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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 8, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

- (1005)
[English]

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-248, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act (composition of boards of directors).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to introduce an important bill to Parliament. This legislation would amend the Financial Administration Act to require gender parity on the boards of directors of Crown corporations and agencies. I would like to thank the hon. member for London—Fanshawe for seconding this bill and for her tireless advocacy of gender equality.

Today in Canada, women make up only 27% of federal appointments to Crown corporation boards. Only 18% of director seats are held by women across all corporate boards in Canada, and 61% of boards are composed entirely of men. This is unacceptable and must change.

By adopting this legislation, the federal government can lead by example and take concrete action to advance gender equality in Canada. For systemic change to occur, we must change the system. I hope all parliamentarians will support this important and overdue initiative.

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

* * *

- (1010)

PETITIONS

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of presenting five petitions.

The first petition I am presenting is looking for additional safeguards in the euthanasia legislation. The government is pursuing, with reckless abandon, the expansion of euthanasia across the country. The petitioners say that rather than pursuing assisted dying,

they would like us to pursue assisted living. With COVID, the plight of our elderly has been highlighted. These petitioners are calling on the government to pursue stronger safeguards for euthanasia.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am presenting today was signed by 1,600 citizens of Canada and calls on the Government of Canada to move quickly to restore funding to organizations that help folks who have been caught up in human trafficking or sex trafficking.

Earlier in the year, the funding for nine organizations was cut by the federal government. NGOs like the London Abused Women's Centre lost their funding, which supports survivors of sex trafficking. The government failed to renew its funding this spring in the middle of the pandemic. Because of public pressure, some of these NGOs got their funding back, and this petition calls for the funding for all nine NGOs to be restored.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I am presenting calls on the House of Commons to quickly pass the bill from my colleague from Yorkton—Melville. She has a bill calling for the condemnation of sex-selective abortion.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is signed by Canadians across the country who are concerned about the order in council banning firearms across the country. They are calling on the government to reverse the order in council made on May 1 and to propose measures that will effectively address illegal firearms use in the country while respecting the rights of law-abiding citizens. They are calling on the government to enact substantial changes to Canada's firearms laws so that the government and the RCMP do not make unilateral decisions.

Routine Proceedings

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, finally, and I thank the House for its indulgence today, I have a petition calling on the government to recognize the genocide that is being perpetrated against the Uighurs in China. We have probably all seen the photographs from the BBC report of the masked prisoners being loaded into cattle cars and brought to concentration camps. We have said never again over and over in this place, yet it appears it is happening again on our watch. Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the government to recognize the genocide and use the Magnitsky act in any way possible.

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to be as succinct as possible when presenting petitions.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition for a number of Canadians across the country who are very concerned about the Uighur situation in China. They are looking for Magnitsky sanctions, among other mechanisms, to deal with this horrific issue.

JUSTICE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not to be outdone by my friend from Peace River—Westlock, I also have five petitions. We are in a race to see who can have the most children and also, apparently, who can table the most petitions.

The first petition is with respect to illegal firearms in Canada.

The petitioners are concerned about the import and use of illegal firearms. They think the government is failing to focus on this problem by instead banning legal guns and going after responsible firearms owners.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to reverse the Order in Council banning certain firearms imposed on May 1, and instead to propose effective measures for dealing with illegal guns, often smuggled into Canada, to actually focus on the real cause of gun crime.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to Bill C-7.

The petitioners are concerned that the government is removing vital safeguards that only a few short years ago the government said were very much essential.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to reconsider its decision to remove the mandatory 10-day reflection period, and to also reconsider its proposal in Bill C-7 to remove the requirements for independent witnesses.

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition brings attention to the human rights challenges and persecution faced by Afghanistan's Sikh and Hindu minorities.

The petitioners call for action from the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. They call for him to create a special program to help persecuted minorities in Afghanistan be directly sponsored by their communities here in Canada.

I note that this petition has the support of a letter signed by members of the Conservative, NDP and Green Party caucuses.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is about Bill S-204, a private member's bill in the Senate proposed by Senator Salma Ataullahjan that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ in a case where there had not been consent for that organ to be given.

The petitioners are very much in support of Bill S-204 and want to see it passed quickly.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth and final petition highlights the absolutely horrific situation facing Uighur Muslims in China and the persecution they are facing at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to have the courage to match action with words and apply Magnitsky sanctions against those responsible for these modern-day concentration camps.

The Speaker: Before we continue, I want to remind hon. members to bring their petitions to the table themselves, and when moving around the chamber to please remember to put on their masks. We do not want to endanger anyone's life in the chamber.

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this time to introduce a very important petition, one that I agree with substantially.

The petition concerns our children in the midst of COVID-19, considering the arts in particular. Dance, drama and the visual arts are very important for our children, especially now with so many children out of school, throughout the summer of course. Even now it is hard for them to get back into the arts. For physical activity and social interaction, the arts in education, dance, drama and visual art, are very important.

This brings me to the petition I want to introduce, which is good for owner-operators of academies and studios, and provides financial assistance to parents who want the arts to be more accessible for our kids to partake in.

Routine Proceedings

Here is the petition, precisely:

We, the undersigned, citizens of Canada, call upon the Government of Canada to classify children's arts (dance, drama, visual arts) in the same educational category as music, and provide HST/GST-exempt status, retroactive to January 1, 2019.

This is a great proposal for getting our kids back into the arts so that they can flourish. I want to particularly thank Denise Vokey of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, and also Lee Newman and Tom Carter of the Stouffville Academy of Music and Dance for bringing this to my attention. We look forward to the government's response.

• (1015)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House on behalf of constituents from across Canada who are raising the issue with regard to the Uighur Muslim minority in China, who are currently being persecuted at the hands of their own Communist government.

The individuals who have signed this petition are calling on the Government of Canada to take action on behalf of this vulnerable group of people.

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition. It was signed some time ago, so events have moved, but it is still relevant. It is petition 10619710, previously certified, in the matter of the Trans Mountain Pipeline, the Government of Canada's decision to buy it from Kinder Morgan, the amount of money the petitioners believe was wasted in buying it and a plea to the government, as most of the \$13 billion of additional costs has not yet been expended, to halt financial support to the Trans Mountain Pipeline.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise to present my first petition in this place. It is also about the persecution of the Uighurs. The petition says in part that it is clear that the UN conventions around the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide have been breached. Canada cannot remain silent in the face of this ongoing atrocity. The petition formally requests we recognize that Uighurs in China have been, and are being, subject to genocide and to use the Magnitsky Act in this case.

As it is my first time standing, I was reminded of one of my favourite writer's quotes when I was reading this petition. Elie Wiesel, writer and Holocaust survivor, said, "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition on behalf of Canadians who call on the House to formally recognize the genocide and atrocities against the Uighur population and Muslim minorities in China, and for us to take the appropriate action via sanctions. As someone who was deployed to countries where genocide has occurred, we need to stand up against this now.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition for action

on this as well, like so many of my colleagues, to say we stand against the genocide that is happening to the Uighurs. Just as many of my colleagues have stated, this is an issue that many Canadians are standing strong on. We should be against this genocide and bring forward the Magnitsky Act.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join my colleagues in presenting this petition signed by Canadians from across this great country. The petitioners call upon the Communist Party of China to stop its horrific human rights abuses against the Uighurs and also ask the Government of Canada to impose sanctions on those responsible.

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding the issue in China. It brings attention to the Uighur Muslims and the ongoing campaign of Uighur birth suppression by the Chinese Communist Party, which includes methods such as forced sterilization and abortion. It is estimated that up to three million Uighurs and other Muslim minorities have been detained in what have been described as concentration camps. We would like to use the Magnitsky Act to impose sanctions on those who are responsible for these heinous crimes.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table this petition with 98 signatories. They call on Parliament to pass a Criminal Code prohibition on sex-selective abortions. The petitioners are drawing to the House of Commons' attention that sex-selective abortions are legally permitted in Canada. I believe a broad consensus exists among Canadians to end this abhorrent practice. As parliamentarians, we too must be clear on this. I hope this consensus will be respected and reflected in the House of Commons.

* * *

• (1020)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I apologize for interrupting routine proceedings, but it might be appropriate at this time for you to remind members that when presenting petitions, as my friend and colleague from Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame did, they are merely to present the petition and not express their own personal views, as our colleague from Newfoundland did. He expressed his view that he was in support of the petition that he presented. I think it would be well advised for you, Mr. Speaker, to remind members that this is against the normal procedures of this House.

The Speaker: That was very well put. I want to remind all the members that when presenting petitions they are presenting the petition, not giving their opinion on it. I thank the member for bringing that up.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

JUDGES ACT

The House resumed from October 7 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 Speaker: The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has five minutes left in his speech.

Mr. Garnett Genus (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bulk of my remarks were shared yesterday when I spoke about the importance of Bill C-3, a bill which would introduce mandatory training with respect to sexual assault for people becoming judges, and also require them to provide written arguments in those cases. I will not repeat all of those arguments. I wanted to spend my remaining time today responding to some of the things that other members have said over the course of this debate.

Maybe I will remake one specific point that I made yesterday, which I think is important. When it comes to mandating training, we need to appreciate the benefits that come with training but also the limitations that come with training, such as training not replacing the importance of developing character and empathy. As C. S. Lewis once said, and I quoted him yesterday, “Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.” Therefore, we recognize the value in terms of education and training but also, at the same time, the importance of doing more.

The bill is particularly timely now. I was just reading a great column in the National Post by a friend of mine, Kathryn Marshall, who spoke about how there has really been an increase, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, of instances of domestic violence. While other instances of violent crime have been declining, we have seen an increase in reported instances of sexual and domestic violence, and it really calls on us to respond.

Unfortunately, in the course of this debate, most of what we have heard from the Liberal side is not arguments about the issue or the bill. They are more interested in debating the debate. They are advancing the argument that we really should not be talking about this, and that, given there is a general consensus on moving the bill

forward, we should just let debate collapse and have as limited a discussion as possible.

I wanted to make five specific points in response to that rather bad argument from the Liberal side.

First of all, I think it is important to point out that the government controls the scheduling of debate. It is up to the government whether the bill is a priority, and we think it should be a priority. It is up to the Liberals to schedule the debate to occur as urgently as possible. They could have scheduled this debate on Monday or Tuesday of this week. They had earlier opportunities to schedule the debate. They chose to wait until Wednesday to schedule the first day of debate.

We want to see the bill moved forward, but it is up to the government, which controls the vast majority of the structure, to schedule the debate in a way that allows the bill to move forward while still giving members the opportunity to speak to it.

A second point that I think we need to underline is that the debate is important. Points could come to light about this issue through the debate that would maybe identify ways in which we could refine and strengthen the bill, as well as other areas that require our action. We have talked, for example, about the way in which young boys seeing violent sexual images online can contribute to sexualization and an increase in rape culture, and the need for the government to move on meaningful age verification. That is another issue that comes out of the debate and demonstrates why this debate is important.

The third point I want to make is that, unfortunately, because of the government's allergy to committee work, it has not yet struck the committee that would be studying the bill. Despite our efforts to have committees struck right away, the government put in place mechanisms to delay the striking of committees. The justice committee has not even met yet. Frankly, by having more debate and more discussion in this place, the bill is not in any way being slowed down, because what is required for the bill to move forward is the justice committee to be struck. That committee, thanks to the government not wanting committees to be struck early, is not yet meeting.

Fourth, I just wanted to observe that the current government shut down Parliament. It prorogued Parliament, which created the necessity for the bill to be started all over again. There were many issues we could have been debating in the summer. Of course, we could have been having the studies of the We scandal, the study of the public safety committee on systemic racism, as well as this bill continuing to be discussed and moved forward, but the Liberals made the choice to shut down the debate on this.

Finally, recognizing the urgency of action, I would call on the government, before this legislation is passed, to act by policy. The Liberals could put in place a policy whereby they would say that they will not appoint people who have not been through this training. In other words, as important as the bill is, many of the things that would be achieved through the bill can also be done in the short term by policy. As far as I know, the government has not enacted the policy to do that yet.

Recognizing these points, I think the government's desire to debate the debate, as opposed to actually talking about the issue, is missing the mark. I think this is a good opportunity for us to be talking about an important issue. We want to see the bill move forward, but this requires the government to take some action in terms of allowing the justice committee to be struck, not proroguing Parliament and scheduling when the debate would occur. All of those things would allow us to move forward with this issue and move the bill forward more quickly.

● (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government demonstrated just how important the legislation is when it introduced it last Friday, even ahead of the throne speech. We also have other important legislation dealing with truth and reconciliation, Bill C-5, as well as assisted dying legislation. These are good, substantial pieces of legislation that I know opposition members would also like to debate.

In terms of the comments coming from the Conservative Party, I am wondering if the member would not agree, given the sensitivity of the topic and the importance of the issue, that maybe this might be a good opportunity for the official opposition to use one of its opposition day motions. If the Conservatives feel so passionate about the issue and want to see that debate take place, would the member not support having a wider spectrum of debate on this very important issue and use it as a day of opposition?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, when it comes to the selection of topics for opposition days, I can only say that it is often difficult to decide because it is a target-rich environment. There are many challenges facing this country. We could be talking about the pandemic, the way Canadians have a hard time having confidence in the government because of all of these ethical scandals, the way the Liberals have used the pandemic to try to funnel money to and enrich organizations with which they have close personal connections, as well as issues around sexual assault, foreign affairs and the crises we see around the world. There are many issues that we could be talking about, but one thing is clear: When the government puts forward a bill that would change Canadian law, it is our job as lawmakers to debate it.

Some members of the government think the role of parliamentarians is just to be public relations ambassadors for the government. I do not believe that. I believe our primary vocation in this place is to be lawmakers, that is, to study, debate and pass laws, and that requires a level of engagement and seriousness in every case.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, while we are talking about debating, I wonder if the member would like to comment on when the member for Winnipeg North, in February 2014, accused the Harper government of being somewhat shameful for not fully debating issues. I wonder if the member would like to comment on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I know the parliamentary secretary across the way has many words to share in this place, and at times he may need to come back and eat them. He is accusing me of being a bit hypocritical in laying this allegation, but at least I am

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consistent with the things I say. At least the things I was saying in 2014 are the same, more or less, as the things I am saying now.

As the member is right to point out, this parliamentarian, in particular, and many members of the Liberal caucus who railed against all sorts of tactics like prorogation when they were in opposition have been happy not only to use those same tactics in government but to push them so much further than they were ever used in the Harper era.

● (1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed with my colleague's speech. We have come to expect more content in his remarks, in general. I am really trying to understand what the Conservative Party is doing here today. I think its position is remarkably hypocritical. The Conservatives are claiming that they want to pass this bill as quickly as possible, but this week, when a member of Parliament moved a motion to expedite the passage of the bill, the Conservative Party voted against it.

What is going on here today?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I never thought I would see the day that this usually strong and vocal member of the NDP would just be repeating the government's lines on so many issues. It is unfortunate to see the NDP come to this: supporting the government shutting down the investigation into different things and closing down Parliament in the spring session.

When it comes to the content and moving this forward, I do not know if the member was here to listen to the speech I gave yesterday, but for the majority of it, I spoke in great detail about the bill before us and the issues it raises. As I said, I think the debate is important. Again, I do not want to refer to the presence or absence of the member yesterday, but maybe he had an opportunity to hear the speeches that were given. I think the many thoughtful and substantive speeches helped to elucidate important aspects of this debate, and that is the conversation we need to be having.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would point out that the appointments we are making to superior court benches are already diverse and people are already being compelled to do this type of education, but I will admit to some level of incredulity in terms of what I just heard.

First of all, when the bill was in the last parliamentary session, it was senators of the Conservative Party who blocked the bill in the Senate, much to the chagrin of Rona Ambrose, the leader the member just served under. Secondly, when the opportunity arose last Friday to get this sent by unanimous consent to committee, the motion was blocked by the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

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If we can take at face value what the member is saying about the importance of the bill, then perhaps, since it was started by a Conservative, we can reach all-party support and get it there expeditiously. Does the member have a comment?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I am obviously keen on seeing the bill move forward. However, as I made clear in my remarks, and I hope the member took advantage of the opportunity to listen to them, it was up to the government to schedule the debate.

The government schedules the days on which debate happens. We debate the bill, as it is our responsibility as lawmakers. It is a little bit disappointing. I was hoping I would get questions on some of the substantive arguments I made as well, with respect to maybe the limitations and the nature of how we structure training in a way to be effective.

It is clear again that the government only wants to talk about process. It is important to take the time to respond to those process arguments, but its only interest is in talking about the process piece. We have a job here as lawmakers, which is to debate important legislation. This could have already been done if the Liberals had not prorogued Parliament. They prorogued Parliament and then they say that we have to rush everything afterward, presumably because they want to shut down Parliament again. That is not something that we want to see happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I noticed that, from the beginning of the period for questions and comments, the member has only been asked questions about the debate. I am going to give the member a chance to talk about the content of this bill because I think that is important.

Does he think that Bill C-3 needs adjustments and amendments or does he think it is good the way it is?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to work with my colleague on the subcommittee on international human rights. I know he works really hard on that issue.

With regard to Bill C-3, we need to have a discussion to improve certain provisions. I think that it is important for the bill to be examined in committee.

We also discussed the Parole Board of Canada and the fact that it would be useful for parole officers to have the same training.

• (1035)

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since the member opposite wants to get into specifics, under the previous session of Parliament the bill went through the debate in the House, went through committee and went on to the Senate. I am curious. What is it about this particular bill that makes the member and other Conservatives feel it needs to go through the process a second time, that it needs to go to committee and needs to go to the Senate again?

What is so outrageous about ensuring training for justices that the member opposite wants to have this process go on and on?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, let me just be very clear. If the member was listening she would know from my remarks that I am strongly supportive of the bill. In fact, promoting training around issues of sexual violence is something that, before I was elected, I was involved in as a board member of a local organization in my riding that does this kind of training. This is a bill that was originally put forward by the former leader of the Conservative Party. It is something that we support. That is why I think the conversation is important.

I will just point out, though, as a small factual correction, that I do not believe there was actually study done at a House of Commons committee on this in the last Parliament.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering—Uxbridge.

I am pleased to contribute to today's second reading debate of Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, which aims at ensuring all newly appointed provincial superior court judges participate in continuing education in sexual assault law and social context.

It would further require the Canadian Judicial Council to report the participation of all sitting superior court judges in sexual assault law education. Finally, the bill would also require judges to provide reasons, in writing or on the record, for decisions in sexual assault matters.

I would like to focus my remarks today on the challenges the criminal justice system is facing in responding to sexual assault in Canada. Further, I would like to discuss how Bill C-3 aims to address these issues by building on recent measures our government has undertaken.

Sexual assault is a gendered crime. Women are almost four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than men. Statistics Canada has reported that 30% of women in Canada, compared with 8% of men, have been sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 15. That is 4.7 million women and 1.2 million men who have been victims of sexual assault.

It is estimated that only 5% of sexual assaults are reported to police. In 2017, only 32% of sexual assault charges proceeded to trial and only 41% of those resulted in a conviction. In other words, less than 2% of sexual assaults in Canada resulted in a conviction in 2017. I would like to note that the number is likely much lower.

In 2018, it was estimated that only 35% of reported sexual assault cases resulted in charges being laid. If we apply this number to the 2017 data, the result is that only 0.23% of sexual assaults in Canada result in a conviction. The data paints a bleak picture and illustrates the challenges our criminal justice system is facing in responding to sexual assaults.

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In recent years, this government has made important changes to sexual assault law. These reforms were aimed at enhancing the equality, privacy and security rights of complainants by countering the myths and stereotypes that have persisted in our criminal justice system, while also balancing the rights of the accused in a manner consistent with relevant Supreme Court of Canada jurisprudence. These myths include deeply rooted beliefs of how so-called real victims react to sexual assault and myths concerning the reliability of women's testimony when they make sexual assault complaints.

In June 2017, our government launched its action plan to combat gender-based violence. The plan is called "It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence". It is a coordinated, multisectoral strategy based on the three pillars of prevention, support for survivors and their families, and promotion of responsive legal and justice systems. The government has invested substantial sums to support the implementation of this government-wide initiative, which aims to combat gender-based violence, coordinate existing programs and lay the foundation for a broader package of measures.

Additionally, through former Bill C-51, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Department of Justice Act and to make consequential amendments to another act, which received royal assent in 2018, we amended the Criminal Code to clarify and strengthen Canada's sexual assault laws.

For instance, these reforms clarified that an unconscious person is incapable of consenting to sexual activity; an accused cannot rely on the defence of mistaken belief in consent if there is no evidence that the complainant voluntarily and affirmatively expressed consent; sexual history evidence must never be adduced to infer one the twin myths, namely, that the complainant is more likely to have consented or is less worthy of belief based on the sexual nature of that evidence; and the admissibility of the complainant's private records that are in the possession of the accused, such as counselling records or private journals, is determined through a special procedure similar to what applies to the admissibility of sexual history evidence and the production of third party records.

In addition, our government has funded the creation of pilot programs in various provinces to provide independent legal advice, and in some cases, legal representation to survivors of sexual assault. The provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Ontario, as well as Yukon Territory, have reported that these programs have been beneficial to survivors of sexual assault. Our government has also provided funding to the National Judicial Institute to develop judicial education on gender-based violence, including sexual assault.

● (1040)

Finally, through former Bill C-75, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other acts and to make consequential amendments to other acts, which received royal assent in June 2019, we restricted the availability of preliminary inquiries to offences punishable by 14 years or more imprisonment. This means that preliminary inquiries are no longer available for many sexual assault offences so that many complainants will not have to testify twice, once at the preliminary inquiry and again at trial. We know that testifying in court is often a harrowing experi-

ence because it requires victims to relive the trauma they have experienced.

As such, the criminal justice system has become more compassionate to survivors of sexual assault. Although we have made significant progress in recent years, we must continue our efforts to ensure that survivors of sexual assault are treated with respect and dignity in their interactions with the criminal justice system. It is imperative that judges have the necessary training regarding the complex nature of sexual assault law and the myths that too often surround it. Bill C-3 aims to ensure that decisions in sexual assault matters are not influenced by myths and stereotypes about sexual assault victims and how they have behaved, which the Supreme Court of Canada has found distorts the truth-seeking function of the court.

Through this bill, we hope to enhance the confidence of the public and survivors in the handling of sexual assault matters by our criminal justice system. This is why the bill would require all candidates seeking appointment to a provincial superior court to agree to participate in continuing education in sexual assault law and social context, and to require judges to provide reasons in writing or on the record for decisions in sexual assault matters.

The proposal in Bill C-3 to require candidates to commit to continuing education after appointment would ensure that newly appointed provincial superior court judges fully understand the complex nature of sexual assault law. It would also require that the training created by the Canadian Judicial Council be developed in consultation with survivors of sexual assault, their support groups, and other individuals or groups the council considers appropriate.

The bill also provides for the introduction of a requirement that the Canadian Judicial Council report on the participation of all current superior court judges in sexual assault law education. This measure would increase accountability for sexual assault law education and act as an incentive to encourage the participation of current superior court judges in sexual assault law education.

Bill C-3's specific proposal to require judges to provide reasons in a determination of sexual assault matters would be included in part VIII of the Criminal Code with other sexual assault provisions to ensure that provisions relating to sexual offences are clear and accessible to those applying them. Essentially, this will create almost a mini sexual assault code within the Criminal Code and will help to prevent the misapplication of sexual assault law. Further, it would help improve the transparency of sexual assault decisions because recorded and written decisions can be reviewed.

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Improving the handling of sexual assault cases in our criminal justice system goes beyond partisan politics. This bill, originally a private member's bill introduced by the hon. Rona Ambrose, the former interim leader of the Conservative Party, will help to increase the confidence of sexual assault survivors and the public in our criminal justice system. We must work together to transform the criminal justice system into a fair, more effective, accessible and efficient system for all Canadians. I urge members of the House to support the passage of this bill.

• (1045)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for speaking to the substance of the bill. It was valuable to have that contribution and gives me an opportunity to ask some specific questions about the substance of the bill. I have two questions that I would like to hear the member's thoughts on.

First, he spoke about judges making a commitment to this training. He then said that participation in this training would be tracked. Could he speak, though, to a case in which a judge commits to training and then does not follow through with that commitment once on the bench? Is there any mechanism in this legislation to respond if a judge, after making that commitment, fails to follow through?

Second, is there specific evidence about the impact of this training? Is there evidence that people, once they receive this training, will act differently than they did prior to the training, and what kinds of training are most effective?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, concerning whether there are repercussions for judges who do not act in accordance with that training, it is not in this act. However, I think there are other judicial mechanisms under review by the chief justices who have the ability to take such actions. It is a very cumbersome process, but that is something that will probably have to be modified in a much broader case.

As to his second point, yes, there is evidence that the provinces that have already taken training on for their provincial court benches have seen a difference. They have seen that understanding of sexual assault law and that compassion for the victims. The results have been much better than we have previously seen.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to offer a clarification and ask the member a question. My clarification is that the study of this bill included speeches earlier this year prior to prorogation and two committee meetings where extensive witness testimony was heard on this bill, as it then was. That is in response to something that came up in the last set of debates.

In terms of the member for Surrey Centre, I want to delve into his background as a lawyer, as a Sikh Canadian, and also as a racialized member of this legislature and of the bar. This bill contemplates training not just on sexual assault law, but also on social context and on unpacking who comes before the courts to make sure the court environment is more hospitable, welcoming, open and inclusive for those individuals.

Does the member believe that this is an important step forward given the movement that is taking place across this country, and the continent, toward combatting systemic racism?

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, yes, this bill has been debated and dealt with in committee. It was stalled in the Senate. It was surprising to many of us on the government's side that a bill initiated by one of their own members, the interim leader, be stalled and delayed rather than having swift passage. I would like to remind members that it was their caucus members who stalled that process in the Senate and under their leader. It could have been expedited.

As to the case of needing more social broadness and an understanding of diversity in this country and of people with different backgrounds, we absolutely need that. As we recall, initially the benches were for white, older men. That diversity has been changing over the years, but there is still a lot of work to be done before more people who come before the bench feel comfortable that it is a bench of their peers. That work is in this bill, even though I addressed it more in the context of the sexual assault law.

• (1050)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too am a member of the bar in Alberta, albeit a non-practising one. I very much support this bill. The opportunity to educate judges in this area is very important.

Would the federal government agree to undertake initiatives to work with provinces to make sure law school curricula are expanded? We could then start to educate lawyers as they are being trained about these very important issues of context, institutional racism and sexism. They could then adopt these values as they practise, because eventually it is lawyers who are put on the bench, and we do not have to wait until they become judges before they get this very important training.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Madam Speaker, it is an important issue. I believe law societies, including the Law Society of British Columbia, have created initiatives, though it may not be mandatory. It could become part of the CPD requirements annually for someone to maintain their licence at the bar, but these types of initiatives must be encouraged and brought about across the country.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation. I hope that in this Parliament it will not be blocked again in the Senate and that we can finally implement this important legislation.

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Bill C-3 is important. It would ensure that provincial superior court justices would be trained in sexual assault law and in practice with respect to getting rid of the myths that exist in our society around sexual assault, particularly with women. However, this certainly impacts men and the LGBTQ2I community. It would ensure that our legal systems are safe places for victims to share their experiences, that predators are held accountable and that in the future victimization of people can be avoided.

I have been listening to this debate and a number of members have spoken about the statistics. I think most members in the House do so because the statistics are pretty stark. When 30% of women and 8% of men have been sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 15, what kind of society do we live in when this is okay?

When we compare that to the conviction rate of something like 2%, how can we allow women, boys and others in our society to be assaulted from the time they are 15? If this were any other crime, there would be mass outrage in the country about how this was even possible. I suspect the conviction rate is even lower, because sexual assaults and sexually based assaults are so under-reported in this country and around the world, mainly because of the low conviction rates and because of the re-victimization of victims in the justice system and having to defend that they are not at fault for what happened to them. I would argue that these statistics do not paint the full picture.

As a young woman, I certainly know too many stories of other women being victimized and how often that is ignored or accepted. It is not worth it for them to share their stories, bring their family into it and have others hear about what happened to them. The shame is put on victims instead of on the assailants, where it should be.

In addition to why this training is important and why the conviction rates need to be dramatically increased, I want to share some of the comments that justices in Canada, as well as in the U.S., have made in sexual assault cases and why training and getting rid of the myths need to happen as quickly as possible.

Here are some quotes from justices about victims in cases that they were supposed to be adjudicating: “If you wouldn’t have been there that night, none of this would have happened”; the victim “wasn’t the victim she claimed to be”; “Why couldn’t you just keep your knees together?”; the victim was “probably as much in control of the situation” as the assailant; the body can “shut the whole thing down”; and “It’s open season” for intoxicated “women”.

These myths continue to victimize women, continue to keep sexual assault of all genders in the shadows and, more dangerous, continue to allow perpetrators to victimize more people and place fear in those whom they have already victimized.

● (1055)

Human trafficking is a huge issue in this country and around the world. I have often heard from survivors and about their experiences. When the process has gone to court, there has been very little protections with respect to being re-victimized. They have been questioned as to why they are there or how they got into the situation. The defendants in a lot of these cases are still able to contact these victims and pressure them. Therefore, many do not bother

moving forward because they have to relive their stories, the assault and the trauma they have gone through in a public way and the re-victimizing.

This bill also talks about making changes to the court process. This was brought up in the earlier question and answer period of this debate, and I am very pleased about that.

It is also important that part of the bill relates not only to the training, but also to the written decisions that will be on the record. There needs to be some public naming and shaming of decisions that have been based on old stereotypes and myths to ensure we have a judicial process that protects victims, not puts them on trial. When it comes to sexual assault, we have seen this far too often.

A big myth in sexual assault cases is the notion of who the real victim is. There are very few other areas of law or criminality where the victim is questioned like in the quotes I read earlier, such as why she was there, or why she drank too much, or why she just could not stop it or she should not have been out so late. It is not a crime for women to wear what they want or be where they want to be. It is as if women have to protect themselves from sexual assault when they need to be protected from predators.

Victims need to be protected from sexual assault. This should be a basic principle in our country and our judiciary should respect that, understand that and should not put the lives of sexual assault victims on trial. Only those who have been accused should be put on trial. They have every right to put up a defence if they have been wrongly accused, but it is not the victims who should have to prove they did not deserve the sexual assault or “had it coming”, which is often attributed to sexual assault victims.

With Bill C-51, as my colleague also brought up in the last round of debate, some of the important changes to amend the Criminal Code have been spoken about in the House, but it is really important to raise such things as an unconscious person being incapable of consenting to sexual activity. This might seem like a basic legal principle. We would not have a valid contract if it had been signed by an unconscious person, yet there was a time in our country where an individual could agree or give consent to sexual activity.

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Therefore, it is incredibly important that other changes be made to criminal law as well. This is why continual training is so important, so judges can be kept up to date on our most current laws, that we can ensure that these myths and stereotypes are not repeated, that they are formalized in law, that victims can stop being re-victimized and that people feel safe to come forward, to speak out and to stand up against these predators to help stop further victims from being victimized.

I am very appreciative that the former interim Conservative leader Rona Ambrose brought forward a bill on this. I hope that after this second round of debate, we can pass it and have real and substantial change in our country.

• (1100)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that this was originally a private member's bill. One of the things about a private member's bill is that it is somewhat limited in what it can change and it involve spending money on things. However, when it is a government bill, it can be expanded, and basically the sky is the limit. There are many things around sexual assault and changes to the judicial system that could have been put in the bill, such as some of the things the member talked about around human trafficking. This is a big area on which I have been working.

If the sky was the limit and she was picking some stars, what else would the member put in the bill?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, the way that legislation should be done in the House is not like the former Conservatives with omnibus bills.

In fact, we have made changes on issues around human trafficking. We have had public safety bills and measures. As I mentioned, Bill C-51 talked about changing the Criminal Code.

The bill before us is specifically around superior court justices being trained in sexual assault laws and myths. It is important and we need to move forward with it. Also, we need to ensure that we have broad support, which we have, except I do not understand the Conservative senators who blocked it from moving forward.

However, there is no one silver bullet. If we are serious about gender-based violence, then we need to look at it in multiple ways and put forward legislation like this government has done in multiple areas.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Pickering—Uxbridge for her heartfelt speech. In addition to being an MP, I am the mother of one girl and two boys. It is part of my job as a parent to teach, to dispel stereotypes and myths, and to educate my children. There is no such thing as too much education, in my opinion.

When the member pointed out that numbers alone do not tell the whole story, that resonated with me. I have worked in the shelter space, with women's centres and as coordinator for a regional women's organization, so that statement speaks volumes for me.

People talk about the conviction rate, but those numbers are not necessarily the real numbers because people have to actually report

assaults in the first place. If my colleague could make those numbers talk, as she said, they would paint a fuller picture than just a percentage.

• (1105)

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I do not have kids, but I often think of parents, especially parents of young girls, and how they prepare their kids for some of these things. We want to dispel myths, but we also want to protect our children. For young boys, we want them to understand how to respect women in a healthy way.

On the statistics, I thank the member for raising this. It is one of the most crucial pieces for legislators. We often rely on statistics to make good decisions. In this case, we know, because of the experiences of victims, that so many more do not come forward. This is even more reason to make the judiciary a more open and inclusive place, so victims feel comfortable and we can get a clearer picture.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it is good for judges to be trained in avoiding bias and stereotypes, but women have to be able to get to that point in the first place. There is a glaring lack of funding for shelters for women who are victims of violence, including spousal violence.

How does the member intend to increase funding so that women have a place to stay when they are in distress?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with the member. In fact, we can never do too much in the area of shelters and protecting women from domestic violence. We have made important announcements for more funding, but I will continue to support this, because the need is there. COVID has proven an even increased need, so I will always continue to work on more. Our government has stepped up, but there will be further need, and I am happy to support it to ensure victims are protected.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by thanking everyone for their great interventions in this conversation that we have had. It is more of an apt description to call it a conversation as opposed to a debate.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say it was great to hear the words of the parliamentary secretary. I would also like to recommit to him, as we did the first time we went through this, to work with the Province of Ontario to make sure we can have this be more effective, perhaps expanding it to our province, as well. I am looking to working with him and the provincial government to hopefully have it also include something like this in its legislature.

Bill C-3 is an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code. I believe that this bill is fundamentally a step in the right direction. The justice system is of course supposed to be a safe place for victims of sexual assault. However, as many have commented, as a member of the bar and as a member of the justice system, I have seen complainants revictimized by the system over and over again.

Sexual assault is the only violent crime in Canada that is not declining. Out of over 500,000 sexual assaults, only 3% are reported to the police. While one in three women and one in eight men will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime, the majority of sexual assault crimes are not reported to police. In fact, of all the types of crime, sexual assault is the least reported to police. While the rate of self-reported sexual assaults has remained relatively stable, the percentage of offences reported to police has dropped from 12% in 2009 to 5% in 2014.

Why is it that victims of sexual assault just do not feel comfortable going to the justice system for support?

It is estimated, as some of my colleagues have commented, that fewer than 1% of sexual assault cases experienced by women lead to an offender being convicted. Believe it or not, this is even worse for vulnerable women in our society. Young women, women with disabilities, indigenous women, particularly those in the north and the territories, have a much more heightened risk of sexual assault.

To highlight this, to say that these are not just words, they are not just numbers, I would like to tell a story of the truth of a 12-year-old aboriginal girl who lived in Saskatchewan. This comes from *Sexual Assault in Canada*, edited by Elizabeth Sheehy. This young lady had a fight with her parents, as many teenagers have, and, as many teenagers have in the past, myself included, she went to blow off steam. She walked down the road. Unfortunately, she met up with three men who befriended her and gave her alcohol. Eventually, they got her intoxicated to the point of vomiting. At this point, they decided to hold her down and rape her. When they dropped her off at her friend's house, she was frantically crying and screaming.

Two of these three men were found not guilty, as the judge believed the testimony that they thought she was over 15 and had consented. This, despite the fact that she was 12, drunk, being held down and was vomiting at the time. One of the three men was convicted. He received a sentence of two years less a day, hardly having the book thrown at him.

To make it all worse, to make the trauma even worse for this young lady, the police officer, when questioned in court, said, of the intoxicated 12-year-old girl, "Well, she might have been the sexual aggressor."

For this to go on in Canada is utterly and completely unacceptable. It is really incomprehensible that in this great country of

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Canada we have things like this going on. While I cannot begin to imagine what it is like for a victim of a sexual assault to have had this experience, I know there are many reasons why victims may not come forward. Victims might experience a range of psychological responses. They might feel grief, shame or denial, and these are reasons why they do not feel comfortable. To make it worse, they may not have faith in our criminal justice system.

It has been reported that women feel revictimized, over and over again. In the last 10 years, as some of my colleagues have mentioned, these are some of the statements from justices. One commented, "Well, why could she not just keep her knees together?" Another commented, "Why did the victim not scream?" One of the worst I have heard is, "Why did the victim not simply skew her pelvis to avoid penetration?"

● (1110)

I am paraphrasing because the actual language in these comments is unparliamentary. How anyone, particularly a justice, can think they are appropriate in a court of law is astonishing. Our government, our justice system and our society must do better.

According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, while 96% of Canadians believe all sexual activity should be consensual, only one in three Canadians actually understand the meaning of the word consent. We have to make sure judges are not part of that two out of three and they understand that unless there is a clear "yes", it is a "no." Coming forward and reporting assault to police is hard enough for women. We need to do everything we can to ensure victims of sexual assault are supported. The justice system is the last thing they should fear.

Women who have had the courage and perseverance to make it through years in the justice system, reliving their pain every step of the way, are often faced with yet another blow. The perpetrator, the one who has changed their lives forever and destroyed dreams, brought on addiction, poverty and a lifetime of mental illness, will be given an almost non-existent sentence.

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According to StatsCan, from 2009 to 2014 only 21% of sexual assaults completed their court case within six years. Some 60% of those cases were pleaded down to a lesser offence, so the perpetrator avoids custody for the most part. For cases that made it to completion, approximately half, or 55%, will result in any time in prison for the perpetrator. Of the tiny percentage of sexual assault perpetrators who are actually sentenced, most will not receive a day in prison. What will they receive? Average probation for sexual assault is 730 days. A woman's life is destroyed and the price is a couple of years of checking in with one's parole officer. That is not good enough.

If there is anything we can do in the system for victims of sexual assault we should do it, and we should do it not tomorrow, not today, but yesterday. I will definitely be supporting this bill. In fact, I salute the government for bringing it forward and thank it for doing so. Perhaps by giving the judges the necessary training, we can avoid the outlandish comments in the future and give victims more confidence in our justice system so they know they will be treated with respect when they perform the act of bravery of confronting their perpetrator.

Fixing the criminal justice system is about helping our federal judges begin to understand the suffering of our victims and teaching our judges to be more compassionate toward victims. The bill is not simply about fixing our justice system, it is about making Canada a safer place for all women and children.

I am a son, a brother, a husband and a father. I worry about my loved ones. I worry about my five-year-old daughter. I find the history of our justice system appalling. We need to make Canada a safer place, a place where victims have faith in our justice system, where everyone knows the meaning of consent, where women can feel comfortable walking alone, walking with anyone and walking anywhere they want wearing whatever they want, knowing society will always be there to protect them.

Bill C-3 is a positive change, albeit a modest one, that will help Canada be a safer place for my daughter, my mother, my sisters and for all Canadians. I will be supporting it wholeheartedly.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his heartfelt and impassioned speech. The points he raised are quite valid.

We debated the bill and it was passed by the House of Commons in the previous Parliament. It even made it to the Senate. At this point, the five parties in the House unanimously agree that it should pass. Everyone agrees that it is very important and is a step in the right direction.

This week, one of our colleagues proposed that we fast-track the bill, which was introduced by the Conservative Party. However, the Conservatives refused to expedite the process.

Why do the Conservatives not want to expedite the process to pass a Conservative bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, that was a terrific question from the hon. member, indeed. This discussion in the House of Commons is what separates us from totalitarian regimes. It is what makes our government better than communist regimes.

Debate is of critical importance. In fact, yesterday I was a witness to some of the most moving interventions I have ever seen in this House or outside. The member for Saint-Laurent talked about the difficult neighbourhood she grew up in and how now she has created a path for hopefully hundreds of thousands of girls to follow and that anyone can make it from anywhere. I heard from her about personal challenges. She shared with us her pain and suffering. It deeply moved me and it made me feel uncomfortable in a very good way.

Then I heard from the member for Calgary Nose Hill—

● (1120)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do have to interrupt for another question. There is only five minutes of questions and comments.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

My colleague shared some rather frightening scenarios. In my view, this only reinforces the need to act quickly, and my colleague even touched on that. I think we need to set partisanship aside and pass the bill quickly. This is not about shutting down the debate; it is about hearing victims' testimony. The best way to serve the interests of victims is to act as quickly as possible.

Does my colleague agree with me on that?

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I will use this as an opportunity to finish off my comments with respect to the member for Calgary Nose Hill. She talked about systemic misogyny with comments that, once again, should make us all feel uncomfortable as Canadians, and all the men in the House and elsewhere feel a little bit uncomfortable, which will move our country to be better. I believe that this debate has made Canada a better and more open country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to continue on from the member's last statement, would he not then agree that it would be advisable for the Conservative Party to use one of its days of opposition motions to continue the debate on the broader issue of the impact of sexual assault?

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Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, no. Obviously, the government has a lot of opportunity to talk about this and we are pleased to talk about this business. We thank the government for bringing it forward.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege and honour to rise in my place to add my voice to this very important debate. It has been five years since I was elected, and in those five years I have worked a lot on issues regarding the court system, its handling of sexual assault and human trafficking cases and how to get justice for victims.

This bill is a substantial departure for the Liberals, so I thank them for bringing it forward. Typically, when the Liberals try to fix the justice system, they reduce sentencing. That has been their road map. We saw that with Bill C-75 in the last Parliament. Their solution to fixing backlogs in the court system was to reduce sentencing, and they have been unwilling to take on the justice system and say they get things wrong. On this side of the House, we have been ready to say a certain decision was wrong or was not good enough, or we brought in mandatory minimum sentences to try to fix many of the outrageous deficiencies in the justice system.

This bill is a departure for the Liberals, so I welcome it. They are acknowledging that there is an issue in the court system, a lack of appreciation for victims in the court system. This bill goes some of the way to help that along and fix some of the problems.

I would like to step back a bit. Statistics have been brought up several times. I have been in the House of Commons all morning listening to the speeches, and the stats on sexual assault continue to be brought up. We should be working to have a society in which sexual assault does not happen. If sexual assault did not happen, we would not be talking about conviction rates and that kind of thing. We could have a law on the books for sexual assault and it would not happen, and, therefore, whether judges were educated on this issue would be a moot point because they would not be dealing with those cases.

That said, the rate of sexual assault across the country is going up dramatically, and in other areas of my work in this place I put forward some ideas on why that is. Motion No. 47 was passed in the last Parliament. It addressed misogynistic and sexually explicit material online and how that was impacting Canadian society. There was some good work done at the committee, but the government has failed to capitalize on the committee report, the voices of people who have been victimized and the voices of academics working in this area. They show us that we are in the greatest social experiment in human history, given online sexually explicit content and the education our youth get through that regarding their sexuality. I hope the government is going to be pursuing that. An initiative I have been working on is meaningful age verification, and I hope the government is looking at that too.

There is another part of the debate here today: While the Liberals have brought forward a bill, it is basically a rehash of a private members' bill from my side of the House, though I salute them for that. It is now a government bill, and they had the opportunity to bring forward a bill that contained a whole suite of things they could do to fix the issue of sexual assault in our country. Judge edu-

cation is an important one, but it is a bit downstream from the issues.

The Bible says that the law will not save us, and that is the case here as well. The best laws in the country will not save us. The law always comes into effect after the fact. It allows us to bring perpetrators to justice, but before that, it does not save us. That is important to recognize.

• (1125)

We should be cultivating in humanity and in the citizens of our country a culture where sexual assault is unthinkable, where individuals hold each other accountable, where there is a large sense of community and where messing with one of us means messing with all of us. In doing so, there would be strong relationships within our society that could prevent this kind of thing from happening. I hope that we can get back to that, as it is more upstream from where this bill is at. That said, I will be supporting this bill, for sure.

Over the past five years, I have been working hard to end human trafficking and specifically the sex trafficking that happens across the world. This is a large and growing issue in our country. The average sex-trafficking case is happening within 10 blocks of where we live, so let us keep our eyes peeled. If we see something, there is a national hotline we can call. It primarily targets women and girls. In Canada, it is estimated that 50% of people caught up in human trafficking and sex trafficking are indigenous. This is to our shame, and we need to be working very hard on this as well.

One interesting thing has happened, particularly with Bill C-75 from the last Parliament, regarding conviction rates and convictions in human trafficking cases. One thing we brought in during the Parliament prior to my getting here, through a bill by the Bloc and the NDP that passed in 2013, was consecutive sentencing for human traffickers. The Liberals sat on this for three years and finally passed it into Bill C-75, but they removed the part about consecutive sentencing and made it concurrent sentencing.

There have been some egregious court decisions that have come out since, and I will give some examples.

Imani Nakpangi was a human trafficker who sold two girls in the Toronto area. He trafficked these girls for almost two years. He ended up being the first person in Canada convicted under our new human trafficking laws. In one case, he received a three-year sentence for trafficking a girl for over two years, but spent only 13 months in prison. This gentleman had made \$350,000 selling the body of a young girl and he spent less time in prison being rehabilitated than he spent trafficking this girl.

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There was the case of Michael Mark. He received a two-year sentence. He victimized a 17-year-old girl for over two years and spent only a week in prison after his conviction.

These are some egregious examples where the justice system has, in my opinion, made mistakes. These are things we need to work to correct. While I commend the government for this bill today, it seems to be at odds with other things the government has done, particularly Bill C-75. We see the insignificant sentences that came from it.

We also see, over and over again, this place attempt to bring the judiciary to bear on these things by creating minimums, because we cannot let these guys out of jail after spending one week in prison for trafficking a girl for two years. We create a minimum for that, like a three-year or 10-year minimum sentence, but we see the courts strike those down, so there are, to some degree, some issues in the judiciary. This place has the ability, opportunity and mandate to direct that to some degree, so that is what we are doing.

I already talked about consecutive versus concurrent sentencing. It has been troublesome to get things going there. The bill from 2013 also had other tools for the police to use to help convict human traffickers, but the Liberals never brought that into force. They left it on the table for three years before they passed it in Bill C-75, while taking out the consecutive sentencing.

There are serious crimes that are being perpetrated in this country, and we need to ensure that judges get things right.

• (1130)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in terms of the references the member made to Bill C-75, I submit that it is a good day for those of us who were behind Bill C-75. The Supreme Court just upheld the provisions in that legislation that deal with eliminating peremptory challenges when selecting jurors. This ensures we will not have a tragedy of justice like what we saw with the trial of Gerald Stanley.

I appreciate the member's comments, and in his five years in the House I have always thought of him as a thoughtful member. I note that he has done a lot of work on the issue of human trafficking, which he mentioned today. Addressing human trafficking and, more broadly speaking, the issue of sexual violence requires a judiciary that is sensitized to these issues, that is fully up to speed on the current state of the law, that is transparent in providing reasons, etc.

Given that background and his commitment to this pressing issue, which is very closely connected to what the bill is about, he said that he supports the bill. Would that support translate into getting the bill efficaciously and expeditiously to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, where any amendments that might be needed could be moved and debated?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I agree that we should get this to committee as soon as possible. However, I point out that the committee is not constituted at this point, so whether the bill passes today, tomorrow or next week, there is no committee for it yet. It is important to let us have this debate and get these issues on the record.

The other thing I will say is that the bill could have been broader. I would have liked to see a discussion of special courts. I know there are special courts for a whole host of issues. In Alberta, we have some really cool special courts for family law and child abuse. I would have liked to see some of that in the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, since we began our discussions this morning, I have noticed that some hon. members would rather that we not debate this type of topic. That amazes me because so far the testimonies have been heartfelt. I am very pleased to take part in this debate and to hear my hon. colleagues from all parties in the House on these very specific subjects.

I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I have the following question for him. In addition to Bill C-3, what do you think the government should do to ensure that we live in a society with a justice system that is fair for everyone?

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, as I alluded to in my reply to the last question, one area that we could look at is special courts. In Ontario, we have seen drug courts, and they have had very good success in getting prosecutors and judges who are versed in a particular area of law to not only bring justice to a situation, but also bring renewal and rehabilitation through the justice system. I would like to see us pursue that model more. In Alberta, we have child advocacy centres, which allow a child witness to be videotaped. This can be used over and over again, rather than revictimizing them over and over again. These are the kinds of things I would have like to see in the bill.

• (1135)

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has been discussing a subject near and dear to my heart, and that is human trafficking. With the bill and with some of the other things that the government has done, he pointed out that the government has removed the emphasis on consecutive sentencing and has instead put in concurrent sentencing.

I am wondering if he could expand on his thoughts about why the government would favour volume discounts for multiple crimes.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her mentorship in this place. As she has announced, she is retiring. She is one of the first MPs I met when I came here, and I have always appreciated her opinions and advice. She even has a little book called *Book of Commons Sense*. It is a great little book. I use it often, and I often share the tips she put in it with new members.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are here today to again debate the Judges Act and the Criminal Code.

Bill C-3 amends the Judges Act to restrict eligibility for judicial appointment to persons who undertake to participate in continuing education on matters related to sexual assault law and social context. It also amends the Judges Act to require that the Canadian Judicial Council report on seminars dealing with matters related to sexual assault law. The purpose of these seminars is to ensure that this theme is addressed in the continuing education of judges. Finally, the bill amends the Criminal Code to require that judges provide reasons for decisions in sexual assault proceedings.

This bill would have been passed two months ago if not for the prorogation by the Prime Minister, which was totally useless given the empty throne speech and Prime Minister's address to the nation. This has delayed our work and obviously upended our schedule and parliamentary agenda. We have lost two months because the government wanted to flee Parliament and politics in general to avoid the ire of the opposition over yet another Liberal scandal. How cynical, some might say.

We were elected as legislators to provide solutions and make the changes expected and desired by Quebeckers. There needs to be more co-operation and less partisanship, less squabbling and more collaborating. That is what everyone says they want, but every day we often see that is not the case despite the good will of some.

Sexual assault trials resonate strongly with ordinary people. In fact, they obviously have a serious impact on the reputation and life of those involved and they also revictimize the survivors of sexual assault. Unfortunately, this type of trial sometimes gives rise to problematic interpretations of the law. It is in this spirit that the bill proposes that candidates seeking to be appointed as judges must agree to participate in ongoing training on matters related to sexual assault law and social context.

In almost all these cases, a judge must assess the credibility of the witnesses, the victim and the accused. The judge's assessment can be influenced by preconceived notions that do not stem from malice, but from their lived experience, perceptions and culture.

The topic of training is something I relate to. I was a school principal for more than 20 years, and this was a topic and a problem that I had to work on and deal with almost every day. We had to work hard to get past the mindset that once someone got a degree they had mastered the subject. Times have changed, obviously, and we have come a long way. We have paid the price in recent years for that whole period of time when there was no continuing education. Now, graduating from university means the beginning of continuing education, which continues right up until retirement, for any field you can imagine.

It is all well and good for a teacher in the school system to have gotten a good education, but young people change and the way they learn changes. Boys need a different kind of stimulation than girls do, the curriculum changes at lightning speed and evaluation systems also go through drastic changes. A teacher cannot teach the same way today that they taught five, 10 or 15 years ago.

It goes without saying that we need to adapt our approach to the current context. Nevertheless, many people think that changes to training often fail to keep pace with society's needs, and I completely agree.

Ongoing training is top priority in every sector. There is an old saying: Adapt or die. In this case, with this bill, we might say, "Adapt or lose your credibility".

● (1140)

People in our riding who know that we are debating this bill tell us this is fundamental. It just makes sense. I am hearing the same thing in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles as other MPs are elsewhere. Constituents are asking us to move forward, to stop stalling and to pass this bill quickly.

Making sure that judges get adequate ongoing sexual assault training will enable them to dig into cases differently, to ask questions the right way and to better understand witnesses' reality. Let us not forget that witnesses must testify in front of their attackers. Training will undoubtedly improve their rulings too. This bill will also make rulings more consistent, give our judges more credibility, and, most importantly, boost our justice system's credibility with respect to victims of sexual assault.

I am the father of a beautiful and amazing grown-up 30-year-old daughter. I protected her, coddled her and taught her as best I could. However, I often felt like I had to fight to protect her against a rather macho world, a world of men who all too often tend to denigrate women. These old tendencies remain in our society. I tried to shelter my daughter from the mean-spirited influence of certain uniquely male perspectives, certain stereotypes, myths and prejudices. At the very least, I take comfort in the fact that my daughter did not have to go through the court system. That would have been very painful for both her and for me.

This bill is a step forward. It is a start, a beginning. It is high time we took action to restore women's confidence in the justice system. Obviously, any action we take must respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. Making sure that judges are informed, in touch with the evolution of our society and more understanding of complainants' circumstances can only have a positive impact on our Quebec society.

What we want is for judges to be more transparent and more accountable when rendering decisions in sexual assault cases. We want these decisions to be reasoned and justified.

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That is why the Bloc Québécois will be pleased to vote in favour of this bill. We will vote in favour of victims, all victims. I encourage the House to pass this bill quickly as a sign of respect for all victims of sexual assault, whether they be male or female.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what is really encouraging is the fact that we have before us a piece of legislation that appears to have the support of virtually all members of the House.

This is not new to the House. It has come in different forms. It started with Rona Ambrose, the former interim leader of the Conservative Party, in the form of a private member's bill. The idea was shared with the Prime Minister, the government and all members, and then brought in as a government piece of legislation, which was ultimately passed through first reading, second reading, committee stage and third reading, and went to the Senate. Unfortunately, due to the election, it never did receive the necessary royal assent. Today, we have it before us once again.

I am wondering if the member could reinforce his thoughts in regard to how encouraging it is when members of the House come together, virtually unanimously, to support positive legislation such as this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We can argue back and forth across the House. The government decided to prorogue Parliament. As for the Conservatives, they unfortunately delayed the passage of the bill.

This is the third time we are debating this bill, and we all hope it will be the last. The idea is to vote in favour of this bill as soon as possible.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for his remarks. I would like to address the issue of sexual violence. As we all know, the problem disproportionately affects indigenous communities and indigenous women.

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls addresses this issue. We must not forget what happened to Joyce Echaquan in a hospital in Quebec. Of course the member across the aisle is well aware of that situation.

Considering the systemic discrimination and sexual violence indigenous people suffer in all kinds of institutions, is it not important to quickly pass such a bill in this Parliament?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. I very much believe in taking things one step at a time.

There is nothing grandiose about this bill. It is important, essential, and will bring us up to date with the times. It is clear that a lot

of other changes could be made when it comes to training judges. It is clear that indigenous peoples suffer immeasurable prejudice. It is clear that someone with addictions will not necessarily be judged the same way because of how some might perceive that group of people.

I hope this bill will pass quickly so that we can move on to something else. I am all for taking things one step at a time provided those steps are taken quickly.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to talk about Bill C-3, a bill that is going to make a small difference in what is really a larger system failure in dealing with sexual violence and sexual assault in Canada. It is certainly important. As members of Parliament we come to the House with very different experiences and exposures to violence or assault in our professional and personal lives. This really frames our understanding of the issue. It also is important in terms of the debate that is happening.

In reflecting about the bill today and about the broader issues, I went into my memory banks and thought about things that have happened throughout my life. I thought I would share some examples, first of all, to look at the larger systemic issues that are not addressed and then to look at the issue of the bill in particular.

I want to first talk about the emergency responses by our police officers. I can remember, as a young nurse with very limited experience, working in a small first nations community. One day I arrived at the little clinic office. Across the road from it was a baseball field. When I arrived at the clinic at about seven o'clock in the morning, there was a woman in the baseball field. She was completely nude and had a number of bruises. Obviously, she was a victim of a sexual assault and an assault in general. No one else was around so we covered her up. She was intoxicated. We called emergency services to transport her to something more than what we had available, and we also called the RCMP. I remember, again as someone who was young and new to this business, that they made it about her being drunk and "Who knows what happened?" They were very dismissive of that horrific crisis.

There was some work done by Robyn Doolittle in 2015 that was called "Unfounded". What she said was that police would find the complaints as baseless and there would often be no investigation, so the example I just gave certainly fits into my initial experience. The numbers in 2015 were quite incredible, where 25,000 incidents were reported to the police with only 1,400 convictions. Clearly, we have an issue with the emergency response system.

The next experience I would like to share is my move from the small community to a larger health centre that had an emergency room and an emergency response. It was still rural. Typically there was a nurse and doctor who were available during that time. Nurses in rural communities have to respond to everything that comes through the door. It might be a three-person motor vehicle accident, the delivery of a baby or a victim of rape.

One night we were called in. There was a very shaken woman who indicated that she had been very violently sexually assaulted. We had to do an examination. If anyone is not aware of what those examinations are like, it is very, very intrusive in terms of taking swabs and plucking samples from the pubic area. It is very detailed and very intrusive. I had never used a rape kit before. I had never been trained in using a rape kit. We had to read the instructions. We tried to hopefully be compassionate and kind, but we certainly were not proficient in what we needed to do to put this case together.

I talked about the police response and now I am talking about the health care response in a rural community and the ability of nurses and doctors to have the expertise that is needed.

• (1150)

The next experience is not a professional one, but an experience within the judicial system. It is the only time I have ever been close to the court system in my entire life. I had never been in a court. I was a support system for two young girls who had been sexually assaulted, and my support role was to be in the courtroom to listen.

I remember the morning of the trial. This is going back in my memory, but this is what stands out. There was an overworked Crown counsel who went to these young girls and asked them if they could get hold of the witnesses from when the preliminary interviews were done and bring them to the court. I was stunned that the Crown counsel did not have the witnesses planned out in terms of the people who would corroborate the stories of these two young women. These two very young women gave compelling and heart-breaking testimony. There was no question in my mind that it was very real testimony. The person who was accused, his only response was that it did not happen. He denied it.

I looked at the bravery of these two girls who had decided to pursue this case in spite of all the challenges to get to that point. They had to hear the person they knew had done exactly what they said he had done deny it, and then the Crown counsel, without an appropriate case ready to present, talked about their bruises. It was absolutely awful. The result that came out of that particular court case was a finding of not guilty. The judge at that time said that, although the testimony of the girls was very compelling, they did not feel there was enough proof so they found the person not guilty.

That is the experience we have. We have system failures throughout. I talked about the rape kits. We did learn a little bit more over time, but I was never called to be a witness for the Crown in terms of the mental state or in terms of what happened. Other than the rape kits, the notes we kept were never brought into the court system when dealing with it. We have so many flaws, more than what are in this bill, that are still happening today. We still have so much to do.

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As many people have indicated, this bill has a history. The history starts with the passion of our former leader, Rona Ambrose, who introduced it as a private member's bill. We all know it is very difficult for private member's bills to meet the finish line. There are many people in here who probably have never had an opportunity to even introduce a private member's bill. She did get it fairly far along the system, which took four years. As I said, there are very few private member's bills that make it to the finish line, and I know she was very delighted when the government decided to take up the bill, as it appears were most members in the House.

It speaks also to the process, which becomes important, because there were amendments that had been suggested to the private member's bill, which have now been incorporated into the version we see in front of us. We talk about this as maybe a simple bill that we could skip all the process with, and I know that two weeks ago we spent \$50 billion without having a committee process. However, what it shows is that, even with the simplest of bills that seem like they should just receive unanimous consent and move through the process, Parliament is there for a reason. It is there to scrutinize. It is there to make things better. The fact that we have some process for these measures, and of course I still profoundly—

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but it is time for questions and comments.

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that the Conservatives voted against a motion to pass the bill and refer it directly to the Senate. That is what we did with Bill C-5, which was more or less the same bill.

The Conservatives argued that they wanted the training to also be provided to parole officers. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

Do the Conservatives have any other objections to the bill being passed quickly?

Since everyone officially supports this bill, does my colleague agree that we should pass it as quickly as possible?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question and I will answer it in a few ways.

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First of all, the justice committee is not up and operating yet, so even if the bill passed, we would not be able to deal with it because there is no committee to send it to. The second thing is that we know that the Senate is not sitting until the end of month. Again, there is nowhere the bill could move quickly through this process.

Also, out of all the times the bill has been put through rapidly as a private member's bill with very limited debate, this was my first opportunity to stand up and actually speak on it. I am very honoured that I have had this opportunity and that we are having this extra debate to really have an opportunity to look at the broader issues within the scope of the bill before us and what we could perhaps do better.

Again, this debate is not slowing the bill.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to explore this issue of getting the bill expeditiously through the House.

I will confess that there is some level of concern on this side of the House with respect to the Conservative Party being the sole party that is standing in the way of getting the bill expeditiously to the standing committee, where amendments could be made. I take the member's point that the standing committee has not yet been constituted, but the first meeting of the standing committee is next week. That would also free up parliamentary time to scrutinize other pieces of legislation, such as the heritage minister's truth and reconciliation bill that deals with the indigenous community, which the member is a strong advocate for.

Given the member's close work with Rona Ambrose, and given Rona Ambrose's strong support of the bill in its current form, is the member amenable to getting this quickly to committee so that further amendments, if required, could be addressed there?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, we took some extraordinary measures during the COVID emergency, whereby we moved things through debate at all stages very quickly, and I would say, reluctantly, because I know that mistakes have been made as we spent billions and billions of dollars.

I would suggest that this debate we are having today would not go on for all that long, and the justice committee is going to have a lot of opportunity to do the scrutiny it needs to do. However, I am glad to have the opportunity to participate in this debate today, and I know that my other colleagues are very glad to add their points of view. That is what we are here for. We are here to debate bills. The government put the bill up for debate today, and I think we need to enjoy the opportunity. If we are not going to debate the bills, and the government just wants to put billions and billions of dollars through, which it has done regularly, what is the point—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to my hon. colleague's speech, and I want to thank her. I found the description of her real life experiences as a practising nurse dealing with sexual assault victims to be incredibly informative and, frankly, very moving. I want to thank her for sharing that with us.

The member pointed out very well and articulated in a very piercing fashion the fact that we have a system-wide problem with dealing with sexual assault in this country, and she pointed out some of the affiliated aspects beyond just the education of judges.

I wonder if the member could share with the House, out of the many areas she identified as needing reform and improvement, what her priorities would be. What would she tell this House—

• (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. A very short answer, please.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, when trying to fix the system, every piece of the system is important, including prevention. One of the areas I did not get to speak to, which we debated in the House last year, was the parole system. A very violent criminal was released and a horrific murder happened. We debated that at length. We have system-wide issues and they are all important.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak today on this very important topic: the introduction of Bill C-3, which is an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Judges Act.

It is important that the Canadian public have confidence in our criminal justice system; therefore, it is critical that our courts and judges are perceived as being fair, objective and respectful of all parties: the accused, the complainant and all witnesses.

Canada's criminal justice system, as we know it today, builds on many centuries of common-law tradition and statutory law development dating back to the early days of England's history. It is a legal structure built around an adversarial system in which the Crown advances rigorous prosecution and the accused an equally rigorous defence.

The accused always has the benefit of the presumption of innocence and the Crown must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. It is a very high standard of proof that the Crown needs to meet. Under the accepted rules of natural justice, the accused has the right to meet their accuser in court and to subject the accuser's evidence to a rigorous cross-examination, which often involves drawing that person's integrity into question and impugning their credibility.

If after that cross-examination the trier of facts, whether a judge or a jury, determines that the victim's evidence does not meet the beyond-a-reasonable-doubt standard, the presumption of innocence survives right through the trial and the accused goes free. The Crown has to meet this very high standard and sometimes, despite the prosecution's best efforts, guilty people walk free and victims' reputations are left in tatters.

That is a risk associated with the criminal law system. As a society we have determined, rightly or wrongly, that this risk is better than the opposite: that innocent people could be convicted of crimes they did not commit. The result too often is that sexual assault victims are revictimized through the process and that, I submit, is not acceptable.

It is in this context that I want to address the topic of the day, the introduction of Bill C-3. This bill, if approved, would require all federally appointed judges working in our criminal justice system to undergo continuing legal education in the form of sexual assault law and social context education. I agree with that, and I think that we all do after listening to the earlier speeches. It is important that the Canadian public have confidence that our courts and judges are fair, objective and respectful of all parties, including survivors of sexual assault.

For our criminal justice system to succeed in doing what it should do, convicting sexual assault criminals and keeping our streets, cities, workplaces and even our homes safe, victims need to be encouraged to step forward, but they will not if the courts are perceived as unfair, disrespectful and damaging to their dignity and reputation. As it stands, the vast majority of sexual assault cases go unreported because women and girls do not have the confidence that they will be treated fairly. That is not acceptable. That is not justice.

The preamble in the introduction of Bill C-3 states:

...sexual assault proceedings have a profound effect on the reputations and lives of the persons affected and present a high possibility of revictimizing survivors of sexual assault...

Sadly, that is true. What can Parliament do? Bill C-3 is a step in the right direction to rebalance the interests of the accused to a fair trial and of the complainant to respect and dignity.

As a Conservative, I am proud to say that this bill originated in our party under the initiative of our former party leader, Ms. Rona Ambrose. I would like to thank the Hon. Rona Ambrose for her work on this important file. Ms. Ambrose said:

...like me, many Canadians would be surprised to learn that a lawyer does not need any experience in the sensitivities of sexual assault cases to become a judge overseeing these types of challenging trials.

● (1210)

As a lawyer, I have to undergo continuing professional development every year in order to maintain my practice licence. I submit that the same rule should apply to judges, maybe even more so. Judges have such a big impact not only on the lives of those who appear before them, but on all of society. They are influencers of our society, so it is appropriate, I would submit, that judges understand the societal contexts within which they work and within which those who appear before them find themselves.

It has been suggested by some academics that by legislating judges to undergo such training and mandating them to give written reasons for their decisions, Parliament would be interfering with the judicial independence that is fundamental to our justice system. It has also been said that such training, which focuses on the needs of victims, would undermine the right of the accused to a fair trial, and that these rules would cause judges to apply a different standard in sexual assault trials than they would in other types of criminal pro-

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ceedings, thus running the risk of more wrongful convictions. I disagree with that.

This bill, mandating ongoing continuing professional development for judges, would not take away judicial discretion from judges, nor would it undermine the accused's rights to the presumption of innocence. It would just assure that judges would have a better understanding of the societal context within which they work. Importantly, it would go a long way to ensuring that those victims brave enough to step forward and subject themselves to the rigour and intimidation of a courtroom setting would be treated fairly, and with respect and dignity.

I have confidence that our judiciary, in consultation with stakeholders' groups, would develop an effective and responsible continuing education program for judges, and that judges would respond favourably to that training. We need to make Canada a safer place, where women can enjoy the freedoms that men have. It is about safety, and it also about equality.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the thoughtfulness of the member's arguments. The member spoke about statistics and those who have actually stepped forward. I appreciated the member bringing this up.

What message does the member think it sends to those perpetrators who go away without being held accountable, or even accused? Does this not then provide a sense of acceptability in society of this type of behaviour?

With that being said, and given the member's professional background, would he not agree that the urgency of this training should be paramount in this country? It would not solve all things, but would the member commit to working with all members to move this forward as quickly as possible so that we could actually see it implemented as quickly as possible?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I agree, as I think all members in the House agree, that this needs to be moved along as quickly and as expeditiously as possible.

There is unfairness in our court system today. Although most judges are fair and thoughtful, education is important for them. It is also important that our society, generally, realizes that people are taking this seriously and that we are holding our judges accountable to be fair in the way that they administer the cases before them, and this is why I think this debate in the House today is so important.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier I asked a question about how the Conservatives opposed a motion to adopt the bill and send it directly to the Senate, claiming that they wanted to amend the bill to say that parole officers and members of the Parole Board of Canada must also take the training.

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Could my colleague explain this further? I would like to know whether the Conservatives have any other objections to our quickly passing this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I would be very pleased to see this bill passed by the House and sent to committee for full debate there as well. The justice committee would give thoughtful consideration to the possible expansion of this bill, such as applying it also to parole officers.

I also want to reflect on the very touching comments of my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, which got me thinking that perhaps the same requirement for sexual assault sensitivity and social context training should also apply to prosecutors and police: to everybody involved in the justice system. I was shocked to hear her story about evidence not being retained properly by the police from early on in investigations. With proper training, things like that would be better handled at the very early stages of investigations.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to listen to members of the Conservative Party speak about the importance of this issue. I do not question that sexual assault is a very important issue. I am sure all members of the House recognize how important it is that we address this in the best fashion we can.

I am curious whether the member would agree that it might be good for the Conservative Party to use an opposition day for this, not only to talk about it but even to expand on the importance of this critical issue, which many Conservatives have already talked about.

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, of course the government side determines the parliamentary agenda, so I am just really happy it presented this bill for full debate. Debate is really important. It is important that our justice system appears to be fair and judicious. It is also important that the Canadian public recognizes Canada's Parliament takes these issues very seriously, and that we are having this open, full and frank debate on this very sensitive topic. I applaud that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity in the House to thank and congratulate folks in Quebec and across Canada who are working on the front lines of this pandemic in hospitals and long-term care homes. I am talking about health care workers, nurses, doctors and orderlies. We are now in the midst of a ferocious and very complex second wave, and these people have not had a break since the first wave this summer. They were not even able to take vacation. That is not easy. I commend them and honour them for the essential work they are doing.

It is a huge honour for me to speak to this bill. I stand here humbly, hoping to make a modest contribution, to play a small part in making sure that our justice system treats everyone the same.

As I stand here, I am thinking of all the women I have known in my lifetime who experienced the trauma of sexual or other types of assault. I am thinking of all the women who even today hesitate to file a report because the process is too long, too gruelling, too overwhelming. I am thinking of the women who worry that they will have to relive their painful moments and trauma over and over again, retell their stories over and over, and find the words, words that can often hurt just as much as the actions. I am thinking of the women who know or believe that, at the end of the day, justice will not be served.

Obviously, I am also thinking of my 17-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son. It is also important to me as a man. I believe this is a rather sensitive debate. There have been some good questions and considerations that have been touched on in recent days with regard to this matter. If my sex, my being a man, is part of the problem, then I hope that, as a parliamentarian, I can be part of the solution.

The statistics on sexual assault are shocking. Only 5% of women who are assaulted report it. That is shocking. According to the Regroupement québécois des centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel, Quebec's association of sexual assault centres, believe it or not, only three of every 1,000 reports of sexual assault result in a conviction. Apparently, the vast majority of victims never report their assault, and the few who do never get justice. The justice system scares them.

Yesterday and today, my colleagues gave several examples of judges whose comments exposed their poor understanding of issues related to sexual assault and who have therefore done justice a disservice. Bill C-3 will fix that. I do not think it is a panacea or the definitive solution, but it is a big step in the right direction. The Bloc Québécois supports this bill, which everyone seems to agree on, so let's adopt it quickly and not let it drag on. It is a step in the right direction, but we need to do more.

I would like to invite this assembly to consider the social and cultural changes that are needed when it comes to sexual consent. We see that these changes are happening slowly in society. We have seen it in recent years, but I think we need to go even further.

Let us talk about rape culture. To make sure that we understand what that means, the United Nations defines rape culture as the social environment that allows sexual violence to be normalized and justified, fuelled by the persistent gender inequalities and attitudes about gender and sexuality. Naming it is the first step to dismantling rape culture.

Rape culture exists in Quebec and Canada. Of course, we can agree that no one would publicly and voluntarily endorse sexual assault. However, by perpetuating myths surrounding sexual assault, some individuals often contribute, quite unconsciously, to trivializing sexual assault and invalidating victims' experiences. Rape culture and, more broadly, the trivialization of sexual assault are deeply rooted in our society.

• (1220)

How many men have learned from watching movies that kissing someone out of the blue is romantic? However, in many cases, that can constitute sexual assault. It is imprinted in our brains. These are behaviours that are difficult to change. Take, for example, the number of movies in which a suitor relentlessly pursues the woman of his dreams until she finally gives in and agrees to go out with him, even though she initially refused. It is presented as romantic and sweet.

An example of this is a film I am sure everyone is familiar with that grossed \$100 million at the box office. *The Notebook* is a 2004 film starring Ryan Gosling. In it, his character forces his future wife to agree to a date with him after harassing her at a carnival and threatening to commit suicide if she does not give in to his blackmail. That is really something. It seems so cute and sweet: the girl sees the guy hanging off a merry-go-round, and he threatens to throw himself under it. He tells her that if she does not agree to go out with him, he will kill himself. The girl wants nothing to do with the guy, and in fact, she was there with her boyfriend, but she eventually gives in. Everyone loved the film, and it took in millions of dollars at the box office. Men and women saw that as romantic.

Rape culture is perpetuated by collective myths. It is also perpetuated by individual actions that reinforce prejudices and stereotypes. Certain comments and questions can unintentionally make victims feel worthless. Sometimes these comments can even come from the victim's own family or loved ones.

Think about what happens to victims of sexual assault when they report the crime to the police or someone else. They get asked why they did not leave, why they did not fight off their attacker, why they drank that night, and how they were dressed. Sometimes the victim's account is questioned because she had multiple partners, because that shows promiscuity, which is viewed negatively. All these questions and comments do harm.

We must not only understand rape culture, but also destroy it. Many collective and individual changes are needed. We must also denounce macho culture, where a man who gets rejected is humiliated and judged because he did not get what he was hoping for. We have to develop positive and healthy masculinity. It has to be okay for a man to be told no. It does not make him any less of a man or take anything away from his masculinity. No must always mean no. Being told no is not a signal to ask 50 more times in the hope of being told yes. Accepting no for an answer is not less manly.

Naturally, we must do more than just say no means no. Change is happening. In Quebec, for example, there is an interesting campaign called “Sans oui, c'est non!” or “If It's Not a Yes, It's a No!”. This campaign has helped raise awareness significantly on university campuses. I commend their contribution and their efforts.

More and more people understand that having sexual contact with a person who did not say no because they were unable to also counts as sexual assault. I am thinking in particular of TV host Julie Snyder. Last week, on her show, she responded to Gilbert Rozon, who had claimed that he had never slept with anyone who said no. Julie Snyder said that a person cannot say no if they are sleeping, and they cannot say no if they are not asked. That, too, contributes to rape culture.

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More and more people understand that a timid, embarrassed or fearful no may not be a true yes and that it is vital to get true and enthusiastic consent. When in doubt, stop and check. It is very important that people understand this. We must destroy rape culture. This also means questioning our role as men and as individuals.

I do not have much time left, but I think my colleagues know where I was going with that.

This is a very important and worthwhile bill. It is a step in the right direction. The justice system can play a part, but as a society, and as men, we can all go a little further and start thinking about these issues. As someone rightly mentioned earlier, we are currently talking about training for judges already on the bench, but we also need to ensure that future judges will have taken the training beforehand.

• (1225)

If we knew that judicial candidates already had that training and that open-mindedness, we would be able to help move society forward.

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I understood the translation correctly, my colleague commented that as a man, he recognized that gender may be part of the problem and he hoped to be part of the solution. I hope I am quoting him correctly. As a woman listening to his speech, I very much appreciate it. Having this conversation on the issues around rape culture are very impactful and I appreciate him speaking on this.

I asked this earlier and I would ask the member for his comments. When less than 2% of sexual assault crimes result in a conviction, what message does that send to women, to victims in general and to perpetrators who get away without accountability?

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I think that is what this bill seeks to address. Clearly, the justice system is not welcoming to victims right now. Women do not feel safe, as I mentioned. It is like a mountain. Sexual assault victims must repeat their stories to a police officer, a lawyer, a judge. They have to recount a very painful experience. As a result, women end up getting discouraged.

We have the statistics, but I think that the real figures are likely even worse. Bill C-3 is a step in the right direction; we are taking a small step forward so that women will want to report an assault, but we are not there yet. We will have to continue working.

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Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He raised a number of very important points, such as the need to move forward and do more, changing attitudes, cultural shifts, and social change. I completely agree with him.

Now here we are with a bill that has unanimous support, but the Conservative Party rejected a motion to fast-track its passage and send it to the Senate right away. I do not know why things are being delayed like this. Maybe the Conservative Party does not want to discuss certain bills, like the one banning conversion therapy, which is insulting and degrading to the entire LGBTQ+ community.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague.

I have been here since yesterday, and I have been an MP for a year. I see the Liberals and the Conservatives pointing fingers at each other and saying it is the other party's fault that the bill has not been passed. Both parties are to blame. This could all have been wrapped up a long time ago. The bill could already have been adopted, and we could have moved on to discussing the issues I talked about in my remarks. Partisanship has no place in certain debates and bills, and this is one of them. I find it most regrettable.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my hon. colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, whose speech was passionate and extremely relevant as usual. He tends to think outside the box, as they say. I am deeply grateful to him for his speech.

I would like to know to what extent he thinks this bill will combat rape culture.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, it is a small part. The bill sends a message that judges will have to take training going forward, and this will encourage them to be more open-minded when it comes to these issues, thereby avoiding the kind of terrible comments and remarks we heard from Judge Braun, for example. Progress is slow. As my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles said, this is a small step. We need to do a lot more.

It is interesting, and I am glad that we are talking about this here and that these matters are being raised, but we are addressing only a tiny part of the issue, where solutions are possible. Yes, there are some solutions, and this does solve certain problems, but this is a much broader issue.

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill C-3. The original legislation was first introduced in February 2017 as Bill C-337 by the Hon. Rona Ambrose, the former leader of our party as well as the official opposition. I want to thank Ms. Ambrose for the passionate advocacy that she has taken on this important legislation.

I am also pleased to see that the legislation adopted by the Liberal government earlier this year was reintroduced again now as Bill C-3. In 2017, it received unanimous support from the House of Commons and passed quickly to committee. I guess it should come as no surprise then that it would take over two years for it to move through the legislative process despite having all-party support and

it would die on the floor of the Senate in June 2019. Despite finishing the legislative process at about the same time as 15-plus other bills that June, it was held back by the Liberal majority government from receiving Royal Assent. Why, people may ask? Some may suggest it is to play the same Liberal games that many Canadians despise and disapprove of, and that is so it can be renamed and called their own.

This is important legislation as it is a step forward toward actually improving our criminal justice system, something that the Liberal government has done little or nothing on for the last five years. This legislation is about ensuring trust is maintained in the justice system and that survivors of sexual assault are respected by the justice system when they do come forward. The bill requires that to be appointed a judge of a Superior Court, an individual must now commit to participate in continuing education on matters related to sexual assault law and social context, including attending seminars.

This would ensure that Superior Court judges are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to address sexual assault trials and ensure that survivors are treated with dignity and respect. It also provides training to not feed into the myths and stereotypes that often cause women to hesitate to come forward. Personally, I would have preferred that, in addition to the new appointments to the bench, all current judges sitting at every level of court that adjudicates sexual offences in this country be required to participate in continuing education on these matters as well, in the same way that this legislation proposes for new Superior Court appointments.

The bill would also require judges to provide reasons for decisions on sexual assault cases. This is good, as it will give more information to victims and improve transparency for the justice system and the public who watch it.

As a former police officer who has given testimony in a wide variety of criminal cases, including numerous sexual assault cases, I have the utmost respect for the significant challenge and burden placed on our judges. Every day they are tasked with appropriately applying the law to determine guilt or innocence as they adjudicate criminal cases. While Canadians enjoy the best justice system in the world, it is not without its flaws. Judges, after all, are human like all of us and are given the incredible responsibility of applying laws written by other humans, namely parliamentarians in the House. We know that sometimes those laws can also be flawed.

We put a great deal of authority and trust in our judges and so ensuring that people who take up this challenging post are properly equipped, we must ensure that they have the necessary training and knowledge to fulfill those responsibilities to the best of their ability and to the expectations of the Canadian public. This training would eliminate misconceptions, myths and stereotypes that often prevent victims of sexual assault, almost always women, from coming forward and pressing charges against their attackers. This is not a minor issue. The number of sexual assaults that occur in Canada and are never reported is staggering.

• (1235)

Statistics Canada reported that only 5% of women who are sexually assaulted come to the attention of police. I suspect that one of the many reasons is because of the women's lack of confidence in our justice system. Far too few of these crimes are reported, and of the 5% that are reported, only 21% have led to a court case. There are many factors in this, including what evidence might be available, how it might be prosecuted, witnesses who are available, any corroborating evidence, attitude of the justice participants, how judges approach the issue, and maybe many others.

Of the 21% that actually get to court, of the 5% who actually reported being assaulted, only 12% of those cases result in conviction. That is 12% of 21% of 5%. In other words, there is a better than 98% chance of not being convicted of sexually assaulting another person in this country. That is unacceptable. Finally, of all those convicted of sexual assault only 7% result in a prison term. These are terrible crimes and they have lasting, lifelong impacts. Getting a conviction on a sexual assault, let alone having someone sentenced, is far too rare. Most victims of crimes of violent sexual assault will usually prefer not to relive the experience over and over again in our courts, living through the trauma multiple times.

Like I said previously, I have investigated many sexual assault crimes. The heartbreaking experiences of victims are further exacerbated by our justice system. The victims feel they are not being believed. The intrusive nature of the evidence-collection process; retelling their experiences, over and over again; sometimes limited victim supports; and lack of convictions reduce the victims' willingness to come forward. If the assailants are convicted, many victims do not feel that the sentence that is given out fits what happened to them.

This bill is the kind of thing that governments should be doing: working to improve our justice system, working to support victims with better services and working so that criminals who assault others are held accountable and put in jail. Support for victims has been sorely lacking in the last few years. There has been lots of support for criminals, including reduced sentences for some serious and violent crimes, but limited support for victims.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police noted in its brief to Parliament on Bill C-75 that for some criminals, if given reduced sentences, it would mean eliminating certain information being entered into the Canadian Police Information Centre system, including DNA. When the conviction is considered a secondary offence, it eliminates critical information that then limits the ability for police to track and catch that criminal if they commit other crimes. As

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the CACP put it, this would “have a direct and negative impact on police investigations.” I would add, “and on public safety”.

Canadians should not live in fear. Young women should not live in fear. Victims and their families should not be living in fear. They should have trust and confidence in our justice system. Victims and their rights should always be put ahead of the rights of criminals. Canada's Conservatives recognize that far too often the justice system fails to respect the experiences of victims of sexual assault.

It is time that we end comments and attitudes like that of our Prime Minister, where he said that she “experienced it differently”. Those kinds of excuses allow sexual assaults and sexual harassment to be normalized. Calling it out is a duty of all of us. Acting to stop that kind of behaviour is a responsibility of this House.

My hope is that this bill will be the first step in improving the treatment of victims, increasing the conviction of sexual offenders, improving public safety, and developing the trust and confidence of Canadians in our justice system.

• (1240)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner for his contributions to today's debate and in Parliament, but also for his service in the past as a police officer.

By way of comment, I would just indicate that in terms of crafting this bill we are always looking to protect the critical, constitutionally important principle of judicial independence. Apropos of the member's comment about judges at every level or jurisdiction in every court in the land, we do not at the federal level have the ability to intervene directly with respect to provincially appointed judges. What we can do is set an example at the federal level of what we are trying to do and the importance of judicial education on sexual assault law and in social context.

Given the importance of this kind of bill and this kind of training, we commit to get this expeditiously to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights; and to also work with his colleagues in the Alberta government, including Premier Kenney, to ensure similar types of training are also delivered provincially as is now being done in Prince Edward Island.

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• (1245)

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, yes, absolutely it is necessary to work collaboratively. I think the steps of the House to ensure that, at least federally, this is done and working toward all provinces having this as a requirement of anyone sitting on the bench would go a long way toward serving the justice system and victims.

As for expeditiously moving this through the House, I would push back and say this had the opportunity to be passed in the last Parliament. It was introduced in February 2017. For two years, it went through the process. It was at the Senate. It did not receive royal assent. Why? It was because the Liberal government did not push it forward to receive royal assent, and I wonder why.

Now, we have a bill that we, of course, support and want to debate to make sure that we get it right. We have waited, now, nearly three years since this was introduced. It is important that the bill move forward, but move forward in a way that serves the best needs of Canadians, not the current Liberal government.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on an excellent speech. I appreciate his input, his background and perspective on it, and his support for this very important bill.

One of the figures mentioned was about only a small percentage of cases involving sexual assault being brought forward. Could my colleague, in his experience as a police officer, could elaborate a bit on why he thinks that is the case and how, perhaps, this bill could help in that regard?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I believe a number of factors inhibit the successful prosecution of sexual assault cases. They are vast. It could be that the police officer may not have the experience necessary, or the appropriate attitude, to investigate this. It may be that the prosecutor is overwhelmed and undertrained, and so may not give it the attention it requires. It may be that witnesses are reluctant or that the victim is reluctant.

However, in those cases that actually get to court, it is incredible to see that the system is tilted. I appreciate the balance of probabilities and the whole issue of “beyond a reasonable doubt” or any doubt for conviction, but I have had great evidence that has been put together from incredible witness testimony, DNA evidence and everything there, and the judges sometimes, for various reasons, will not convict.

So, I think that the more training they have, the better it is for everybody.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have been asking questions all day about why the Conservatives did not agree with the proposal to send the bill to the Senate as quickly as possible.

I would like my hon. colleague to explain to me why the debates we are having here today are so important. Will they help get this bill passed any faster?

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I think that is a question we should ask the government, why it dragged its feet for nearly three years on this bill. Why did it not get the push that it should have? I did not get a chance to speak to it last time. I get a chance to speak to it today. I think it is important that it be debated further in committee. There might be amendments that can be made that would make this even stronger than it is today.

• (1250)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-3. While important and something I was happy to support in the 42nd Parliament, I am afraid it is just a drop in the bucket in what we as a society must do to fight sexual violence against women.

Bill C-3 will, I hope, like its predecessors Bill C-5 and Bill C-337, find unanimous support as this legislation is a rare product of bipartisan support.

I thank the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada for sponsoring this reintroduction of the bill that found its genesis in a private member's bill created by the Hon. Rona Ambrose, former member of Parliament for Sturgeon River—Parkland and also former leader of Canada's Conservatives and the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

This legislation is about ensuring that trust is maintained in the judicial system, that survivors of sexual assault are respected by the judicial system when they step forward. The bill, when passed, will require federal judges and those seeking the office to participate in continuing legal education with regard to sexual assault law. It also strives to combat the myths and stereotypes that often cause victims of sexual assault to hesitate to come forward.

Federal judges will also be required to provide written reasoning for their decisions in sexual assault cases in order to promote transparency in the reasons that lead to their decisions. The bill would require the Canadian Judicial Council to submit an annual report to Parliament on the delivery and participation in sexual assault information seminars established by it.

In my mind, to be truly effective, provincial court judges should be required to take this training. I encourage those provinces to take a serious look at the work that has been done by parliamentary committees and listen to the words spoken in the House with respect to this issue and to strongly consider passing complementary legislation in their respective jurisdictions.

It is a shame, though, we find ourselves in this place at this time where we must pass legislation to train arguably the highest educated group of individuals in the country on sexual assault awareness. Where we should be focusing our energy is educating the next generation of men and women to be advocates, especially men, for ending sexual violence and not perpetuating the myths and stereotypes that enable others to think it is acceptable.

Yesterday, the member for Calgary Nose Hill made one of the most impassioned and important speeches I have heard in this Parliament. Our colleague stood here and challenged men to stand up and be a voice for women and men who are victims of sexual violence. Far too often it is women who are forced to stand on their own and shout enough is enough.

Statistically, women constitute the overwhelming numbers of victims of sexual assaults. Adding to the personal trauma, they must often rely solely on their own strength to report these heinous crimes. As men, we have historically dismissed women's voices on these issues or left it to them to demand action. It is time for men to recognize their role in preventing sexual violence in all its forms. Let me be clear: It is not enough for a man to say, "Well, I would never do that so I've done my part."

We need to do more. We all need to do more. We need to stand with those incredibly brave survivors who are taking a stand to end sexual violence, and not just for women. Men are victims of sexual assault as well and it needs to end for all victims. Men need to challenge the myths and stereotypes about how survivors of sexual assault are expected to behave.

As a father of a young boy, I have a responsibility to guide him in his journey to become a man. There are many things I must teach him, and for him to learn from me and I from him. However, in order for him to take his place as a productive member of society, I need to be that role model. I need to be putting forward the messages and encouraging him to be better.

One of the most fundamental things I need to impress upon him is to respect others. He needs to understand that men should not feel entitled to sexually harass people or perpetuate sexual violence, that every person has power over his or her own body and how to give and receive consent. He needs to understand that men and boys must never obtain power through violence and that the notion that sex is a right of his gender is false. Sexual violence ends when all of us understand the fundamental truth that no one is permitted to sexually harass or invade another individual's body or personal boundaries.

• (1255)

Girls and women are given advice about rape prevention, and we heard this from many members in this place in the ongoing debate today and the debate yesterday, such as not letting their drink out of sight, not wearing revealing outfits or high heels and not walking alone at night.

As a society, we must go beyond what girls can do to prevent being victims. We need to focus on the attitudes that boys have about women and their own masculinity. The next generation of men needs to promote mutual respect for women and embrace equality for all people, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

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Working toward ending sexual violence is a constant collective effort and, as men, we all need to do our part.

While Bill C-5 is just a ripple, it is my sincere hope that it will eliminate victim blaming, an attitude that suggests a victim rather than a perpetrator bears responsibility for an assault, that victims' sobriety, or the clothes they were wearing or their sexuality become irrelevant in the courtroom. To end sexual violence, perpetrators must be held accountable. By trying sexual violence cases, we recognize these acts as crimes and send a strong message of zero tolerance.

Canada's Conservatives were proud to support Bill C-337 and Bill C-5 in previous Parliaments. We recognize that far too often the justice system fails to respect the experiences of victims of sexual assault.

The Canadian bench must be held accountable and ensure that judges have the updated training that Canadians expect them to have. That is why we committed in the last election to ensure that all judicial appointees take sexual assault sensitivity training prior to taking the bench. We will always look for ways to stand up for survivors of sexual assault and ensure they are treated with dignity.

I would like to thank Rona Ambrose for being such a passionate advocate for victims of sexual assault and for her work on this very important file. This bill addresses the simple fact that victims going to trial should expect that judges are educated in the law, yet what it does not address is the absolute necessity that all of us, every single person has the same responsibility to be educated in what it means to be human and protect and respect the dignity of our fellow citizens.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to Bill C-5. I suspect he meant Bill C-3, the bill we are debating today. Bill C-5 is a very interesting bill about reconciliation. I look forward to that debate and the position the Conservatives will have on it.

Listening to what members of the Conservative Party have to say, I would assume that the bill will pass unanimously in the House. That is what I am expecting. However, there is this desire to have not only the content of this bill debated, but the broader issue of sexual assault debated in the House.

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The opposition has a good opportunity when we come back, with two opposition days coming. Would the member not support having a debate on the broader issue, maybe even with a Conservative motion that would then allow for an expansion on some of their thoughts? Would the member not think that would be a good thing?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for the clarification on the bills. I think I did say the wrong bill number, and I appreciate the clarification on that.

We are having this debate because this is a pretty large topic and it could go on for quite some time. There is a lot to dive into on this issue. The fact is that the Liberals are trying to somehow place blame on the opposition for trying to have this discussion, for debating the issues and seeing where we can find common ground. I think we have found a lot of common ground, but there are also ways we could improve.

The member for Calgary Nose Hill said it quite well yesterday, that this is but one step, but the other step is to stop appointing the wrong people to the bench. That would be a nice step as well.

There is a lot to get into. What we need to do in this place is debate these pieces of legislation, and we are here for that.

• (1300)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, when we talk about this issue, we all bring our own experiences. The member talked about his experience as a father, which is similar to my own as a father. We hear about these stories and events and it is always sobering as we think about how to teach our children and raise them to reflect the values we want embodied in society.

In some ways, talking about training judges seems quite late. If someone is at the stage of already having had a legal career and getting appointed to the bench, that is the point when this education is happening. It reminds us of the value of teaching some of the principles of respect for others, self-control, recognizing the dignity of all people and teaching and passing those principles on much earlier. I wonder if the member can speak more to how we might work to do that.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, my friend raises a very good point and something on which I can take a lot more time. I do not have as many children as he does. I am a father of only one and he is a father of four. I take that responsibility, all parents should take that responsibility, especially fathers, for teaching their sons, in this case, the role of respect, how to act like human beings and treat everyone equally.

I agree with my colleague's point that judges are some of the most educated people in our society and that this training is coming too late, because they should already be aware of it. They should be self-aware and have common sense about what is right and what is wrong. This is just one step in, hopefully, many that will come to address this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I obviously thank my colleague for his speech.

The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-3. Some people think we should cut the debate short and act faster. I personally think we have talked about this enough today. We will, however, continue with the debate.

Does my colleague think any other professions should be subject to this kind of legislation, to make our world a fairer place to live?

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, we can explore and look at this. There are jurisdictional issues, as I know my friend from the Bloc knows. We should be talking about this. It also comes with parents educating their children, so when they grow up, this is not an issue. We as a society can do better. It starts with each and every one of us and I will admit that it starts with me too.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-3.

This was originally introduced as Bill C-337 in 2017 by Rona Ambrose, who was the leader of the Conservative Party at that time, and who has doggedly pursued it even though she is no longer in the House of Commons. We have to give her all the credit in the world for that, because this is a very important bill.

The bill comes to us for the third time, and that is a shame. The reason it is here again is because this government, which initially put it through the paces of the justice committee in the last Parliament, decided to end that Parliament without really good reason. I am not sure, when we end a Parliament, how we decide to keep the good things and throw out the bad things, but we throw out everything. There was a process here that we were going through, and this government decided to end that process on so many good things that had to happen with this country, and this is one of those bills. Now we are starting over, and that is a shame considering how important the legislation is.

As I said, I was on the justice committee in the last session. I am not on the justice committee anymore; however, we heard many good reasons for the bill before us from many interested parties that appeared before the committee. I will go through some of the wonderful organizations that presented us with compelling evidence on why we need to proceed with the legislation. We heard from the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, the DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the Colchester Sexual Assault Centre, the Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre and the Canadian Judicial Council.

These groups were almost unanimous. I am not somebody who buys into groupthink. I do not think that any of us are: we have to do our own analysis on what comes before us, but there was only one dissenting voice in that group of presenters about how important the legislation was for advancing the needs of women who had been through sexual assault hearings in front of our judiciary. That one dissenting voice was the Canadian Judicial Council, representing lawyers there, saying that it did not think that the government should put its hands in their business, because they had their own process and were smart enough to take care of their own laundry. However, I can tell members that, no, that is not true.

This is our only venue to actually have some influence on how we appoint judges, on what is important in their job and on how to get their job done. We know that, upon becoming judges, they no longer have the influence of Parliament. Having an independent judicial system is a separate part of our democracy, and we want and need to maintain that. Having a separate judiciary means that we have to have a good judiciary. To appoint judges through a certain process, when we have heard the evidence from all the statistics on what happens in sexual assault cases that come before the judiciary, is not something that can keep going on. Imposing an actual education system for the people we are appointing to the bench is our main instrument to try to influence them in how they view victims when they come before them to give testimony. That is what our role here is. With the legislation before us, we need to make sure that the people we are appointing are well educated on what they have to do, that they understand the needs of the victims and that they consider their rights as well.

I appreciate the legal system as much as anybody else. I am not trained in legalities, but in my previous employment I had many dealings with the legal system. Seeing the legal system work, almost like Parliament here, is like watching sausages getting made: It is never pretty. Sometimes, when one goes through the legal system, one recognizes that what is happening is not perfect. It might be one of the best systems in the world, as far as judicial hearings go, but at the same time there are faulty outcomes, and when we look at some decisions judges have made, we sit back and scratch our heads, wondering how on earth that person made that decision given everything they had heard in a hearing.

● (1305)

That is troubling to a rational person. Nevertheless, it is reality. We are all human. In the House of Commons we are all human and not supposed to be perfect. Judges are the same. We appoint judges. We do not expect them to be perfect, but expect them to do the best job they can with the information that is presented to them. Hopefully, we have the best outcome for society at the end of the day. The statistics we have heard clearly show that we are not getting the best outcome for society with what is going on now, so change is important. That is why we are here. We are here to make sure that the changes we impose on the appointment of judges happen very well.

The justice committee was one thing, but let me tell colleagues about the hearings themselves. We heard about women who were not represented. In those cases they went before the judges and felt belittled in the process.

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This bill would bring about an important change for society: to make sure that victims of crimes have the ability to be heard effectively. Justice needs to be understood by the public for it to be an enforceable system. If we do not have a system that is open to everyone who feels that they are a victim of a crime, if people feel marginalized and like they should not come forward to present a crime to society, then we have failed as a society. Again, that is our job here: to make sure that we build on that going forward and get this better in the next iteration.

Shutting down Parliament obviously had the effect of stopping the process that we are now starting again. How long is it going to take before we actually get some legislation that matters to Canadians?

We all know there will be small advances. There has been so much going on here, yet much has been thrown out, like the baby with the bath water, as we have gone through this. It is the result of the government having no regard for what we are doing here as far as process goes.

Process means examining legislation and making sure that we get it right, as much as possible. Getting it right means putting the right bills in front of us and getting those bills heard through a process that has been developed over years and years. Then we get to analyze what is right or wrong with it, hear the expert opinions and come to a conclusion about the best path forward. That is not here right now. By shutting Parliament down in the middle of the pandemic, the government effectively said it does not respect this process and that it wants its own process without dealing with others. Therefore, we have to make sure that it is held to account.

I am dismayed that this is before us again. I wish this was not here. I wish it had already received its third reading from the House and been over to the other house and debated there, so that we could move it to royal assent once and for all. It has been held up too many times and prorogued and left to die on the Order Paper with Parliament being closed.

Can we finally get some work done and get Parliament working again?

● (1310)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to invite the member to perhaps correct the record in reference to some statements that were made in the last 20 minutes by his colleague, the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner. I want to read this quote:

They have an opportunity to show they put victims of sexual assault and women's issues before political games...

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That is a quotation from Rona Ambrose, a woman whose name has been invoked repeatedly on both sides of the aisle in the context of this debate. That is a comment she made in reference to Conservative senators in the last Parliament who blocked Bill C-337 from securing passage and royal assent. That is a statement she delivered to the *National Post* in June 2019.

The member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner clearly attempted to portray the prevention of receiving royal assent on that important piece of legislation as the fault of the Liberal government. I invite the member for Calgary Centre to correct the record and clearly indicate what Ms. Ambrose had said, which is that in fact the obstacles were put in place by members of his own caucus.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I have been a member of the House since October of 2019. It is an honour to serve the residents of Calgary Centre and I am pleased that they chose me to represent their interests.

The advancement of this issue is very important. I am elected to the House. I am not elected to the Senate. My colleagues on this side of the House have been unanimous in support of this bill and we continue to be unanimous in moving this bill forward.

I am not aware of the actual quotation that the member on the other side of the House put forward.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to respond to what the parliamentary secretary said. I was here in the last Parliament, and what we saw from the government was an effort on its part to push through large government bills that were widely opposed across the country, such as Bill C-48 and Bill C-69. I know the member who just spoke knows this well, as the shadow minister working on natural resource issues.

The point is that the government was trying to rush those bad government bills through the Senate, and there was a backlog of private member's business. That affected many good private member's bills. It affected an organ harvesting bill I had done a great deal of work on.

The fact is that Senate rules involve prioritizing government legislation, and if the government had done a better job of listening to people and their concerns raised about Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, maybe the process would have been smoother on those bills and there would have been more time in the Senate to get to other things. The government is kicking Liberal senators out of their caucus so they have no capacity to engage the agenda in the Senate. That was a decision they made, and they are blaming other people for their inability to manage their own legislative agenda.

• (1315)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, that is exactly the reason many of us ran for Parliament. We saw the way the government was rushing certain legislation through the House and the Senate, with no regard for process or for what Canadians actually needed in that process. That happened, and there was a selective process applied about which of those bills were good for them at that point in time, and how much time was being spent on them. Some good bills got left in the trash. Unfortunately, the predecessor to this bill was one they chose to leave behind.

Why one chooses to advance bills that divide Canadians and do not move us forward socially, and to leave the ones unifying us as we come to debate them, is a question that is up in the air for many people across Canada. I would challenge the government to take a look at what its priorities are as far as social issues, such as this one, and also the economic issues Canada is facing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a quick question. For the past two days, the two parties have been passing the buck and blaming each other. I mentioned that earlier.

Does my hon. colleague agree that if we had abolished the Senate, this bill would already be passed? As an elected member I vote on a fundamental issue for my society. I talk and debate about it. I had the courage to put my mug on an election sign, I got elected and now I have the right to speak to this fundamental issue.

There are people who were not elected and who are paid very well—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Calgary Centre has time for a quick response.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. I do not disagree with him.

I think our job here is to debate topics that affect Canadians. What happens at the other place is not our business and that is part of the process.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill C-3.

To begin with, I want to thank the government for reintroducing this important piece of legislation in this new session of the 43rd Parliament. Members will recall that the original architect of this bill, when it was presented as a private member's bill, Bill C-337, was the former Conservative interim leader Rona Ambrose. I want to thank her for her tireless efforts to support and protect survivors of sexual assault.

In short, this bill proposes to require judges to participate in continuing legal education with respect to sexual assault law. It requires the Canadian Judicial Council to submit an annual report to Parliament on the delivery of and participation in sexual assault information seminars established by it. It requires judges to provide reasons for decisions in sexual assault cases.

That is what the bill does, but what is the bill about? It is about ensuring that trust is maintained in the judicial system. Trust is a very important thing. It takes a long time, often a lifetime, to establish trust, but it only takes a moment to destroy it. It is about ensuring survivors of sexual assault are treated with dignity, respect and compassion by the judicial system when they have the courage to come forward.

Sharing about what led her to introduce the previous version of the bill, also called the just act, Ms. Ambrose spoke about her time volunteering at a rape crisis centre while in university. She also shared about a research project that she participated in, a court watch program, and said, “This project basically had student volunteers like me sitting in courtrooms during sexual assault and sexual abuse cases, taking notes about how victims and complainants were treated. It was shocking.”

She went on to share during her speech one of the troubling scenarios she witnessed. She said, “I remember sitting in a courtroom taking notes when a prosecutor was questioning a little girl—when I say little girl, I mean under the age of 12—about how she sat on a defendant’s lap. The insinuation was that she was flirting with this man who was in his fifties.”

I am the father of two daughters and the grandfather of six granddaughters. I cannot imagine how I would feel or how I would react if I were to watch one of my daughters or grandchildren, had they been a victim, being treated like that in a court of law. This is not an impressive experience that any Canadian should have in our judicial system.

Tragically, it is young women aged 15 to 24 who have the highest rate of sexual assaults. It is also more likely for victims of self-reported incidents of sexual assaults than it is for victims of robberies and physical assaults for the offender to be known to them. These realities perhaps contribute to another troubling fact, which is that, according to the justice department, the majority of sexual assaults, 83% of them, go unreported to the police.

By requiring judges to stay current with respect to sexual assault laws, Bill C-3 will make sure that sexual assault survivors are treated with dignity, respect and compassion by our justice system.

In addition to the education component, Bill C-3 will also require judges to provide written reasoning for decisions in sexual assault proceedings. This provision offers those engaged with the justice system, and all Canadians, more transparency. More transparency will build trust, and with more trust will come a greater willingness to seek justice when one has been wronged. Only by restoring that trust and confidence in our justice system can we ensure these young women will have access to the justice they deserve.

In our 2019 platform, the Conservative Party committed to requiring all judicial appointees to take sexual assault sensitivity training prior to taking the bench. This bill requires them to commit to taking training prior to taking the bench and is therefore consistent with our party’s commitment to defend victims of crime.

I was pleased to support Rona Ambrose’s just act in the last Parliament, because there are still instances where the justice system fails to respect the experiences of sexual assault survivors. We owe it to them to address these failings, and Bill C-3 does that.

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I want to take a step back from this specific bill for a moment, because in an ideal world we would not need the just act and we would not need Bill C-3. What we need is to be appointing judges who are people of integrity in the first place, judges who recognize the dignity and value of each person before them, and judges who are sensitive to the tragic circumstances that often lead to individuals attending their courtroom.

● (1320)

I am reminded of the story of two wolves, a popular legend often attributed to the Cherokee people. As the story goes, an old Cherokee man was teaching his grandson about life, and he said, “Grandson, a fight is going on inside of me, and it is a terrible fight between two wolves. One is evil. He is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority and ego.”

The grandfather continued, “The other wolf is good. He is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The same fight is going on in you, grandson, and in every other person as well.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute. He then asked his grandfather, “Grandfather, which wolf will win?”

The grandfather used that opportunity very wisely. He said, “The one we feed.”

The point is that each one of us is feeding those metaphorical wolves every day. We choose which one grows in strength, character and stature. We choose which one wins. Many of us will be familiar with the disturbing comments of one Canadian judge, who asked the sexual assault complainant why she could not just keep her knees together.

This goes to show that our judges are not immune to this kind of struggle, and that is why appointing judges of integrity is critical. Appointing judges of good character and proven track record is essential. Appointing judges who have proven themselves to be good, decent and honourable people is the best starting point that we can have, and from there we keep investing in good people with further training and, in this instance, further training on sexual assault law.

Some might ask why we should train. We have heard the arguments that we train them only for them to leave, and that it is a waste of time and a waste of money. The answer to that is, “What if we do not train them, and they stay?” That, of course, is a worse situation. Training is important, and part of what this bill seeks to accomplish is ongoing training and improvement of our justices.

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My Christian faith offers a similar sentiment. Jesus, sharing with a group of people, says that no good tree bears bad fruit and no bad tree bears good fruit, for each tree is known by its fruit. Figs are not gathered from bushes, nor are grapes gathered from a bramble bush. The good person that treasures good in his heart produces good, and an evil person that treasures evil produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart, their mouth speaks. We need to start with good people, and from there continue to invest in good people and good judges through training them to disseminate the justice and to do it with compassion.

At this moment, at the very least, this bill will help judges to feed the right wolf. Furthering education around sexual assault law can help develop a judge's humility, empathy and compassion when dealing with sexual assault survivors. Pulling back the curtain on the rationale behind a judge's decision also encourages a fulsome presentation of truth and can empower victims on their journey to find peace. This is what it looks like, at least in part, to feed the good wolf.

On this side of the House we will always look for ways to stand up for survivors of sexual assault. We will always strive to ensure victims of crime are treated with dignity, respect and compassion. I am thankful today for this opportunity for us to come together to discuss this very important bill, and I am thankful that, across all the party lines in the House, we can come together with the common sense of purpose and unity on this bill.

• (1325)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to the member opposite, I wanted to continue to quote the National Post article that I quoted from in my last intervention. It is an article that cites Rona Ambrose, whom the member himself cited in his intervention.

What she indicated at that time, expressing her frustration with members of the Conservative Party who were in the Senate, was that it “could help” for Conservative leader Andrew Scheer to talk to them about her bill, referencing the previous leader of the Conservative Party and the fact—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary cannot refer to a member by his or her name.

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, at that time she was referring to the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle in his previous capacity as leader of the official opposition.

I ask the member opposite, given his and his party's repeated invocation of Rona Ambrose, the leader under whom he served, her belief in her own bill, our and every party's, including his own's, belief in this bill, did that conversation ever happen between the former leader of the opposition and Conservative members of the Senate? Further to this legislation now, will the Conservative—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice has indeed posed an interesting question. To presume that I would have intimate knowledge of every conversa-

tion that may or may not have happened in this place is giving me an awful lot of credit, which I just do not deserve.

Further to that, we would not be discussing this today had Parliament not been prorogued by the Prime Minister. This bill could be long on its way. It has gone through the House already. Unfortunately, what we are doing here today should not be necessary. However, it is necessary, because we want this bill to go forward. I support it, and I hope the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice can see his way through to supporting it as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I believe that everyone agrees that this is an important bill, a step in the right direction, and that it addresses a crucial issue, but I am frustrated by the Conservatives' inconsistency. I would like to understand one thing.

This week, why did the Conservative Party reject the proposal made by one of my colleagues to immediately send this bill to the Senate? Why are we spending the day still talking about this when we could have sent it to the Senate, had the Conservatives agreed?

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, that is actually a great question. Why are we discussing this bill today? We could have, by unanimous consent, moved it along. We chose not to, and we chose not to because we believe it is so important for Canadians to participate in this discussion.

We think it is important for victims of sexual assault in this country to get the respect, dignity, compassion and justice they deserve, not only in the House but also in the courts. When the Canadian public understands that this is an important issue, it raises the awareness of the value all parties in this House place on this issue. We are discussing it here today to create a higher profile for the victims of sexual assault.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, when I was a member of the status of women committee, one of the things we discussed was how we could improve the lives of young women and girls, as well as the young boys who have also been affected by sexual assault. One of the things we looked at was education. We talked a lot about that, because we have to go back to the core of how this happens. We know there are lots of influences.

I was wondering if the hon. member could talk about what we should do when it comes to the education system and the education of our youth in respect to young women and girls.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, educating our young boys and girls is very important. It is something I place a lot of value on. Parents should be able to engage in open and frank discussions with their children about important issues, such as issues around sex and the invasion of children's personal space. These conversations need to start at home with mom and dad. From there, they can grow.

It is important for kids to have the trust in mom and dad so they go to them with their concerns. If they have situations where they feel they have been violated, such as their personal space being intruded upon, they should be comfortable enough to go to mom and dad, tell them what happened and ask if it is right or appropriate. Education is best started at home.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, today it is a great pleasure for me to speak virtually to Bill C-3 for the first time. I would like to take this opportunity to say hello to the interpreters and thank them for doing a really incredible job.

I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-3, especially since I am a feminist. Defending women's rights and social justice are important priorities for me, and these issues are at the heart of this bill.

Members will have heard my Bloc Québécois colleagues say that passing this bill is in the interest of both the judiciary and the public, especially victims of sexual assault. I believe that parliamentarians must act quickly to implement it, but it nonetheless deserves to be studied in committee, particularly since the Quebec bar association has raised certain concerns that I will discuss later.

I want to address my female colleagues and constituents, in particular. Unfortunately, we have all been the victims of disgraceful comments at least once in our lives, whether they were about our physical appearance, our age, our clothes, our way of working or other things. We have also all heard this sort of comment being made about our female friends, colleagues, sisters or mothers.

Unfortunately, this practice is widespread and just as common in our society as in our justice system. Many times, judges have made inappropriate comments during sexual assault trials. Some have even rendered decisions without taking into account the victim and her difficult reality. Although we have a lot of work to do to eliminate this problem in our society, this bill will at least do away with this practice in our courts. That is a big step in the right direction.

There are also many myths and stereotypes associated with sexual assault that may lead some judges to believe that the victims were actually consenting. For example, a judge could find an aggressor innocent because that judge does not really understand the concept of consent.

Let us talk about consent. I want to take a moment to do a quick review, since it never hurts to go back over the basics. All members would agree that in any kind of relationship, the partners' intentions must be clear, free and informed. To give consent is to give permission or authorization. It means saying "yes". In 2016, the Ghomeshi trial, the Bill Cosby case and the #MeToo movement ignited a complicated and wide-ranging debate over the definition of consent.

Although our society is governed by laws, the Criminal Code is far removed from the bedroom. One situation where we see a nuance in the concept of consent is when a person feels obligated to consent. According to Julie Roussin, a clinical psychologist, consent must be viewed as "an informed decision free from coercion or threat", which is too often the case in a sexual assault. Therefore, the concept of consent can be considered from both a legal perspective and a psychological one.

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I would be remiss if I did not mention some of the appalling examples my colleagues have probably already heard. One judge said out loud during a trial that the victim, who was a minor at the time of the assault, had a pretty face and should feel flattered to have attracted the attention of an older man. An Alberta judge was fired after making sexist and racist remarks about indigenous people, battered women and victims of sexual assault. Another judge said that, because nobody had noticed any signs of assault, the girl, who was between the ages of 6 and 12, was not credible. Victims have been discredited for wearing pyjamas without a bra and underwear, for not immediately leaving when a sexual assault began, for not saying no to some of the things the accused did during the assault, and for not reporting the assault immediately.

Consent has nothing to do with the victim's credibility, looks, age, appearance or social condition. That is why I feel it is not only appropriate but necessary for all judges to receive ongoing training about issues related to sexual assault law and social context.

Although we are well into 2020 and nearly 20 years have passed since the Supreme Court's L'Heureux-Dubé decision, we do not seem to be much further ahead when it comes to the biases associated with sexual assault. Researchers from the Institute of Research on Public Policy recently published a series of articles entitled "Improving Canada's Response to Sexualized Violence", which seeks to shine a light on the gaps that policy-makers, legislators and the courts need to address.

Fortunately, the federal government has recognized the damage that gender-based violence continues to cause in Canadian society and is committed to developing an action plan to combat this problem that affects all spheres of society. Bill C-3 is part of that commitment and I commend it. It is even an improved version of the previous bill. This bill addresses the criticisms made about the previous Bill C-337, namely that by registering for this type of course, lawyers would be announcing their interest in becoming a judge, which would breach their anonymity. Bill C-3 instead asks lawyers to undertake to participate in the course, which makes sense to me.

● (1335)

I understand that the Conservatives voted against the NDP motion to pass the bill and send it directly to the Senate as they believe that the bill should apply to parole officers and members of the Parole Board of Canada in the wake of the murder of Marylène Levesque.

I sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which began a study of the circumstances of this murder before Parliament was closed and then prorogued.

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To refresh everyone's memory, Marylène Levesque is a young, 22-year-old woman who was killed last winter by Eustachio Gallese. This man was on day parole after being incarcerated for about 15 years for the murder of his wife in 2006. Despite his history of violence against women, his parole officers deemed that it was appropriate for Mr. Gallese to go to erotic massage parlours, where he met Marylène Levesque. My colleagues know the rest of the story.

I completely agree that parole officers and members of the Parole Board of Canada should also take mandatory training on the subject. I would go even further and include a broad range of professions. Of course, certain professions do not fall under federal jurisdiction, including police officers and lawyers. However, this kind of training is essential for all professions under federal jurisdiction that are likely to interact with sexual assault victims, such as corrections officers, border services officers and RCMP members.

As the Quebec bar association has pointed out, this bill applies exclusively to federally appointed judges, in other words, those sitting on superior courts, appeal courts, the Federal Court of Canada, the Federal Court of Appeal, as well as the Tax Court of Canada and the Supreme Court of Canada. However, experience shows that the vast majority of criminal offences are handled in provincial courts, so I hope this bill will inspire Quebec, the provinces and the territories to pass their own legislation to make this kind of training mandatory for judges.

I therefore encourage all my colleagues in the Conservative Party and the other parties to introduce legislation regarding similar training for parole officers, members of the Parole Board of Canada and any other professionals deemed relevant.

We have an opportunity to quickly pass Bill C-3, as was almost the case with Bill C-337. I urge all of my parliamentary colleagues to work towards this.

We can always do better, and I hope that our study of this bill will address the call from the Quebec bar to ensure that this bill does not encroach on provincial jurisdictions.

The bar association has also raised concerns that the amendments to the Judges Act and the Criminal Code proposed in this bill could undermine the independence of the judiciary. However, as my colleague from Saint-Jean pointed out last week, judges already receive training on many different topics. Judges receive training throughout their careers, and it makes complete sense that their rulings should be better documented. I sincerely doubt that this training could bring about any biases that would undermine the independence of the judiciary.

As a parliamentarian and as a member of a distinct society, I want to conclude by saying that we must do more to eliminate rape culture. This system of thought that explains, excuses or even encourages rape is everywhere in our society: in our homes, our courts, our children's schools, our workplaces and our streets.

We therefore need to do better and do more. We need to stop trivializing. We need to stop making off-colour jokes about women's bodies. We still hear these sorts of jokes all too often and we encourage them instead of speaking out. Often, without realizing it, we put the responsibility for the assault on the victim and call into

question the woman's word. We treat women's bodies as though they were there to service the needs of men. Where then should we start?

I want to quote Pascale Parent, a worker at the Centre d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel de Rimouski, who said that we could start "by talking about equality between men and women and also between women, including those with disabilities and indigenous women. Of course, we know that not all men are abusers. Men can decide to fight against this culture and speak out against it with us. They can speak out against sexist jokes and inappropriate behaviour. They can help women who need it and support the women who trust them and tell them about their experiences."

That would be a good start, just like this bill.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the discussions I have heard, I understand that one province, Prince Edward Island, has looked at what Ottawa is doing and brought in something of a similar nature.

Would the member not agree that when we have the unanimous support of the House to pass legislation of this nature, it sets a very good example for provincial jurisdictions, which could look at it to possibly copy and administer? I am interested in the member's thoughts on the important role that Ottawa can play in ensuring that we have a positive influence on lower courts.

[Translation]

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

I agree that unanimous decisions set a good example. However, before the bill is unanimously passed, we should ensure that it does not contain any flaws, that it truly expresses the intention of parliamentarians and that it works for the groups concerned.

I mentioned that the Quebec bar association has shared some concerns. We should ensure that we examine the bill carefully before hastily passing it.

Since there was a broad consensus among parliamentarians when the Hon. Rona Ambrose introduced her bill, I think that we can work together to quickly pass the bill that is before us today.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague does great work and delivered a very good speech about the bill.

The reason we are here today is to hear these kinds of perspectives and understand the needs. It is important for parliamentarians to have the opportunity to discuss the bill all day, to express their ideas and to hear what people from across Canada and Quebec think.

I do not want to interfere in Quebec's jurisdiction, but I do have a question for my colleague. Does she think Quebec should take its cue from what is happening here so that judges at all levels have the same understanding of the reality experienced by women who are victims of sexual assault?

• (1345)

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his question.

I agree with him. We need to begin by starting a conversation. That is exactly what we are doing today.

Yes, the provinces and Quebec should draw upon what we are doing.

I think Quebec was ahead of its time when it proposed a special court for sexual assault cases. Members of the National Assembly all worked together in an exemplary fashion. I think Canada's Parliament should take its cue from the work members of the National Assembly did, especially Véronique Hivon, who has taken the lead on this work.

I think it goes both ways. Canada can inspire other countries but can also be inspired by what is happening elsewhere. Clearly, we can do more at every level.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate our dear colleague for her outstanding and sensitive speech.

Listening to her speech, I remembered that she is the youngest MP in the House. I found her comments to be very constructive, and I think everyone will agree with me.

I would like to ask my colleague two questions. Does she think that the bill goes far enough? What does she think of how slow the parliamentary process is for passing the bill?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I will try to be brief.

I believe that the bill does not go far enough. As I was saying earlier, this training could be helpful to a broad range of professionals, not just judges. The bill we are discussing today concerns federal court judges, and I believe it is good enough. However, we must ensure that the bill does not interfere in provincial jurisdictions.

I certainly think that the process for passing the bill is too long. That is the case for all bills. Since there is unanimous support for the bill, I hope that we can pass it quickly.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, one in three Canadian women will be a victim of sexual assault in her lifetime. What an awful statistic for women and fathers to contemplate.

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I have three children, two daughters and a son. To think or imagine that one of my daughters could one day be a victim of sexual assault, or that maybe she has been already but kept silent, or has been a victim of sexual harassment and kept it to herself, is simply awful. It is awful to think that in our society, one in three women will experience sexual assault in her lifetime.

Sunday is International Day of the Girl. I think many parents will take the opportunity to ask questions. I hope we can take that day to reflect on the fact that one in three girls, one in three women, will be a victim of sexual assault in her lifetime.

Sunday will be a day to think about this issue as a family and to reflect on and discuss it with our children to find out what is going on, to make our boys and girls aware, to show openness in order to encourage people to talk, to try and ensure that nothing gets bottled up and that this is something that can be talked about more openly. Unfortunately, if we do not talk about it and it remains hidden, it will continue, and the statistics will not get any better.

For one in three women to be a victim of assault shows that there is a problem with trust in our society. My colleague from Sarnia—Lambton said it so well yesterday.

[*English*]

“Because of a studied lack of trust in our criminal justice system, many women feel unable to even report the assaults they suffered to the police out of fear they will not be taken seriously. They will continue to suffer re-traumatization, and if their cases do advance, their attackers will not face serious repercussions.”

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

More than two-thirds of women say they are not confident in the police, the court process, or justice itself. As a result, 83% of sexual assaults go unreported. Of the remaining 17% of cases, one in five just gets dropped. The other four are subjected to intense scrutiny. The victims are caught in the middle of a difficult and stressful process that unfortunately has small chance of success. Of these remaining cases, just one in five will go to court. Just one in 10 cases ends in a conviction resulting in a fine or jail time. That means if we start with 100 cases, that number gradually gets whittled down.

We understand that women are afraid to go to court and that they struggle to trust the criminal justice system. That is exactly what the bill before us is meant to address.

Three versions of this bill have been introduced in the House. It was first introduced as a private member's bill by our former interim opposition leader, Rona Ambrose, as Bill C-337. It was reintroduced as Bill C-5, and it has now been introduced as Bill C-3.

Government Orders

Every chance we get to debate the bill is an opportunity for all parliamentarians to educate Canadians, judges and everyone about the reality that women face in this country.

It is important that we talk about it. It is important to talk about it tomorrow, next week and as often as possible. The culture of secrecy, the fear of speaking up, the fear of being ridiculed and the fear of not being believed are all reasons why women choose not to report their assailants.

This is what we are trying to stop. This is what we are trying to do with Bill C-3. Progress may be slow, but we are taking logical, meaningful action.

Madam Speaker, the government rightly reintroduced the Hon. Rona Ambrose's bill, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, also known as the "just act". This bill includes the amendments that were passed by the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs before the last election, which delayed the passage of the bill.

What will this bill do if it is passed? As I said, it will help by requiring new judges to take continuing legal education on sexual assault law.

We have been talking about this bill since the beginning of the day, but those who are watching at home may not be aware of its content. They may not know exactly what this bill is about. I will therefore read part of the preamble to give a good overview of the bill.

The preamble states that "survivors of sexual assault in Canada must have faith in the criminal justice system". It also states that "Parliament recognizes the importance of an independent judiciary". Parliament does not want to get involved in cases that are before the courts because Parliament's role and duty are to ensure that people can have confidence in the justice system.

The preamble also indicates that "parliamentarians have a responsibility to ensure that Canada's democratic institutions reflect the values and principles of Canadians and respond to their needs and concerns". In the past, we have seen too many cases where judges have rendered decisions based on myths or false precepts. That is not what today's society demands of judges. We, as parliamentarians, are the voice of Canadians across the country and we therefore have a duty to remind judges of these new principles. That is what we are doing right now with Bill C-3.

The preamble also says, "...sexual assault proceedings have a profound effect on the reputations and lives of the persons affected and present a high possibility of revictimizing survivors of sexual assault." Having to go through the judicial process and relive everything that happened, in front of many people, and strangers at that, can deter women from seeking justice.

The preamble also states that "...Parliament recognizes the value and importance of judges participating in continuing education." With this additional training, our judges will be better equipped to do their jobs, which could result in greater access to justice for women.

The preamble of Bill C-3 also states, "...it is imperative that persons seeking to be appointed to the judiciary undertake to partici-

pate in continuing education on matters related to sexual assault law and social context." That all makes perfect sense.

I was impressed, and actually very touched, by the speech given by my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill, even as we go about proposing changes and trying to improve things. Here is some of what she had to say:

...there is something about this bill that really makes me angry. It is absurd to me that we have to spend time figuring out how to train the men in Canada's systemically misogynistic justice system to be sensitive to sexual assault. In so many ways, it is blindly the wrong approach because it is so paternalistic in its design. ... If men want to be honoured with a judicial appointment, why can the hiring criteria not be what they have done in their career to remove the systemic barriers women face? Why do we have to train the idiots in society, and why could we not just hire the allies?

Those are harsh words, but they are the words of a woman who, like many of our colleagues here and many women I know, has herself gone through all kinds of ordeals. We need to take this seriously. That is the point we are at. I applaud the women who have had the courage to speak up in the House in support of Bill C-3.

Personally, I fully support this bill. I hope that more and more of our colleagues will talk about it and seize every available opportunity to do so because the more we talk about it, the closer we get to a solution.

• (1355)

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talks about a trust problem with the justice system, especially women who face sexual assault in the justice system and he is right about that. However, in delaying this legislation further, are we not creating a trust problem in Parliament? Members say we should stop debating and move on. Opposition members say we should not have prorogued and we will say the Conservative Senate held it up and it is back and forth.

Would the hon. member agree that we should put all of that aside and get this legislation passed as soon possible to avoid that trust problem with Parliament and re-establish trust in the judicial system?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the only problem with trust in this Parliament is the one the current government caused when it prorogued Parliament. We were unable to continue studying the bill as a result.

As I mentioned in my speech, which the hon. member should have listened to carefully, Canadians deserve to hear debate on Bill C-3. We deserve to talk about this. Women in this Parliament deserve their right to speak to express their position. That is how it is. The more we talk about it, the more we will manage to effect change.

Statements by Members

We are not the ones playing politics, they are. The members across the way should learn their lesson.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government have made it very clear in terms of their priorities. We introduced the bill back on Friday. It could have actually passed last Friday.

We have seen support. I suspect every member of the House of Commons is going to be voting in favour of this bill, and yet the Conservatives still feel that no matter what, we have to talk out bills. No matter what the bill is, we have to be able to talk it out.

Does the member not feel that there is a time and place to actually allow a bill to pass?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, does the hon. member across the way not think he should leave a bit of time for other MPs to speak?

We are being criticized for wanting to talk about a bill. I would like the member across the way to tell me which speech should not have been delivered. Which speech made by my female colleagues who spoke yesterday and today did he not want to hear?

That is the real question. Who did he want to silence?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

YVES BERTHIAUME

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate Yves Berthiaume, who was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal by the Governor General last July.

Mr. Berthiaume has been a funeral director for several decades. He was the president of Optimist International in 2004. He created the first francophone Optimist district outside Quebec in eastern Ontario. Although the terms “optimist” and “funeral director” may appear to be opposites, Yves Berthiaume knew how to talk to youth about death and grief. He even created a program to educate youth about death and grief, which has now been implemented across Canada.

I thank Yves Berthiaume for his years of service to young people. I sincerely thank his wife, Ginette, and his children, Lise Ann, Marie-Lyne and Catherine, for sharing their husband and father not just with our community, but with the entire world community.

Yves, you have known me since I was a young boy and you probably know me better than I know myself. I would personally like to thank you—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE IN ALBERTA

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues from Bow River and Lakeland in Alberta for taking me on a tour to meet with dozens of producers and farmers last week. There is so much to be proud of when it comes to Alberta's contribution to Canada's agriculture sector, but the devastation that I witnessed in Lakeland and the feeling of the government's abandonment is more intense than anything I have ever seen.

To give members context, five out of seven counties in Lakeland have declared agricultural disasters. Kelly, a Lamont County grain farmer, shared his heartbreaking story with me. He, like many others, has worked his whole life to be able to one day have his kids continue in his footsteps. However, after five bad years and a government that is either unwilling or unable to give a hand-up and offer Kelly some help, Kelly has now told his children, who have had their hearts set on being farmers, to find a new career.

The member for Lakeland wrote a letter inviting the Minister of Agriculture to meet these farmers and see the devastation for herself. The minister could not even bother to respond. I urge the Minister of Agriculture to take up the offer to visit, because the only way to truly represent all Canadians requires occasionally leaving the Ottawa ivory tower.

* * *

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this pandemic has disproportionately been felt by women and girls, intensifying societal issues of inequality, including access to critical sexual and reproductive health services.

I am disheartened by the closure of Clinic 554 in Fredericton, New Brunswick, limiting access for sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion. Even in Halton, women have limited access to abortion. It is essential for governments to stand up for human rights and not exacerbate issues facing those most in need of care.

The Leader of the Opposition has refused to condemn statements made by one of his members comparing abortion to slavery. Abortion is essential health care and the decision should be made by a woman and her doctor, not by men legislating control of women's bodies.

We must always be firm in our support for women to have access to full reproductive and sexual health services. Access to these critical services is an issue of women's rights.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

WORLD EGG DAY

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to mark World Egg Day, which takes place on Friday.

We are talking here about a local product that feeds our people and helps revitalize our regions. I start every day with an egg. It is a nutritious, high quality food that will help anyone get through the day. Egg farmers have good reason to be proud of their work.

At such a critical time, when we are seeing how urgent food sovereignty is, it would be nice if the government showed its appreciation and respect for egg farmers by giving them the full compensation they were promised two years ago. Obviously, I want to mention supply management. Talk is all well and good, but it seems to me that World Egg Day would be the perfect time to announce support. It is time the government kept its word.

Until then, family farmers from Berthier—Maskinongé and the rest of Quebec will keep up their great work.

Happy World Egg Day.

* * *

[English]

NIAGARA PORTS TRADE CORRIDOR

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada has always been a trading nation, and as the throne speech stressed, the value of the multi-trillion dollar blue economy is not to be underestimated. In fact, the maritime chamber of commerce confirms that inland and coastal shipping are key drivers in both the Canadian and U.S. economies. I am pleased to see this government take advantage of existing resources in the post-COVID-19 economic recovery effort.

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River navigation system, including the Welland Canal located in my riding, is an efficient marine superhighway that connects our businesses to limitless opportunities and global markets. I am pleased to see this government harness the blue economy by supporting initiatives like local strategic trade corridors.

In Niagara, we are advancing the development of three multimodal hubs along the Welland Canal. To the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority and the cities of Port Colborne, Welland and Thorold, I say congratulations and thanks for moving forward on establishing the Niagara Ports multimodal trade corridor.

I thank this government for showing foresight and innovation by supporting and fostering all the blue economy has to offer.

* * *

● (1405)

VOLUNTEERISM IN STORMONT—DUNDAS—SOUTH GLENGARRY

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while this pandemic has certainly taken its toll, it has not been able to dampen the spirits of countless volunteers

who continue to do everything they can to give back. The wonderful volunteers in my region are no exception, and several have been recently recognized for their efforts.

Constable Jeff Lalonde, a 20-year veteran with the Cornwall Police Service, was honoured with the Governor General's Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

Gloria Waldroff, with the Friendly Circle Seniors' Club in Long Sault, was named volunteer of the year.

Mountain Township & District Lion Ted Ceelen was presented with the Melvin Jones Fellowship, and Lion Bill Havekes was presented with the Helen Keller Fellowship Award.

Bernie McGillis was named volunteer of the year for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cornwall & District. He was just one of the many volunteers acknowledged in that organization.

I would need about a 10-minute statement to recognize all of the wonderful individuals who volunteer throughout Cornwall, the United Counties of SD&G and Akwesasne. I give all of our volunteers my grateful and heartfelt thanks for all that they do, particularly during these difficult times.

* * *

THANKSGIVING

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Thanksgiving takes place at a time of great trial for Canadians and their families. This year we celebrate differently: more quietly, limiting our gatherings.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, for many families, there will be a void as they mourn the death of a loved one. Let us take this opportunity to recognize the courage and determination of our essential workers. Let us honour them and thank them for their dedication and sacrifice.

[English]

Across Canada, we face both health and economic crises of historic proportions. We are worried, but we also know that our families and our governments stand together, supporting each other. When we walk through a storm here in Canada, we hold our heads up high and we will not be afraid of the dark.

[Translation]

We are a great country, united in our fight against the virus. That is the very spirit of Thanksgiving, to help each other in times of trial.

Statements by Members

[English]

Canada, walk on. Walk on with hope in our hearts because we never walk alone. We never walk alone, even when everyone is doing their part by staying apart to save lives.

[Translation]

Happy Thanksgiving.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): On behalf of the residents of my riding, I would like to wish you, Mr. Speaker, the House and of course everyone in Canada a happy but safe Thanksgiving.

I would also like to thank Fort York Food Bank, Alexandra Park Community Centre and countless other volunteers in the riding, like the people of ReportTO who, this weekend, will be donating food and care to make sure as many as possible feel included in community, but safe, hosted Thanksgiving celebrations.

For homeless Canadians, for people living in tents and parks, for women who may be couch surfing and for young people who are fleeing to the safety of shelters, Thanksgiving weekend is a difficult time and not necessarily a moment to give thanks. The national housing strategy has legislated the right to housing, and last month, we added \$1.2 billion to the \$55-billion program to address these situations with even greater focus.

Homelessness can be ended, and our government is working hard with municipalities, indigenous housing providers, provinces, territories and people who have experienced homelessness to do just that: end it. I invite the opposition to work with us to realize this goal. Canada, let us get to work.

* * *

FAMILIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, people in Vancouver were shocked to see ads seeking to shame those who have more than one child. One such ad declared, “The most loving gift you can give your first child is to not have another” beside the picture of a Black baby. This ad reminds us of the racist undertones that have often been associated with the population control movement, targeting minority communities in particular with the message that they should have fewer children.

It also perpetuates the false and disproved idea that large families are bad for society. In reality, parents who make the sacrifice of raising children into productive citizens should be celebrated and not stigmatized. Honestly, parents of large families have enough to worry about. Having a larger population of younger people entering the workforce helps to ensure that there are enough taxpayers supporting the needs of our seniors.

My riding association is fighting back. We are taking out ads on buses in Vancouver, sharing one of my favourite quotes from Moth-

er Teresa: “How can there be too many children? That is like saying there are too many flowers”.

I will continue to stand up for families.

* * *

● (1410)

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN MARKHAM—STOUFFVILLE

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the pandemic, organizations in my riding of Markham—Stouffville have stepped up to support our community. Stouffville's Royal Canadian Legion fundraised over \$10,000 so it can continue to provide services to local seniors and veterans, including virtual services to reduce social isolation and the resulting depression.

Also, the Canadian Mar Thoma Church in Stouffville donated more than \$26,000 to the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation toward the purchase of a new ventilator, and I recently attended the Yikang Seniors Club of Markham's celebration of the mid-autumn festival, where hand sanitizer, masks and of course mooncakes were provided to seniors.

These are just a few examples of how people in Markham—Stouffville are supporting each other. Actions like these are what make our communities stronger and they are a reminder that by working together, we can defeat COVID-19 and move Canada forward.

* * *

NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise as chair of the Canada-Azerbaijan parliamentary friendship group to express my deep concern regarding the ongoing military conflicts in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The violence must end, as there can be no long-term solution through military action. I urge both Armenia and Azerbaijan to step back from the precipice, adhere to the historical ceasefire and protect all civilians, regardless of their nationalities.

Nations with ulterior motives, other than the preservation of human life, need to step back and let the peace process take hold. The territorial integrity of both Armenia and Azerbaijan must be respected and the right to self-determination supported by the international community. I call on the Government of Canada to work quickly with the global community to secure peace and to back the resumption of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe negotiations within the framework of the Minsk group process.

*Oral Questions***PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY**

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Government of Alberta announced the 10-year, \$30-billion strategy to attract petrochemical and associated recycling investment to the province, with the goal of becoming an environmental and recycling leader in North America. Then, in a hastily called press conference the following day, the federal government jeopardized Alberta's long-term plan. Investors in Alberta's comprehensive plastic strategy now face increased uncertainty for the future of the petrochemical industry.

These generational plastic investments have the potential to create a world-leading \$1.4-billion recycling industry, employing a projected 19,000 workers for 50 years or more. The petrochemical industry will be a key partner in developing green, reusable plastic products, yet the government seems intent on banning development opportunities for sectors vital to our recovery and banning jobs for workers.

Why is the government so intent on destroying jobs in Alberta?

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people in my community are struggling with the economic impacts of COVID-19 but also with the housing crisis and growing economic inequality. At the same time, the people at the very top in Canada have gotten richer and richer. The Liberals and Conservatives have set up systems that allow their corporate friends to get sweet deals while avoiding paying their fair share.

People in my riding need housing. We used to have a federal government in the 1970s and 1980s that invested in housing. If we made corporations like Amazon and Facebook pay their fair share, if we taxed wealth over \$20 million and the excess profits of corporations that are profiting off of this pandemic, if we cracked down on offshore tax havens, we would have billions and billions of dollars to invest in things like building affordable, sustainable housing.

The B.C. government has invested historic amounts in housing. Our federal government needs to step up, at least match the provincial funding, take care of Canadians who are just trying to keep a roof over their heads and start making the wealthiest pay their fair share.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DYLAN DELAURY

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, very few of us are given the opportunity to be a real hero in our lifetimes. It is perhaps even rarer for a teenager, which makes it even more impressive. That is what happened to Dylan Delaury on September 28, 2020, the day he became a hero.

As he and his best friend were sleeping in a cabin where they had settled in for the night, the cabin became a veritable inferno. Woken up by the smoke, Mr. Delaury immediately rushed to save his friend, without a second thought. It was instinct. His heart took over. They both managed to escape almost entirely unscathed.

I wanted to tell everyone in the House today about this heroic, courageous, generous and eminently human act. This young man from Baie-Comeau listened to his heart and saved two lives that night.

Dylan, I know you think what you did was not a big deal, as you said yourself, but I assure you, that is not the case. I thank you for your actions. I look forward to meeting you, because you are a role model not only for me, but also for my children, everyone in this House, the people of the North Shore and all Quebeckers.

* * *

• (1415)

[*English*]

ENERGY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government continues to take Saskatchewan for granted. The throne speech failed to even mention western alienation and deliberately ignored the serious challenges facing our leading economic drivers. To add insult to injury, when asked this week for a real plan for energy workers and their families, the Deputy Prime Minister responded by boasting about the delivery of the CERB program in western Canada. That response demonstrates just how out of touch those in the government benches are.

Our hard-working energy workers are not asking for a handout. They are asking the Prime Minister to stop favouring foreign energy, to support an economic sector that contributes so much wealth to our entire country and to stop going out of his way to attack their livelihoods and their ability to put food on their tables.

It is time that the Prime Minister take his head out of the sand and fight for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada had a world-renowned pandemic alert system, but in 2018, the Liberal government revoked the mandate of Canadian experts. It did not want to contradict official data from the Chinese government.

Why does the Prime Minister prefer to listen to the Chinese government rather than our Canadian experts?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is completely untrue. We have been listening to the advice of public health experts and scientists all along.

Funding and staffing levels at the Global Public Health Intelligence Network have remained stable since 2015. We are concerned about reports that analysts were unable to do their jobs. Several weeks ago, the minister ordered an independent review to ensure that their important work could continue.

We have taken this pandemic seriously from day one. We are working with the experts and have been doing so all along.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just said that he listens to the experts, but he forced his decision on them. Senior officials have said that the Liberal government's decision was incomprehensible. These are Canadian experts criticizing the Prime Minister's ideological decisions.

Why does the Prime Minister trust Chinese data over our Canadian scientists?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is talking nonsense.

We have been working with and listening to scientists all along.

Funding and staffing levels at the agency he is referring to have remained stable since 2015. We listened to the concerns from officials and launched a review several weeks ago to find out exactly what happened and to ensure that we can continue working with scientists as best we can.

* * *

• (1420)

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister said that he would follow what our allies were doing when it comes to Huawei. As part of the Five Eyes, we share intelligence with the United Kingdom. This morning, their House of Commons found that Huawei is strongly linked to the Chinese state and the Chinese Communist Party, despite claims to the contrary.

Why is the Prime Minister ignoring all the warnings about Huawei in Canada's 5G network?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, that is simply not true. We have worked very closely with our allies and Five Eyes partners around the world to ensure the safety and security of Canadians, and of our infrastructure.

We will continue to make decisions based on expert advice from our intelligence and security professionals as we move forward to do what we need to do to keep Canadians safe in an increasingly interconnected world.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's security experts are reading the reports out of the U.K. that found Huawei had been financed by the Chinese state to the tune of \$75 billion in the last three years. It also

Oral Questions

found that Huawei had engaged in a variety of intelligence, security and intellectual property violations around the world. In Canada, the National Post has reported that Huawei theft may have led to the downfall of Nortel.

Four of the Five Eyes have spoken when it comes to Huawei. Why is the Prime Minister the only one with his eyes closed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to be very focused on keeping Canadians safe. We are certainly aware of all these reports and are looking very carefully at them, but we trust our experts in our security realm and in our intelligence realm to make fact-based recommendations to us. They are gathering information from our partners. They are looking at this situation. We will move forward in a responsible way that keeps Canadians safe, as we have every step of the way.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the potential closure of the Come By Chance refinery could mean up to 1,400 job losses across Newfoundland and Labrador. It would affect dozens of harbour and outport communities in the province. We are also learning that it could create a severe propane shortage, leaving 2,000 households relying on ferry services during the winter. The head of the local steelworkers union said that the natural resources minister has been silent.

When will the minister finally speak up for the people of Arnold's Cove and the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is lovely to hear the Conservatives finally realizing there is a Newfoundland and Labrador that we need to preoccupy ourselves with. We have been working with them very closely, both our Minister of Natural Resources and the new premier, whom I spoke to just days ago to talk about how we can continue to work to support workers in Newfoundland and Labrador and indeed in the energy sector across the country.

We will continue to be there to stand up for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We will continue to be there to support our workers right across the country as we move forward through this difficult time and into decades to come.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when I asked my question yesterday, before I even finished saying the word “machine gun”, the Prime Minister immediately stood up and started talking about political party financing. The links people make in their heads between different ideas can be odd, at times.

Then I simply asked him if he knew Wei Wei, a criminal arrested in Toronto. He immediately started talking about the Liberal Party's financing. That is when I realized that Wei Wei must be important to the Liberal Party.

My question is simple. Is it because Wei Wei and his gang stopped giving money to the Liberal Party that the Liberals asked for the wage subsidy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Post reported that a wealthy businessman from Toronto, Wei Wei, was arrested on charges of firearms possession and operating an illegal casino. Wei Wei met with the Prime Minister on May 16, 2016, with the founder of the Wealth One Bank. Three days later, he met him again. He meets with him almost as often as he meets with the Ethics Commissioner. The Prime Minister discussed trade relations between China and Canada.

My question is simple. How many of these meetings between the Prime Minister and wealthy investors from Toronto's Chinese community have proven beneficial to the Liberal Party?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our federal system has some of the strictest rules governing political donors. The Liberal Party's rules are even stricter. All of our fundraising activities are public, and we even invite journalists to attend to observe what is going on.

Instead of acting in secret, the other parties like the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois should make their fundraisers public so that the public can see who is funding them.

* * *

● (1425)

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while small businesses are afraid they might have to close their doors because of COVID-19, big corporations have been raking in record profits because of COVID-19. We are proposing a tax on excess profits made by big corporations during the pandemic.

Does the Prime Minister stand with billionaires or with front-line workers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing we did when we took office in 2015 was raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% and lower them for the middle class. That is exactly what we did, but unfortunately the NDP voted against that initiative.

We will always look for ways to spur economic growth and ensure our tax system is fair to everyone. We will always help the middle class and those working hard to join it. We will get through this pandemic together by taking care of our health and our economy.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with Jennifer and Kane, Dominion grocery store workers who barely earn minimum wage and are struggling to get by, while large corporate grocery stores made massive profits off the pandemic. We are proposing a tax on excess profits made by wealthy corporations during the pandemic.

Does the Prime Minister stand with billionaire profiteers or does he stand with working people? Will the Prime Minister tax the excess profits made by wealthy corporations off the pandemic?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the extraordinary front-line workers like Jennifer who every day help keep food on our shelves and keep our economy rolling even in the most difficult moments of the shutdown. That is why we stepped up on supports for workers, for small businesses, for families. We will continue to work to ensure that we are supporting Canadians through this pandemic and beyond.

In regard to the wealthy, the first thing we did was to raise taxes on the wealthy 1% and lower them for the middle class. Unfortunately, the NDP voted against that initiative.

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HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we found out that some Quebec schools have had to resort to using private firms to test their teachers for COVID and keep their students safe because the Prime Minister has failed to get rapid tests into their hands.

Our publicly funded health care system, which, to be very clear, the Conservative Party strongly supports, is breaking down because the Prime Minister has failed to do his job and get these tests into the hands of Canadians when other countries around the world did so months ago. Why?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have worked with provinces and territories to make sure they have the tools, the financial support, the expertise and additional personnel to manage the outbreaks. We will continue to work with provinces like Ontario and Quebec, indeed all provinces and territories, to ensure they have what they need.

This is a complex situation. As the member knows, we have approved a number of rapid tests and we have been all along. We will make sure that the provinces and territories have equal access to those tests as soon as they arrive.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has done such a great job that some provinces have had to send tests to California to be processed. It has done such a great job that people are waiting 10 days for their results. Now we are seeing Quebec schools having to use private firms, against the notion of publicly funded health care in Canada, because of its failure to procure tests.

The government is deceiving Canadians. There are no rapid tests in the hands of Canadians, no widespread use and it is because of its failure and the minister's incompetence. When will it be in widespread use?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it appears the member opposite is deceiving Canadians. In fact, we have had rapid tests in the field since the early months of COVID-19, supporting rural and remote communities and indigenous communities to make sure they have access to testing in a rapid and convenient way, because they are such fragile and vulnerable communities.

We spent billions of dollars supporting provinces and territories to boost up their capacity to test, trace and isolate. We have rapid response programs to go into hot spots to support provinces and territories with human resource challenges. We will continue to do whatever it takes to help Canadians through this.

• (1430)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to be clear, the minister considers a 10-day wait for tests to be rapid. It is ridiculous.

The reality is that somebody standing in line waiting for the results in any part of the country today is not going to have access to a rapid test because the minister has failed to do her job.

We know that these tests are not going to be available in widespread use until, at the earliest, next year. It is because the government has failed. We are going into Thanksgiving weekend. We are hearing warnings about an even greater outbreak because we do not have rapid tests.

When will these tests be in widespread use across the country?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reiterate my offer to have the member opposite briefed by the department to understand that testing is really only one aspect of containing COVID-19. Of course, testing is an important aspect, but provinces also need the opportunity to contact trace, to isolate, to ensure they protect vulnerable communities.

We have been working on this side of the House since day one. I encourage the member opposite to learn a bit more about how to contain these outbreaks.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that, since day one, the government has been dragging its feet on approving rapid tests for COVID-19.

Oral Questions

As a result of this, Le Journal de Québec is reporting this morning that some schools in the Quebec City area are having to do business with a private company to get the results for some teachers who were tested. People in Quebec are having to wait eight, nine or 10 days for their results.

Why did this government take so long to evaluate rapid tests?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had an excellent conversation with my colleague, Minister Dubé.

[English]

We have talked about the supports that we will continue to offer to Québec and to the Québécois to ensure they have what they need as they combat the second wave.

We have approved rapid tests, we have rapid tests in the field and they are not the only solution to combatting COVID-19. We also have to ensure we have human resources to contact trace, to isolate close contacts. We are there for Quebec for those issues as well.

We will continue to work with the provinces and territories on this side, to meet with them on what they need to contain the virus.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like all Canadians, Mr. Dubé wants rapid tests. That way, teachers will not have to wait for days and days on end to get their results, and school boards will not be forced to pay for tests, as Le Journal de Québec reported this morning.

My question for the minister is very simple: Why is it that Japan had rapid tests way back in March and the United States had rapid tests as of August, but it took until last week for this government to finally wake up?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as soon as people apply to Health Canada to get approval for rapid tests, we have been able to quickly turn around those approvals. In fact, the last test was in under 30 days.

We are continuing to work with industry to ensure that applicants apply to Canada to sell these rapid tests here. However, I will repeat that they are not a silver bullet to managing COVID-19. In fact, experts around the world have said that we need to have a robust strategy to contain the virus. That includes of course testing, but also contact tracing, also isolation.

We will stop at nothing to support provinces and territories to protect their citizens.

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The Speaker: I can appreciate the hon. members distancing themselves, but they do not have to talk loudly. They can put their masks on, go to the side and do it quietly. They do not have to shout across the aisle to their friends.

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

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FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, October 15 marks Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day, a difficult day for many families across Canada. Parents grieving the loss of a child deserve compassion from their government. Certainly, no grieving parent should ever have to navigate a cold, heartless bureaucracy.

The HUMA report called “Supporting Families After the Loss of an Infant Child” sets a clear path forward to ensure that parents do not suffer any undue financial or emotional distress as a result of government programming. That report has been gathering dust for nearly two years. When are the Liberals finally going to take action?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that our policies are informed with making sure that children have the best possible start in life. We have re-engineered our programs to make sure that the processes to obtain them are easy and efficient for people. We have hired a number of agents to make sure that people's questions about government programs are answered. We have also tasked thousands of trusted community liaison officers to go out into the community to bring people into government programs and get the benefits that they are eligible for, instead of having them miss out on those benefits, year in and year out.

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[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois asked the Prime Minister an excellent question. How much money did the Liberals pull in as a result of these meetings with the president of Wealth One Bank and Wei Wei?

We know they resulted in a \$1-million donation to the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation as well as a fine statue of the Prime Minister's father. We know that, in 2016, 70% of funds raised in the Prime Minister's riding in Montreal came from Toronto and Vancouver. We also know that Wei Wei donated at least \$2,000 to the Liberal Party. That is what we know.

How much did the Liberals pull in as a result of these meetings with Wei Wei and the president of Wealth One Bank? Can someone tell us?

• (1435)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite my honourable Bloc Québécois

colleague to adopt the Liberal Party's practices and to go above and beyond the very strict election financing act. As he knows very well, the Liberal Party decided to do more than the bare minimum required by the Canada Elections Act by adding, for example, increased transparency, inviting journalists to attend our fundraising activities, not conducting activities in secret as do the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives. These facts should temper my hon. colleague's indignation.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we knew that the Liberals were going above and beyond the Canada Elections Act. The minister did not need to tell us that.

A banker who was hoping for a favourable decision from the federal government was able to meet with the Prime Minister for \$1,500. An individual who was running an illegal casino where prostitution was likely taking place was able to meet with the Prime Minister personally for \$1,500. All people have to do is roll out the red carpet and pay the maximum set out in the act to meet with the Prime Minister personally and make their sales pitch. What is more, we just learned that it seems people can go beyond the \$1,500 limit.

In 2020, is that really the political fundraising approach the Liberals are proposing?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proposing that parties go above and beyond the limits of the Canada Elections Act when fundraising. That is something that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives hesitated to do.

From the start, the Prime Minister has been very clear. We are raising funds for the Liberal Party at events where the media is invited. We are being more transparent by releasing the list of those who attended soon after the event. That is something that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives have refused to do to date. We invite them to join us.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is certainly not above the law.

I think that what my colleagues from La Prairie and Rivière-du-Nord were getting at is that it is important to bring back public funding for political parties, which is how it is done in Quebec and how it was done in Ottawa before the big parties smelled a lucrative opportunity. If we had public funding, politicians would not be getting their picture taken with crooks to fund campaigns. They would not be getting their picture taken in blatant conflicts of interest with bankers expecting favours. When Quebeckers see those pictures, they see that political decisions can be bought.

Are the Liberals opposed to public funding because cronyism pays?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised to hear the Bloc Québécois talk about campaign funding and fundraising, because that is what its members have been doing since last week: preparing for an election. Their leader was very clear. They want an election right away or next spring at the latest.

Here is what I want to know. Why are they so focused on triggering an election in the midst of a pandemic, when we should be here for our businesses, for our seniors, for our families, for our children, for people who are losing their jobs and for workers? They are talking about an election, but we are here for all Canadians.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the middle of a pandemic, when restaurants are refusing to fill people's reusable bottles and we have to avoid sharing items for fear of spreading the virus, the Liberal government announces that we must ban safe packaging. What will we do at the grocery store? Will we have to bring our own plates? The 25 workers at EB Packaging in East Broughton will not have anything to put on their plates, because they might lose their jobs. That is the reality.

Why does the Prime Minister want to risk the health of Canadians and jeopardize the livelihoods of 23,000 Quebecers?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are well aware of the consequences of plastic pollution. They are tired of seeing plastic waste littering their parks, streets and shorelines. They want action.

We have adopted a comprehensive approach to get to zero plastic waste by 2030, and we are committed to banning harmful single-use plastics by 2021. We will continue to take action with Canadians so that more plastic stays in our economy and out of our environment.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know. Plastic pollution is a real problem. We need to fix it. The trouble is, the Liberal solution will be disastrous for Quebec.

The Liberals need to talk to IPL, a business that produces packaging and employs 1,280 people at its plants and offices in Brome—Missisquoi and Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis. Those jobs and the workers affiliated with the FTQ are not disposable. They support families, villages and entire regions.

What is the Prime Minister going to do to save those businesses and those jobs?

● (1440)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the Conservatives are aware, our action plan includes a list of six items that are hard to recycle. This policy is very important for the economy and the environment. Recycling offers many economic opportunities while keeping plastic in the economy.

[English]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the minister is trying to have it both ways, downplaying his announcement, and for good reason.

After five years of hollowing out Canada's energy industry, the Liberals have now set their sights on our manufacturers. Plastic manufacturers employ thousands of blue-collar workers across the country, including in my home region of Atlantic Canada. When the federal government's pandemic procurement plan failed to de-

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liver needed protective products, Canada's plastic manufacturers stepped in and produced the PPE that we need to stay safe.

Now Ottawa wants to call these jobs toxic. Unionized workers across the country want to know why the Liberals keep attacking their families' paycheques and livelihood.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite my hon. colleague to actually read the announcement.

The focus of the announcement is a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of plastic pollution in our environment. We have enormous amounts that go into our landfills and into our rivers, lakes and oceans. We want to focus on enhancing recycling, enhancing recycled content so that we are actually growing a recycling industry in this country that will employ thousands of Canadians.

At the end of the day, it is possible to protect the environment and grow the economy, something Conservatives just do not understand.

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TAXATION

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Loblaws has made more than \$1.6 billion in extra profits during the pandemic, but it does not want to spend the \$3 million it would take to give its workers in Newfoundland and Labrador a decent wage.

Fourteen hundred of its Dominion Store workers have been on strike for seven weeks, trying to get back the \$2 per hour they got as pandemic pay, the only raise they have received since 2018.

The Prime Minister may not be able to force corporations to pay their staff properly, but will he join with us in forcing corporate pandemic profiteers to pay their fair share of taxes?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians take unprecedented actions in the fight against COVID-19, workers on the front line and in essential services are stepping up to serve their communities.

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The pandemic has put a tremendous burden on these workers who are saving lives, ensuring the safety and integrity of our food supply, and providing essential retail services. Our government will ensure that they are properly compensated for their efforts. Through a new transfer of up to \$3 billion to the provinces and territories, we will provide a temporary increase to the salaries of the millions of low-income workers deemed essential in the fight against COVID-19.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost \$1 billion in promised support for young people is missing because of the Liberals' WE scandal.

Today La Presse had a story about students who are struggling during the pandemic and worried about their future. They are graduating. They want to work but many will end up in precarious jobs, and they are drowning in debt. They feel abandoned.

When will the government commit to delivering the money they promised in the CSSG? Will it commit to using it to help students reduce their debt?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our commitment to helping Canadians throughout this pandemic has been clear from day one.

When it comes to supporting youth and students, we will continue to be there for them. That is exactly why we brought forward a \$9-billion plan in support of students, including the Canada emergency student benefit, including making sure there was no payment of Canada student loans, including interest, and increasing the number of jobs through the Canada summer jobs program.

We recognize that there is a diversity of needs for young people, and we will continue to work with them and be there to support them throughout this entire pandemic.

* * *

• (1445)

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the recent Unifor-Ford collective bargaining agreement and what this multi-billion dollar investment means for the future of Canadian auto manufacturing. As the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, I represent Canada's biggest steel producer and hundreds of related manufacturing operations.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry advise the House how our government plans to ensure the resilience and revitalization of Canadian industry for the millions of Canadians who depend on it for their livelihoods?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his continued advocacy on behalf of workers.

Today we announced a historic \$1.8-billion investment, including a \$295-million federal investment to set up Ford Motor Compa-

ny of Canada's electric vehicle production in Oakville. This will position Canada as a global leader in a growing market, help grow our green economy and secure 5,400 good-paying production jobs across Canada.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries has let things escalate to an unacceptable point in Nova Scotia. A problem that was once confined to a few towns along the Fundy coast now impacts fisheries from Saunierville to Inverness. The government has a responsibility to develop an indigenous fishery alongside the commercial fishery. The government has had five years of talk and no action.

When will the minister actually get serious about the problems occurring under her watch in her home province?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since day one we have been focused on making sure people stay safe and making sure we lower the tensions on the water. To that end, we have been in conversation with industry representatives as well as first nations, and we are now at the negotiation table with first nations communities.

We are looking for a path forward, but we know that this is a very difficult situation. We will continue to have those conversations and meetings with first nations communities to make sure we implement their charter rights.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has had weeks to get to western Nova Scotia and resolve this crisis. The ongoing fisheries crisis is a direct result of the minister's and the Liberal government's inaction over the past five years. The minister has been in her position for over a year now and comes from a riding where fisheries are of vital importance. The failure of the Liberal government to act has undone years of reconciliation work. Its inaction has pitted neighbour against neighbour and fanned the flames of this dispute.

When will the minister get representatives from all affected fishing communities to the table and resolve this crisis?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, this is a very complex issue. This is something that is deeply personal to many, many people. We are working with first nations communities right now to make sure we are able to implement their rights that were affirmed under the Supreme Court Marshall decision.

We are also in conversations with our commercial harvesters to make sure we are hearing from them as well. This is a situation we are going to be working on a solution for that is long term. I will continue to have those meetings. I will continue to work diligently to make sure we address this situation.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 16 years, the Yonge subway extension has been a priority for York Region, but the Liberal government refuses to invest.

York Region delivered a business case in 2009 and another business case in 2013. In 2017, this government invested in a preliminary design and engineering study. It would not have done this if the project was not sound.

What are the Liberals hiding? What is the real reason the government will not invest?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a bilateral agreement with Ontario that will see the federal government invest over \$11.8 billion in Ontario over the next decade, including \$8.3 billion for public transit.

Success on large, complex projects requires all orders of government to work together, and we remain committed to working with provincial and municipal leaders to prioritize public transit projects, get them funded and get them built. In fact, we have implored the Government of Ontario to submit business cases on some of the major GTA and other transit lines, and look forward to more.

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members who are joining us remotely that if they are not speaking to please make sure their microphones are muted.

The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

• (1450)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): However, Mr. Speaker, this government will not invest in the Yonge subway extension.

The business case to extend the Yonge subway line is obvious. The Yonge line is bursting at the seams with 800,000 commuters a day and almost 100,000 of them passing through Finch. The Yonge subway extension would create 60,000 jobs, reduce gridlock and deliver economic growth for the entire GTA.

The need for a Union Station of the north in York Region is clear. What is the real reason that the government will not invest?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, communities from coast to coast rely on transit projects to get built to get them from home to work and school, and to meet their needs and access the services they need on a daily basis.

This government is committed to a historic community investment program of \$180 billion over 12 years to make sure that residents of communities from coast to coast to coast get the services

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they need. We are committed to that plan, which, by the way, is going to create one million jobs as we roll it out.

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[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program is a complete fiasco. It is so poorly designed that Quebec is being forced to pay to fill the gaps. It was obvious that giving money to owners rather than tenants and requiring tenants to pay 25% of the rent was not going to get owners on board. In fact, no one is on board. Not even half of the funds set aside have been used.

When will the government overhaul the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program so that it can live up to its name and help businesses pay their rent?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member would be aware, when this pandemic first raised its head we jumped into action to support Canadian households and businesses. In particular, we advanced programs to support the fixed costs of businesses, such as the emergency business account, the wage subsidy and, of course, the commercial rent assistance program.

Going forward, if my hon. colleague cares to take note of the throne speech, he will see that we have committed to offering further supports to extend the emergency business account and specifically help with the fixed costs of doing business.

The hon. member can rest assured that when businesses are facing difficulties as a result of this public health emergency, our government is going to be there to support them.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his reply.

Help with fixed costs is coming, but we would like to know when. Our businesses have been waiting for six months for the federal government to fix its commercial rent assistance program. Businesses needed it during the first wave, but when Ottawa did not keep its promise, they had to go into debt. Six months later, we are in the second wave, and going into debt is no longer an option. Commercial rent assistance is a federal program that is not working because of the federal government's criteria and slowness in fixing the gaps. This is the eighth day of the second lockdown.

When will the government fix its program?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take umbrage with the allegation that our support did not reach Canadian households or businesses. In fact, certain programs have reached millions of Canadians to help them keep their jobs and help businesses keep their workers on the payroll. I would be happy to continue the conversation, as we have throughout the course of the pandemic, with my colleague, the critic from the Bloc Québécois, if he has specific suggestions on what program design ought to look like. In the meantime, we are going to be hard at work developing programs that help businesses keep their doors open and keep workers on the payroll.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been reported that the U.S. trade representative is contemplating putting protectionist measures on Canadian blueberries. The B.C. Blueberry Council has been forced to hire a legal team because of the Liberal government's routine trade relations blunders. The worst part about this is that farmers from the west coast, in the Fraser Valley, and the east coast, in Oxford, Nova Scotia, have never been a priority for the Prime Minister.

What exactly does the government intend to do to prevent escalation in trade relations with our closest ally and trading partner?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member and, indeed, all Canadian farmers, producers and the agri-food industry that Canada will always stand up for them. Our government is concerned about the U.S. decision to launch the global safeguard investigation into fresh and frozen blueberries. Our agricultural products and exports are not contributing to harming the U.S. market, and Canada expects the U.S. to respect the new NAFTA safeguard provision. Rest assured that we are going to actively participate in this safeguard investigation to defend the interests of our agri-food industry.

• (1455)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are getting ready to celebrate Thanksgiving, yet Canada's poultry, egg and turkey farmers are still waiting for support measures that they have been promised by the Liberal government as a result of trade concessions. The government is not acting thankful to these farmers who have been working hard and giving to ensure Canadians are fed. The time for talking and platitudes is over. The time to deliver results is long overdue. It is almost Thanksgiving.

How much longer do these farmers have to wait to get their compensation?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure my colleague and all poultry and egg producers that we will proceed with the compensation. We have committed to making the announcement

before the end of the year for the compensation related to CETA and the CPTPP, and the conversation is ongoing for NAFTA.

We care about our farmers. This agreement was very important for the Canadian economy and very important for the agricultural sector as a whole as well.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 2020 has been a tough year for farmer Tim Bose, from my riding. First, the new U.S. trade agreement hurt his turkey production, costing him a hundred grand. Next, the COVID-19 restrictions put salt in the wound. When he thought it could not get worse, last weekend sections of his popular corn maze were destroyed. Tim is heartbroken, like many Canadian farmers who are asking their government for the support they need to keep putting food on our tables.

When will Tim get the help he was promised?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know how hard it has been for our farmers in the last year. They have had to face many challenges, and we want to thank them, because we were able to rely on them to have good food on our tables.

Members know that I am working very hard with my provincial colleagues to improve the business risk management programs. These programs are there for support, and we are committed to making them even better. For our supply-managed producers, we will also proceed with the compensation, as promised.

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*[Translation]***REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since last spring, business owners and small and medium-sized businesses have been hard hit by the economic impact of COVID-19, particularly given the current situation in Quebec this month.

I met with business owners and families from my riding who shared their concerns about the Canadian economy with me.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages tell us what the government has done to restart the economy in the greater Montreal area and, more specifically, the east end of Montreal?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for her important question and her excellent work.

Oral Questions

Here is why the Prime Minister and I announced good news last Friday. It is because we know that our businesses and workers need help in the midst of the lockdown in Montreal. That is why we invested an additional \$600 million in our regional economic development agencies.

For Montreal specifically, we invested \$30 million in PME MTL and \$750,000 in the recovery plan of the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal.

We will always be there for Montrealers, particularly those who live in Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel and eastern Montreal.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again a Liberal government policy is causing unnecessary financial stress to taxpayers.

Daryl is a pensioner in my riding who relies on the GST credit to make ends meet. He filed his taxes on time, yet received a letter from CRA stating he now has to repay the GST credit, even though his income has not changed. Why? It is because, although the Liberal government extended the filing deadline, it failed to tell people that this could cost them the GST credits.

Why can the government not simply reassess the credits after filing? Why is it adding the financial stress to Canadians?

- (1500)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government agrees that this is a difficult time for Canadians. Our government will always do what it takes to support them. The CRA remains committed to putting people first and providing high-quality services to Canadians.

I invite my colleague opposite to contact my office staff. We will follow up on his request.

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, communities in my riding are ready to start their infrastructure projects now. Aging water and waste-water systems, roads, recreational centres and utility upgrades need repairs. Small rural communities are in need of support in order for these projects to move forward. The Liberal government's utter failure on completing infrastructure projects does not provide them much hope, however.

My communities are waiting and want to know this: Where is their help?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what this difficult time has shown us is that every dollar we invest in public infrastructure can and must do triple duty. Our government is investing in infrastructure projects that are creating jobs across this

country and growing our economy. We are investing in infrastructure so that everyone gets a fair shot at success wherever they live in Canada. We are investing in infrastructure that makes our communities cleaner and more resilient.

Over the next two years our government is committed to creating one million jobs and building strong communities through investments in infrastructure, like public transit, clean energy, broadband, affordable housing for indigenous peoples and the pipe services that my friend just mentioned.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government solicited bids in March to purchase PPE for the Canadian health care system. A company in my riding, which has been doing business with Health Canada for 20 years, went through the bidding process. Unfortunately, the company tells me that there were irregularities in the approval process. I wrote to the minister in August.

Could the Prime Minister assure me that the minister will not favour Liberal friends for these contracts and that she will respect Canadian companies?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to communicate with the member opposite about the specific company in question later. However, I will say that in general, the regulators have very strict protocols to ensure that all products meet specificity about accuracy, about integrity and about the ability to actually do what they purport to do.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, our government has made it a priority to improve water infrastructure on reserves. We have come a long way in ending long-term drinking water advisories on reserve and preventing short-term advisories from becoming long term. In my riding, many constituents and groups, like the Rotary Club of Guelph, Water First, Wellington Water Watchers, University of Guelph researchers, Shared Value Solutions and many other businesses, care about these efforts and the vital work that still needs to be done.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Indigenous Services please speak to the outcomes we have already achieved and update the House on the important next steps?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite being in a global pandemic, on Monday I was proud to congratulate residents of Grassy Narrows First Nations, Asubpeeschoseewagong, on their recent elimination of all long-term drinking water advisories affecting their communities.

We are working aggressively to meet the spring 2021 deadline, and to date, 96 long-term drinking water advisories, the result of decades of government neglect, have been lifted. While we have more work to do, we will not stop until every community on reserve has access to safe and clean drinking water.

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AVIATION INDUSTRY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, COVID is having a devastating impact on the financial viability of airports across northern Canada. This summer, for example, Timmins airport suffered an 89% drop in passengers, while Sault Ste. Marie suffered a 99% drop. This is unprecedented, yet northern airports remain on the front lines for medical services, food transportation and dealing with forest fire refugees.

My question is to the Minister of Transport. When is he going to step up and answer the call of the northern mayors to address the financial crisis that we are facing with airports in a time of COVID?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is, indeed, very important that we ensure that northern parts of our country are provided with essential travel for medevacs and for the provision of essential food and supplies. That is why we put in place a program earlier this summer that will provide up to \$174 million to specifically take care of 140 northern communities. That is our recognition: We must provide those services to the north.

* * *

● (1505)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, when most people think about the future of energy, they will refer to wind farms, geothermal and solar, but far too often we forget about the power reclaimed through energy efficiency. Let us also not ignore the fact that some will try to make us believe that nuclear energy can still be considered clean, safe and reliable. The reality is that it is pointless to dream of a greener future if we are not investing massively today enough to preserve our energy, reducing demand.

My question is for the minister of energy resources. How much precisely is the government projected to invest to intensify energy efficiency in comparison with the upcoming investment to increase Canada's reliance on nuclear power?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly energy efficiency is a critical piece of moving forward with an effective climate plan. It is also an opportunity for us to think about how we create jobs and economic opportunity for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It

is part of a plan that will obviously need to include a focus on renewable energy and how we actually reduce emissions in all sectors across the country. The announcement today by the Prime Minister and Premier Ford with respect to zero-emission vehicle manufacturing is a critical piece of that plan as well. We will be moving forward to address all of those issues.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been consultations with the other parties and, if you seek it, I hope there is unanimous consent for the following motion:

I move that the House, (a) recognize that the wait times at Veterans Affairs Canada are exceedingly long, leaving some veterans without an income with which to support themselves and their loved ones while receiving the care they need; (b) recognize that government ministers and members encouraged Canadians to apply for the Canada emergency response benefit, CERB, that these members said the government would address issues with eligibility in the future, and that a small number of veterans applied for and received the CERB as a means to bridging their personal finances until such a time that their Veterans Affairs Canada applications are processed and they receive the payments they are owed with which they intend to repay the CERB; and, (c) call on the government to ensure that no veteran is fined or otherwise punished for having received the CERB when they did not meet the eligibility criteria and that those veterans not be required to repay the CERB they received until their applications at Veterans Affairs Canada are processed and their pensions are paid.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

[Translation]

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

[English]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am asking the hon. members for unanimous consent to complete my S. O. 31. Unfortunately, I was cut off due to technical difficulties.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

I believe we have unanimous consent. I will let the hon. member proceed with his S. O. 31, and then we will go to the next standing order.

The hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

* * *

MISSISSAUGA FOOD BANK

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. members.

I am so proud and humbled to be part of a community that has proven time and again what true resilience and strength are. Throughout the past several difficult months of this pandemic, the true Canadian way has been on display by our families, neighbours and community members, even through these challenging times.

An integral part of my constituency in the city of Mississauga is The Mississauga Food Bank. Its staff and supporters have worked tirelessly to help put food in the hands of our most vulnerable and needy citizens. For the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday, Mayor Bonnie Crombie and the City of Mississauga are doing a Thanksgiving food drive. I am really proud to say that my family and friends have joined, along with generous supporters from Cooksville, to rise to this challenge and raise tons of food. We were pleased to see that compassion and care take us a long way in our path to help those most in need.

I wish everyone celebrating Thanksgiving a wonderful holiday and time to reflect, keeping in mind that precautions and staying apart must be exercised over the next several weeks. I know it will be hard to stay away from our families, but again, as per our Canadian way, we will all get through this together.

* * *

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday, as per tradition, I am pleased, happy, honoured and enthusiastic to ask my counterpart on the government side to tell us what parliamentarians will be working on in the coming days.

I remind everyone that next week, all 338 Canadian parliamentarians will be back in their ridings. We will not be on vacation.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for the clarification. Indeed, we will be in our ridings, not on vacation.

This afternoon, we shall continue debate on Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code.

Tomorrow, we will begin second reading of Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Code with regard to medical assistance in dying.

When we return after our constituency week, we will resume debate on Bill C-7. We hope we can begin the debate on Bill C-5, an act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act, the Interpretation Act and the Canada Labour Code regarding a national day for truth and reconciliation. This bill has to do with Orange Shirt Day.

Government Orders

Lastly, I wish to inform the House that Tuesday, October 20 and Thursday, October 22 will be allotted days.

I wish all members a pleasant week in their ridings. I hope members will take care of themselves and their loved ones and come back in good health.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

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 Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable has two minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier has the floor to ask a question.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable.

From the beginning of this debate, I have picked up on a strong interest from the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois in protecting women and bringing in rules to make sure judges have the necessary tools and skills.

I have an 18-year-old daughter. I think we need to make sure we have every tool we can think of to protect women. I listened to what my colleague had to say, and it resonated with me.

Does my colleague for Mégantic—L'Érable interpret the lack of interest from the government and the Liberal Party the same way I do?

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one minute to answer my colleague's question.

It is a very pertinent question. He has a daughter, and I have two daughters. Obviously, when we debate subjects like today's, we want to rise to defend our daughters and wives and improve their quality of life.

I am extremely surprised and disappointed that the Liberal government has silenced all the Liberal women and fathers who wanted to express their views about the bill being debated today. I do not even know how long it has been since a Liberal member spoke on the bill. The bill is extremely important for women and girls, but unfortunately, the Liberal members have been prevented from rising and speaking.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to debate Bill C-3.

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This is a bill that is obviously getting an enthusiastic response from all those who take the time to read and appreciate it. Why? It is because it was drafted with common sense. Even better, it sends a message to women, especially those who are victims of crime. It tells them that they will be taken seriously and treated with dignity. Above all, it tells them that judges will be well trained.

If the bill is passed unanimously, and it seems that it will, new judges will be required to undergo training on how to handle sexual assault cases.

• (1515)

[*English*]

It is very sad that we have to address this issue, but it is the reality. What we have seen these last years is that sometimes judges do not have the skills necessary to address some difficult issues, such when a woman has been assaulted by other people. That is why the hon. Rona Ambrose tabled this fantastic piece of legislation, not last year, nor two years ago, but in 2017.

On February 25, 2017, the hon. Rona Ambrose, at that time the leader of the official opposition in the House of Commons, tabled that important piece of legislation as a private bill.

[*Translation*]

The bill introduced in 2017 by the Hon. Rona Ambrose, the then leader of the official opposition, requires judges to receive training so they are properly equipped to rule on sexual assault cases.

Judges will be required to participate in training and to be familiar with the issues surrounding sexual assault from the victim's perspective, in order to fully appreciate the consequences it can have on the lives of young women who are assaulted.

This bill also seeks to ensure that victims are treated with dignity and respect. Judges will be required to provide rulings in writing and make decisions in writing to fully explain the reasons for their final verdict and, above all, to ensure greater transparency.

In addition, the bill requires that an annual report be produced to assess the effects of this policy and to provide a record of rulings made in sexual assault cases.

[*English*]

This is a human piece of legislation. This address has no partisanship. We are not on the right or the left. We are not separatists or federalists. We are no more or less Canadian. We are all Canadian, but first and foremost, we are human beings. When we see that someone has been the victim of a sexual aggression, the least we can hope for is for them to have a fair treatment by our judiciary system.

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, some people have a major lack of confidence in the justice system when it comes to sexual assault. Eighty-three percent of sexual assault victims will not report what happened to the police. That is one of the most heartbreaking statistics there is in terms of justice, fairness and respect for human beings.

Anyone who has experienced the horror of a sexual assault will be scarred for life. The very least we can expect and hope for is that

the victim will be treated with the dignity all human beings deserve. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Members will remember the movie *Mourir à tue-tête*, which was filmed in the late 1970s or early 1980s. It is extremely painful to watch because it tells the sad story of a woman who was the victim of sexual assault and all of the problems that she had to deal with. Some will say that that is how it was in the 1970s and that things have changed since then. Unfortunately, that is not true.

The Hon. Rona Ambrose introduced this bill so that, at that very least, victims would feel safe when it comes time to testify in court. That is the very minimum.

[*English*]

When we think about this, we think about our mothers, our sisters and our daughters. This bill is focused on women, and that is why it is so important. In the last decade we have seen so many women who were afraid to talk about it and who did not have the courage to talk about it. However, it was not their fault. It was because they did not have confidence in the judicial system. This piece of legislation is for those women. It is there to make sure our judicial system can be trusted.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

We are very proud to point out that this bill was originally introduced by the Hon. Rona Ambrose in 2017. I had the pleasure of serving in the House for more than three years under the leadership of Ms. Ambrose, who, members will know, had quite an impressive political career.

Ms. Ambrose was elected as member of Parliament for Edmonton—Spruce Grove in the mid-2000s. She immediately put her talents to work for Canadians. I have some notes here to help me remember the main responsibilities she held within successive Harper governments.

Ms. Ambrose started as Minister of the Environment. She then became Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Minister of Labour, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, and Minister of Health. She led six departments, and no man can top all that Ms. Ambrose managed to achieve during the nine years of Conservative governments, which, as my colleagues would agree, were great and wonderful years for Canada. Canada was lucky to have had Rona Ambrose serving the people of Edmonton—Spruce Grove and leading some major departments within the government.

I had the fortune of working alongside her every day while she was the leader of our party and our parliamentary leader here, in the House of Commons. I have a little anecdote to share. After Ms. Ambrose was chosen by our peers as interim leader of the Conservative Party, I ran into her not far from here, just on the other side of the door at the Confederation Building, where my office was located. I obviously expressed my best wishes and congratulations to her.

[English]

I said, “Madam Ambrose, I am very pleased to...”.

[Translation]

She interrupted me and told me to speak to her in French. I then told her that I would speak French from then on. I took my leader's correction very seriously. This shows that this woman from Alberta cared about Canada, in all of its diversity, and about our two official languages, English and French.

[English]

It has been a real honour and privilege to serve under the strong, fantastic and very impressive leadership of the Hon. Rona Ambrose when she was our leader and the opposition leader in the House of Commons for almost three years. Ms. Ambrose is still very involved in Canada's future. She is involved in some companies, yes, but she is always involved in seeking the best future for this country.

[Translation]

We are very proud to tell the House that even though she is no longer an MP, the individual who introduced this bill, the Hon. Rona Ambrose, is still working for the good of Canadians, in service of the Canadian government, and is putting all of her talent and experience to work for Canada. All members who wish to do so will have an opportunity to speak to this bill. We are very proud to support such an important bill that will give women a justice system they can trust.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do believe that Rona Ambrose has done a great service for all Canadians. In fact, when she raised the issue here in Ottawa through her private member's bill, it was not very long before she was able to get virtually unanimous support for the legislation. In terms of its impact, it has already had an impact in at least one and possibly a couple of provincial jurisdictions that have looked for action at the provincial level. We see that as a positive thing.

We have now had the bill in different forms. We would like to see it passed. The member is very much aware of the House tactics that might be at play, as am I.

When does the member anticipate that we will be able to see the bill pass? I believe it is a unanimously supported bill. Imagine what it would take when a bill is not unanimously supported, in terms of the opposition coming from the Conservatives.

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• (1525)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, the bill is tabled based on the fact that we should respect our institutions and we should give our institutions all the tools necessary. This is why the bill addresses the information provided to judges and would make it an obligation for each and every judge to have information about sexual assault.

The member asks how we could reach an agreement on each and every bill in the House, but our responsibility as parliamentarians is to take a stand for or against a bill. In this situation, yes, we do agree that everybody will support the bill. This is why we want to give the opportunity to each and every member to speak to the bill. This bill is in our hearts so that is why we want each and every member who wants to talk about it to have the chance to do so.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's speech was heartfelt and touching.

I was delighted to hear that women are well positioned and are capable of great things. I am acutely aware that many women need to be listened to more when they are in such vulnerable situations.

My question is very simple. How will this bill help increase the confidence of victims who have to go through the whole judicial process?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I was very touched by my Bloc colleague's comments. Her very presence here illustrates the fact that we live in a great democracy, where this elected woman can fully assume her responsibilities because we can all feel confident in this place.

When women unfortunately become victims of aggression, we want them to feel confident when they appear before a judge. Unfortunately, this trust has not always existed in years past. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that victims who have experienced unfortunate, delicate, horrible and atrocious situations, such as sexual assault, will feel confident because they will know that the judge will have had the appropriate training to deal with such intolerable situations.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, first, I have great respect for my colleague, for his speech and for his comments, but we have had a lot of time to debate the bill. Rona Ambrose put the bill forward. It is a good bill. It is important. The member talked about responsibility and it is our responsibility to protect victims, to protect women who are vulnerable. Delaying the bill any further means there are more women out there that might be before a judge who does not have the training that is necessary. This died in the last Parliament at the hands of the Conservatives in the Senate.

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Does my colleague not agree that it is important that we move this forward now, especially given that it is a minority Parliament, and send this to committee so that we can get it to the Senate and support it? It seems everyone is on board, but it died on a unanimous consent motion to move it to the next level because of the Conservative Party. Maybe the member could speak to that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, the point is that, when the people decided to have a minority government, the people of Canada asked parliamentarians to work together. At least, we should have a chance to do our job. Who were the ones to decide to prorogue the House of Commons, our legislature? It was the Liberal government.

Obviously, yes, we would like to address this issue. We would like to talk about this issue. We would like to proceed with this piece of legislation. The right to talk about an issue as a parliamentarian is very important and I want to keep it as long as possible.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and privilege today to come to the House from the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation to speak about Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and certain aspects of the Criminal Code.

I agree that we are going to have unanimous consent moving the bill forward. It is a very important piece of legislation. Judges need to be educated about sexual assault and about these issues. However, I would put it to the House that the issues that have come up with judges asking inappropriate questions of women who have been sexually assaulted, those questions would not be asked of white women who are the daughters of judges, mayors, chiefs of police or members of this chamber. Those questions are asked of women who are marginalized, women of colour and indigenous women.

The speech I heard from the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre talked about the sexualization of indigenous women and girls, and how that perpetuates violence against indigenous women. We need to do much more than amend this act. The missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry has called for a task force to deal with a whole range of outstanding cases. Even to get before a judge to talk about sexual assault, there is the need to have the RCMP or police force investigate the case properly and bring forward charges, and then have those charges approved by a prosecutor.

I want to talk about a case that happened in my community. This is an 18-year-old case of a 21-year-old woman named Lisa Marie Young. In 2002, on June 29, she went out with friends, drinking, partying in town. She was at a local nightclub. At the end of the evening, she went to another party and then off to get something to eat. She was driven away by a young man in a maroon-coloured Jaguar.

She called friends to tell them that this person was not letting her go and that she wanted to leave. However, her friends, who were intoxicated, did not think to call the police or to raise attention.

The next day, Lisa Marie Young was nowhere to be found. She had very close ties with her family, her mother and father, Joanne and Don, and with her friends. People phoned the RCMP right

away, and they started to raise awareness about her being missing. An RCMP officer came by and had a discussion with them, but then went away. He was away, off duty, for five days. When they talked to someone else, that person said they should give it 48 hours. They said it was an extremely unusual situation. She had actually phoned a friend and said that she was being held against her will.

This young woman and the stories swirling around her have all been brought back to light because of a podcast put out by a journalist, Laura Palmer, called “Where is Lisa?”

It is very clear that the police did not respond in a proper way. This was a young indigenous woman. The police did not do a ground search until September 17. She went missing on June 30 and the police did not engage in a ground search until September 17. It was members of her first nation, the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation of the Tofino area, those family members, who conducted searches on their own, without the aid of the RCMP.

The RCMP did not interview anybody from the nightclub this young woman was at. They did not interview some of her friends. They did not do a Crime Stoppers video until 2009. The family had been asking for a Crime Stoppers video about Lisa's disappearance, and they did not go through with that until 2009. They made sure there was a good likeness of Lisa on that Crime Stoppers video, but the young man in question, Chris Adair, who was driving that Jaguar, a preppy-looking kid from a privileged family, was made to look like a street tough. They botched that.

● (1530)

The police handling of the car used to drive Lisa to her death location is another issue. The Jaguar reportedly was not examined by the RCMP until after the owner, a well-known realtor in Qualicum, had it steam-cleaned and detailed. If this young woman had been the daughter of a judge, a mayor or a member of the House, that would not have been the case. The police would have been all over this right away.

The RCMP dismissed an urgent call from a witness who is believed to be an associate and accomplice of Lisa's killers who called to alert the Young family that Lisa's body was being moved at the moment it was being moved from the original location. The RCMP ignored that call, basically saying that she was not a credible witness, mainly because she was tied to criminals, there might have been drugs involved and she might have been street-involved.

As I said, the people at the Jungle Nightclub where Lisa was last seen were not interviewed, neither were the staff. The RCMP failed to respond to other members of the public seeking to provide information on Lisa's disappearance or murder. In some instances, police have entirely failed to respond. In other instances, their response has been delayed.

One informant, a former associate of the prime suspect believed to be Lisa's killer, one of several responsible in her death, called the RCMP in 2006 to report details of Lisa's murder, a videotape of the crime and more. What people have said about this case is that Lisa was taken to make a "snuff" film. They said she was drugged, sexually assaulted and then killed by accident, that it was not the intention to actually go through with the whole process, but she apparently died in the process. The people who know about this have come forward to talk about it, but because they are all associated and known to police, and known to people who are known to police, it has not been investigated properly.

It is also suspected by people in this community that the prime suspect in this case was a police informant. This echoes what happened in Nova Scotia. The killer in Nova Scotia was suspected of being a police informant, and police have no obligation to release any of that information or to talk about that information.

There are multiple issues of concern with this case. The prime suspect did a polygraph, which the police said he passed. Lisa Marie's mother, Joanne, was taken to the Parksville Police Station to take part in an interview with Chris Adair, who was the last person known to see Lisa alive. She was told by the RCMP to hug Chris. Who does that? How does this happen?

This is an outrageous case, and Laura Palmer has outlined all of this in a seven-hour podcast. Once the podcast was released this summer, the RCMP started actually doing some interviews of people. However, this case just goes to show why the missing and murdered indigenous women's inquiry has called for a task force to be looking into these cases to find out why the RCMP and other police forces have not gone through the proper procedures of ensuring that these cases are investigated properly. These young indigenous women who have been murdered, mothers, daughters, sisters, have not had their cases taken seriously.

We need to do a lot more than educate judges. We need to deal with bringing justice to our justice system for all, because it is not justice for all right now. This is a system that prioritizes people who count in the eyes of the justice system. If Lisa Marie Young had been a white woman and a daughter of a prominent business person in this community, that case would have been investigated properly.

I am challenging the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to get this process going with this task force to look into these cases of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I invite them to come and talk to me. I will bring this family forward, and they can tell them their story. They can give them all of the information that they know, and the names of people involved in this case. This is an outrageous case, and I know that there are other cases like this across Canada.

I am thankful for this time to be able to speak about this.

• (1535)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to emphasize that this is a bill that is widely supported. I suspect that members will find that, when the vote does

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eventually take place, it will be passed unanimously. It is always encouraging when we have debates on important issues. There is no doubt sexual assault is one of those issues. I have invited my Conservative Party friends to look at the possibility of incorporating one of their opposition day motions to not only talk about the assault issues, but also other issues that are having such a huge impact on our society.

I am wondering if my colleague, and I suspect his party supports this bill, would support the Conservative Party having an opposition day motion on something of this nature, which expands upon the issue.

• (1540)

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, the Green Party is, in fact, supporting this bill, and the opposition party members can do opposition days on whatever they feel is important to them.

I would ask that the parliamentary secretary bring my request forward to caucus and cabinet, that we get this task force going on the murdered and missing indigenous women and girls inquiry, and that we deal with these situations with all of these stories and cases properly, so that the families, friends and communities that are affected by these cases see justice.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member's party on the election of its new leader.

We have talked about a number of themes in this debate. The member spoke about the need for action on the issue of murdered and missing indigenous women. I wonder what he thinks about some of the ideas for responding that have been put forward previously, things like having better national coordination in terms of missing persons, as well as issues around police training.

I would also appreciate his comments on the idea of whether it is too late to have training happening when someone is entering the bench. Of course, it is important to have that training if someone has not received it before, but they probably should have received it much earlier in their lives and much earlier in their careers.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I believe that anybody going through law school should be educated on these issues well before they get a chance to come to the bench.

I think that educating police is also very important. We need to do a much better job of educating police forces. My sister was in the Ontario Provincial Police for 25 years and she will tell anyone that there is not enough training for people before they get to have a gun, a badge and the power to police.

We do need better national integration on these cases.

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Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for outlining the case of Lisa Marie Young. She is the granddaughter of my very good friend Moses Martin, and I know that her family member, Carol Frank, organizes a walk in my colleague's riding every year, which is very important. People light their porch on June 30 every year, so that we do not forget about Lisa Marie Young.

The family specifically said that RCMP officers should have specific training on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and better access to information on cases, and that the penalty system is too lenient for not following through on that.

Can the member speak about those important asks by the family and Tla-o-qui-aht nation for these actions?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I agree that everything that this family is asking for should be acted upon. We need to learn from this situation. It is a horrific case, and it needs to be looked into seriously with a task force and those recommendations acted on.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that I unequivocally support this bill. As a new member of Parliament, I did not have the opportunity to state my support for this legislation in the last Parliament, so I am very thankful for the opportunity to do it now. It is my hope that, once passed and proclaimed, this legislation ushers in a new era of change, one of accountability and trust within our legal system and one of real justice for women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people facing sexual violence every day.

In the 43rd Parliament, a record number of 98 women were elected to the House. The statistics on sexual assault say that 32%, or one in three women, over the age of 15 will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime, and that is only based on the reported data. This means that as female parliamentarians we come to the House and this debate with lived experience.

I also have the lived experience of being a resource teacher for youth and of having dozens of children disclose to me the traumas they have endured in their lives: the mental anguish and stress, the inability to trust. I have sat in courtrooms where abusers had more rights than the victims, where delay tactics and games prolonged the experience until a victim gave up, until they had been worn down enough from inaction and intimidation. To think that Canadian judges, those entrusted to uphold our laws, to protect victims and to deter further crimes, could be complicit in lending power to abusers through such ignorance and gaslighting is unthinkable.

I wish to thank Rona Ambrose for having the courage to bring this issue to light with her private members' bill. I also wish to thank the Liberal government for bringing it back as Bill C-3, and thank my colleagues on all sides of this House for their words, solidarity and support for seeing this through.

I would be remiss if I did not include the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and the ongoing systemic racism in our legal system. New Brunswick's chiefs are calling for a full inquiry into the failures of our system with respect to indigenous peoples, particularly women, whose lives have not been given the respect and dignity they deserve.

The issue of missing and murdered indigenous women has deep roots in the early days of colonization, where invading forces recognized the power and stature of women in traditional indigenous society. Just as they intentionally decimated the buffalo because it was the lifeblood of the indigenous economy on the plains, they decimated the population of indigenous women as the lifeblood of the people.

The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls reveals that persistent and deliberate human and indigenous rights violations and abuses are the root cause behind Canada's staggering rates of violence against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people. Testimony from family members and survivors gives context to this violence, marked by multi-generational and intergenerational trauma and marginalization. This takes the form of poverty, insecure housing or homelessness, and barriers to education, employment, health care and cultural support. Experts and knowledge keepers spoke to specific colonial and patriarchal policies that displaced women from their traditional roles in communities and governance and that diminished their status in society, leaving them vulnerable to violence and sexual assault.

Human rights and indigenous rights abuses committed and condoned by the Canadian state represent genocide against indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA people. Given the failures of our education system to confront these realities until recently, we find ourselves in a position where the people with the responsibility to offer justice to survivors of sexual violence are from a generation when consent was not part of the discussion, when the burden was put on women to avoid being sexually assaulted rather than holding men accountable for their sexual violence, when considering how many sexual partners a woman had reflected on her worth as a person and when the intersectionality of misogyny and racism was not well understood.

This is reflected in some of the comments that have been made by judges in recent years. They wonder why a woman could not simply keep her knees together, comment that she should be flattered to receive the attention or reinforce the flawed notion that a drunk woman can provide consent. This shows without a shadow of a doubt that many judges are not well educated on sexual assault. They have the power to influence the victim's recovery, but in many cases we see the victim is left retraumatized and without justice.

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Judges are entrusted with an important job that carries a number of privileges but also comes with significant responsibilities, and if they are missing important knowledge surrounding myths, stereotypes and biases, their ability to accurately interpret the facts and the law will be impacted. Until our bench more accurately reflects the makeup of our society, it is essential to ensure that judges are empowered with the education they need to do their job effectively.

Rape is not about sex; it is about power. It is our job as parliamentarians to ensure that our system restores power to those who have had it taken from them. Perhaps someday our legal system will live up to its other name, Canada's justice system, but we are not there yet.

• (1550)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, many important points have been raised by my colleague and by many members in the House today during this important debate. I am glad the conversation is happening. I know that when people see conversations happen in this place, maybe they are encouraged to come forward and seek counselling and support.

I wonder if the member can just share a bit more about additional steps we can take as parliamentarians. As has been pointed out, this is a relatively small step. We are requiring training for people at a fairly late stage in their career.

What more can we do to respond to this problem, to work together to address the broader, long-standing issues that the member spoke to in her remarks?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, there is so much more that we need to be doing. It is such a multifaceted issue. We mentioned some of the health outcomes and education outcomes. There are so many aspects that we need to address here.

My mind went directly to the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women, in particular, and the need for the actions to actually start happening. A big piece of that is for Canada to actually acknowledge the genocide. I know we have had a hard time saying that word in connection with our own country, but until we can have that truth, that reconciliation piece is not there and the justice piece is not there. That is a big thing I would like to see from all my colleagues: to acknowledge the genocide that has occurred in our country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Fredericton for her speech, and I congratulate her on the Green Party's new leader.

I noticed that my colleague is deeply concerned about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. That issue is near and dear to my heart, and I hope to have the chance to study it as a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on how long it is taking us to put this bill to the vote. I would like her to comment on the Liberals' decision to prorogue Parliament, which set the bill back because we had to restart debate on a new bill.

I would also like her to comment on the fact that the Conservatives voted against the NDP motion to speed up passage of this bill in the last session. In this case, I think we all agree that, while training judges will not fully address the important issue of violence against women, it is an important step toward achieving that.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question.

[*English*]

We have heard a bit about the filibustering or delay tactics with this bill. Again, as an opposition member, I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak to it, so it is interesting to see that come from our Liberal colleagues when Parliament was prorogued and we had a delay already of several weeks. There are games being played on all sides, and these issues are far too important for any games to be played.

I respect my colleague across the way so much because she is always fighting for the most vulnerable in her community, without delay, calling for action. I feel a lot of camaraderie with her. That is what we all need to be doing. Enough of the games, let us get the work done.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, "Reclaiming Power and Place" is the final report that came from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I recall advocating for that inquiry to take place when we were in opposition. I am very concerned and impassioned, as I know all members are, that we move on the issue of reconciliation. One of the bills that we were hoping to get to is Bill C-5, which deals with one of the calls to action.

Does my colleague believe that we need to continue to have a dialogue and deal with some of these issues in a more timely fashion so that we are able to deal with more legislation?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, we absolutely need to move quickly. We need to speed things up for sure. I would love to get to Bill C-5. I also have my support on the table for that.

To say that I would not allow other parliamentarians to speak to this bill, as I have just been given that opportunity, would not be fair. If that is what the opposition needs, to continue to speak to this bill, then I think those members should have that opportunity. Again, it is a day of opposition time when we have had five weeks of Parliament prorogued. In comparison, this is part of the process and I would allow them to use the time as they need it.

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• (1555)

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking my former colleague, Rona Ambrose. She was also the former leader of the Conservative Party and the official opposition in this place. She is the originator of the bill we are debating today. Rona Ambrose has done, and continues to do, a tremendous amount of work on behalf of women and girls, not only here in Canada but around the world. When this bill was introduced in 2017 in its original form, I had the opportunity to sit down with her, hear her heart and understand the purpose of this piece of legislation. At that time, I also had the opportunity to sit on the status of women committee, where we discussed this legislation and its importance at length.

This bill is about ensuring that trust is maintained in the judicial system and that survivors of sexual assault are respected by the judicial system here in Canada and, therefore, feel free and comfortable to come forward with their cases. It mandates that, to be appointed as a judge of a Superior Court, an individual must undergo training with regard to sexual assault law and social context, including attending seminars.

This would ensure that Superior Court judges are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to address sexual assault trials, and that survivors are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve in such a vulnerable scenario. For the purposes of transparency and openness, judges would also be required to provide written reasoning for their decisions when it comes to sexual assault proceedings. These parameters seem very common sense to me.

One would like to argue that this type of training is unnecessary but, sadly, one scenario after another points to the fact that it would be helpful. For example, in 2014, Alberta Federal Court justice Robin Camp asked a sexual assault complainant, "Why couldn't you just keep your knees together?" That was inappropriate. Most Canadians recognize that this kind of degrading and humiliating language is entirely unacceptable and should never be used in any context, let alone in a Federal Court. This is a classic case of a judge misusing his place of authority and power to further make the victim into yet another victim because of his words, actions and degradation toward her.

I have the highest regard for judges, and recognize the burden they face in having to administer justice and apply the law to determine guilt or innocence. This can be extremely challenging. Although Canada has the best justice system in the world, it certainly is not without its flaws. We put a tremendous amount of trust in our judges to function with integrity and professionalism. We expect the best of them. It is in everyone's best interests, then, that they be equipped with the tools, skills and training necessary for them to do their jobs extremely well.

We all know that sexual assault is a serious issue. I believe we would all agree that it should be eradicated. Unfortunately, however, it is very much a reality. More than 11 million Canadians have been physically or sexually assaulted from the age of 15 onward. This represents 39% of all Canadian women to have experienced this. On average, one woman or girl is killed every two and a half days right here in our own country.

Furthermore, Statistics Canada reports that only 5% of women who are sexually assaulted actually bring it to the attention of the police, not because they do not want justice but because they are afraid of being further victimized. That is only 5%. This statistic should be alarming to everyone but it gets worse: Of the 5% who report their sexual assault cases, only 21% take them to court. Then, of the 21% that go to court, only 12% of those cases result in a conviction. That is 12% of 21% of 5%. This means that there is a 98% chance that sexual assault offenders will go scot-free. That should not be the case. Every single individual in this country who commits such a heinous crime should be put behind bars.

That type of conduct is not acceptable in Canadian society, so why is it that 98% are going free and 2% are being convicted?

• (1600)

This bill falls in line with my party's long-standing commitment to defend victims of crime. Sexual assault is one of the only crimes in Canada right now that is not declining, and the Liberals have failed to work to prevent this. Contrary to the Liberals, the Conservatives believe that we must stand with victims, that we must choose them over criminals and that this is what in fact strengthens our justice system. For that reason, we passed more than 30 justice and public safety bills during our time in office, including the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. We put that bill in place because victims of crime and their families deserve to be treated with dignity, respect and honour. It is absolutely vital that victims' rights be put before the rights of criminals, full stop.

In contrast, during their time in government, the Liberal members across the aisle put in place Bill C-75. This bill decreases sentence times for heinous crimes like female genital mutilation, forced marriage, causing bodily harm and other heinous crimes such as infanticide, etc. There is a whole list of them. It is the complete opposite of what one would hope for from one's government.

I would like to finish my speech by imploring the government across the aisle to continue former Prime Minister Harper's legacy of taking a compassionate stance toward victims. Under the Harper government, more than 30 new laws were passed to protect victims, hold offenders accountable and increase efficiency in the justice system.

During our time in government, we invested \$162 million through Status of Women Canada to fund projects to end violence against women and girls.

In 2015, we committed to invest another \$200 million over five years. That was cut by the government.

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In 2012, Conservatives launched the national action plan to combat human trafficking. That plan was in line with the United Nations trafficking protocol and focused on four pillars: prevention, protection of victims, prosecution of offenders, and working in partnership with domestic and international groups, and \$6 million per year was invested into the national action plan to combat human trafficking. Again, the Liberal government has no interest in that plan.

In 2009, we amended the Criminal Code to raise the age of sexual consent from 14 to 16 through this bill.

In 2009, again, we strengthened the national sex offender registry by making it accessible to the public so that people would know if there were high-risk offenders in their area.

In 2010, we implemented the Protecting Victims From Sex Offenders Act to protect women from repeat violent and sexual offenders.

Through Status of Women Canada, we funded innovative projects to prevent and respond to sexual violence against women and girls, engaged men and boys in ending violence, and addressed harmful cultural practices such as forced marriage and genital mutilation.

Canada's Conservatives believe that the safety of Canadians should be the number one priority of any government and that all forms of harassment, sexual violence and discrimination are absolutely unacceptable and should be condemned. We know that a strong criminal justice system must always put the rights of victims before the rights of criminals. Canada's Conservatives will always stand on the side of those who are victimized.

It is my hope that this bill will bring some level of comfort to victims of sexual assault when they consider pressing charges and bringing their cases before a court. Sexual assault victims are some of the most vulnerable individuals. They need to be treated as such. Many perpetrators are not brought to justice because victims fear that they will meet with prejudice, closed ears or bias. These victims need as much support as they can possibly attain. I hope that this bill will take us one step closer to being able to provide victims with that confidence and that level of security and assurance that they require.

In closing, I look forward to this bill receiving unanimous support in this place so that we can send a unified message to all Canadians from coast to coast that we will always stand on behalf of victims and insist on a fair and compassionate justice system.

• (1605)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my thanks to my colleague for her speech and her commitment to the government's Bill C-3. I share many of the member's concerns, particularly with respect to some of the statistics that she cited regarding women who are victims of sexual assault not feeling comfortable going to the police, pressing charges and moving ahead with our judicial system and its processes.

In that context, would the member be favourable to some of the proposals that we made in our throne speech with respect to community policing and other reforms of our judicial system and, in particular, our policing in Canada?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, this is not about playing political games or scoring points. It is not about a throne speech that the Liberals needed to put forward because they prorogued Parliament. They needed to skirt their way out of a scandal. In particular, the Prime Minister needed to get his way out of a scandal.

There were three committees that were very active, very engaged and very much able to attain data to show that the Prime Minister was perhaps guilty of giving \$912 million to his closest friends at the WE Charity foundation. Because of those things, the government had to shut down Parliament, give a throne speech and now the member opposite would like me to engage her on that issue. That is not the issue. The issue here today has to do with victims of sexual assault, not covering up the corrupt Prime Minister.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the parliamentary secretary that she had an opportunity to ask her question without being interrupted and I would ask her to extend that respect when she is receiving an answer even though she may not be in agreement with that answer. I would also remind opposition members to ensure that they also do not go back and forth while someone has the floor.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

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

I am also pleased to hear that she thinks it is important for judges to have better training to deal with cases involving victims of sexual assault.

I believe that justices of the Supreme Court must have another important skill, and that is the ability to communicate in Canada's two official languages. In 2006, the Harper government appointed unilingual anglophone judges to the Supreme Court. In 2010, the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada, Graham Fraser, stated in his report that it was essential that Supreme Court justices be bilingual. We know that official bilingualism is still a problem in 2020. In 2011, the Conservative government, still under Mr. Harper, had not really taken into consideration the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Earlier I heard the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent proudly state that Ms. Ambrose impressed on the Conservative Party the importance of the French language.

Does my colleague from Lethbridge agree that we must ensure that bilingualism is an official appointment criterion for a Supreme Court justice, the highest position in the land for a judge?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, certainly, Canada is a bilingual country. I believe it is in the best interests of Canadians that our judges are able to speak both languages. I also understand that at times there are limitations around this because there are other qualifications that must be considered as well. I would have to give further consideration to this.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was interested to hear the member across the way talk about all the things the Harper government did, but she failed to mention the fact that it eliminated the phrase “gender equality” from the Status of Women. It closed 12 of the 16 Status of Women offices. It reallocated funding from organizations that supported advocacy for women's human rights. It eliminated funding to the Court Challenges Program.

Why did the member decide not to highlight those things that had a significant and horrible impact on women?

• (1610)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, the member opposite was chirping something, so I am not sure if maybe you would like to turn the attention to him? He seems to have something to say.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Lethbridge does not want to respond?

As the member does not want to respond, we will go to the hon. member for Saskatoon—University.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be here to put my comments and support on the record for Bill C-3.

To understand this bill, it is important to back to where it came from. It is very fortunate that our former leader, Rona Ambrose, saw the need, saw the problem and looked for a solution. If we as parliamentarians can find a little of that every day in our duty, we will be in a pretty good place in the country.

We do not need endless study. We need action and fortunately for our judiciary, this is what this will be. I would once again like to thank Rona for all her advocacy work on this file.

I was duly elected last year. I understand that this has been debated, went to committee and has been discussed at length. I am honoured to add my comments and my support to the initiative because it is needed.

I did some research after being informed that I would have the honour to speak to the bill and it was probably some of the toughest reading I have done in this job, to read first-hand what some sexual assault victims had faced. This is very much needed.

I interacted with couple of people and I want to highlight how the bill will affect our country, and thankfully it will. I think of Erica in Montreal. She is a rape counsellor. Throughout the day and even some evenings she counsels people on the phone and in person on some horrific crimes. Hearing these stories through these victims, it stays with her. I suspect she is thinking about it long after the day is done. I think about the number of people Erica would have counselled, that may not have been strong enough to report

charges for some of the unfortunate incidents of sexual assaults. Sometimes it is family members.

We know that a fraction of cases actually go before a judge. The number of crimes not reported is probably one of the more eye-opening statistics I witnessed during my research. Probably the most impactful measure in the bill to improve things is making the court system much more understanding of these victims. That will go a long way in helping Erica. She will still have those long days and long consulting sessions with clients, but at least she will know that if those cases do go forward, they will find themselves in front of a judge who has the training to be much more sensitive to the victims.

I think of Kim, a prosecutor in the Hamilton region, and all the times she showed up to court and the victim was not there, because of fear of past injustices toward people who had been sexually assaulted. I think of the days when Kim goes to court and may witness court proceedings that we would not want for any of our loved ones. She has to stomach it.

• (1615)

Things really hit home when I started reading different articles and research. I would like to read one passage that is impactful and has guided my belief of how worthwhile Bill C-3 is. It is from “Aiming for Justice: The Legal System Has Failed Sexual Assault Survivors”.

It reads, “She was a 19-year-old indigenous woman, and the assault was as brutal as it could be. The accuser slapped her repeatedly, forced her to crawl, bit her hard enough to break the skin, threatened to cut her into pieces if she didn't stop screaming, and forced himself into her mouth and then into her. A roommate called 911, and yet even when four police officers rushed in and shouted at him to stop, they had to pull him forcefully off the naked, screaming victim. It's hard to imagine a more open and shut criminal case. Unlike the vast majority of sexual assaults, there was no possibility of the victim failing to report to the police. Four police officers after all were witnesses, and yet the cross-examination of the complainant stretched over five exhausting days. The defendant's lawyer repeatedly suggested that the victim was lying, even though four police officers witnessed the crime, and forced her to describe the sexual acts. The young woman complied, against her will, to testify, and was so distraught by the grilling she endured on the stand that she refused to return to court. She was then arrested and compelled to return. Halfway through the week-long cross-examination, she tried to admit herself to the hospital, fearful that she was being driven to suicide. The next day, he was questioning the witness about whether she had gone to the hospital because she had overdosed on drugs. Over and over, she expressed agony at having to relive the assault.”

For me, hearing first-hand how these victims have been revictimized really reinforces why this bill is so needed. Additional training could help avoid victims being revictimized by defence lawyers and help improve our system.

The article goes on about what these tactics are called and why defence lawyers use them. It continues, “Multiple scenarios from recent sexual assault trials involve pit bull tactics. Judges hesitate to stop such questioning because they believe they may be uneducated about the law or may hold sexist beliefs themselves. Judges may also hesitate out of fear the judgment will be overturned on the basis that the judge interfered with the right of the defence to question a witness.”

This case is an example of where I believe additional training would help. If there is the possibility a victim does not have to face what this victim has, it is worth it.

I know we have great judges in Canada. I believe the vast majority are appointed to these roles because of the work they have done in their careers and on a personal level. They are good individuals, but there are some who would benefit from a little more training on sexual assault. I am so grateful that, with this change, we would be granting that opportunity to these judges, especially the very small few who may need this extra training.

I would like to also thank the other opposition parties that made this possible. It was a Conservative bill, Bill C-337, introduced by our former leader. I am very grateful to the Liberals and the members who are here today for picking this up and making this a government motion. In a very short time, this will be read a third time and with royal assent become law.

I am so grateful for my role as a parliamentarian and to add my comments to the record on Bill C-3.

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• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is important to have these concrete examples, which give us reason to believe in the outcome of the changes made to this bill. We are getting there and I am very proud of that.

That being said, considering the comments and specific knowledge of some people, which my colleague talked about, I would like us to already be thinking about the longer term. In his view, what other amendments would help increase the level of trust and allow victims to be treated with as much respect as possible?

[*English*]

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is correct in the assumption that this is not going to fix all that ails our society. It is not going to fix sexual assault in Canada. We are still going to have that scourge.

It does send a message that we will not tolerate in our judges ideas and thoughts that belong in days long gone.

My commitment as a parliamentarian is that, if additional measures and bills are introduced on the floor of this assembly, I would be very interested in furthering the work that we are starting with this bill. It has been three long years. It is time to get the job done, and I am very grateful that this will be done soon enough.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me to say how moved I was by my colleague's speech. Clearly, he feels very strongly about this issue and is quite passionate about women's rights and the rights of sexual assault victims.

I wonder if the member has any suggestions with respect to creating even more allies, through perhaps education, such as unconscious bias training, for younger people or other populations.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the question raises somewhat the same issue as the first question I had the honour of answering. There is more work to be done. This is not the end. If we look at training and education, I do not think there is anybody who would say that they are smart enough, have been trained enough and do not need any further training.

An overarching belief in my system is that we can always learn more. I would be interested to hear what other steps we could consider as a Parliament.

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Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague raised the important issues of aggressive cross-examination and the impact that can have on people's willingness to come forward, as well as the pain that could be associated with those cross-examinations. Training will not change the fact that defence lawyers may choose to use that tactic. Judges, even if they are educated, may fear that to intervene would lead to problems at appeal.

This may be an area for further study, but I wonder if the member has suggestions for additional things we should consider to deter aggressive cross-examinations in cases where it is not actually going to produce any information that is useful for the determination of guilt or innocence, but is just used as an intimidation tactic.

• (1625)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I am not a lawyer. I have not been trained in law in Canada. However, from my experience, I would expect that judges today would involve themselves if, in their minds, the defence has gone a little too far in their cross-examination.

I am not a judge. I am not a member of the court. As much as this is a court of record, I am not a member of a judiciary court, and I would not comment on the practices of judges. I would need to do further study on these different tactics.

However, I do know, and I have read, that some of these tactics are terrible. They are terrible in that they revictimize the victim. I would hope that some additional sensitivity training would help.

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I give my first speech in this session of the 43rd Parliament, I would like to thank the amazing people in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra for allowing me the privilege to stand here today. I want them to know that it is my joy and honour to serve them, especially during this unique and challenging time in Canadian history.

I am grateful to stand here in the House of Commons as a woman speaking on Bill C-3, legislation that I trust will mark one step forward in the healing and empowering of women and girls to thrive and beautify the world with their vision, wisdom and love. I would like to thank the Hon. Rona Ambrose, former interim leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and the official opposition. She originally introduced it as Bill C-337 on February 27, 2017. I am encouraged to see this legislation adopted by the Liberal government earlier this year as Bill C-5 and reintroduced in this session as Bill C-3. I am happy to see many members contribute their ideas, thoughts and feelings during the course of debate on the bill.

One in three women around the world is victim to physical or sexual violence. In Canada, young women aged 15 to 24 years have the highest rate of sexual assaults, 71 incidents for every population of 1,000. The impact of COVID-19 has created an environment of an increase in violence against women and girls, but I know there is hope because of counsellors, social workers and community outreach programs on the front lines across Canada that provide a safe oasis for vulnerable and victimized women.

On that note, I would like to thank Tri-City Transitions, a shelter for domestically abused women and children in my community.

The unconditional love and caring work of women like Carol Metz and her counsellors help the women in my community find hope to heal and the courage to break free from the cycles of abuse and violence.

I am also grateful for the tireless work of champions like Mary O'Neill and recovery programs like Talitha Koum that provide caring mentorship to help women reclaim their lives, not only from addiction but many times the trauma behind their substance abuse. I thank them for being beacons of hope to women who are hiding in the shadows of fear, broken will and shattered self-image. The sad truth is that the fact that we need more shelters and programs for victims of domestic violence and assault, and the fact that they exist, shows a broken system that allows the cycle to perpetuate. This cycle must stop.

I support Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act and the Criminal Code, because it is one step in a long series of many steps we must take to break the cycle of violence and abuse against women. Bill C-3 addresses the lack of justice for women in the court of law by seeking to improve the interactions between sexual assault complainants and the justice system, specifically the judiciary. Bill C-3 seeks to amend the Judges Act to restrict eligibility of who may be appointed a judge of a superior court by requiring them to commit to undertaking and participating in continuing education on matters related to sexual assault law and social context, including attending seminars.

This bill also requires the Canadian Judicial Council to submit an annual report to Parliament on delivery and participation in the sexual assault information seminars established by it. Bill C-3 also requires judges to provide reasons for their decisions in sexual assault cases.

We need only look at a couple of incidents as prototypes of court decisions that show reviling misogyny and biases. Robin Camp, a former federal judge, in 2014, when the alleged rape victim was testifying, asked her why she could not just keep her knees together. Throughout the trial, he criticized her for not screaming while the alleged assault took place and suggested she wanted to have sex. Camp later acquitted the defendant, Alexander Wagar. After acquitting him, he told the defendant, "I want you to tell your friends, your male friends, that they have to be far more gentle with women." This is absolutely disgusting.

Cindy Gladue, an indigenous woman, was paid for sex by Bradley Barton, the alleged killer, and was found dead in a pool of blood in a motel room after a violent death. I dare not repeat how graphic that picture was because it is just so reviling. The judge presiding over the trial repeatedly referred to her as native and a prostitute. Barton was acquitted because of biases formed against Gladue's history. Such appalling incidents further victimize and silence women from speaking up. It is also unjust for families of victims.

• (1630)

The majority, 83%, of sexual assaults are not reported to police. These two examples alone illustrate very clearly the cause of this hesitation: 67% of women in Canada have no confidence in the justice system and of the 20% of women who take their cases to court, only 10% that make it to court come out with convictions. Among those convicted, only 7% of the perpetrators actually get punished with jail time. Others get probation or fines at the judge's discretion. There is no justice, so why would these women pursue it?

Insult is added to injury when they are left to walk away, feeling like the ones who were sentenced. When an agent of authority like a federal judge gaslights a woman before the court, where does that leave her? There is no justice for that woman. That little seedling of self-esteem she fought to salvage is trampled, but the chain of injustice is long.

There is fear of retaliation from perpetrators when they are not locked up in jail and are free to stalk and repeat their offences, and perhaps even go further and murder the victims. The lack of support, condemnation, shaming and shunning that victims experience from taboos and cultural stigmas prevent women from speaking up. If the perpetrator is someone she knows, like a friend, acquaintance or neighbour, as is the case in 52% of sexual assault incidents, it is even harder.

The court's decision can take away a victim's credibility in the community and inevitably put a toll on the mental and physical health of that victim. It takes a lot of courage for women who have experienced sexual assault to speak up.

I just want to pause here and commend and congratulate the women who have taken steps to speak up and go to the courts. This is why we are standing here as parliamentarians. They inspire us. It takes a lot of courage for women who have experienced sexual assault to speak up and seek the justice they deserve. They have to relive the trauma when speaking about it. If they go forward to the courts, they risk being condemned for speaking up.

Similarly, it does not help when families of victims like those who came forward with testimonies for the report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls have to relive their traumas through the retelling of their stories and now still await action from the government. However, I hope that these discussions will inspire the government to take action more quickly.

I am very proud that my Conservative colleagues in the last Parliament supported the "JUST Act", because we recognized that the justice system failed to respect the experiences of victims of sexual assault far too often. I would like to thank Ms. Ambrose again for her work on this important file.

Government Orders

As I support Bill C-3, I do so with a hope that it is an important step among lawmakers in Canada to improve the justice system to work for all people, including women and girls, and not against them. Bill C-3 is a positive beginning, but simply that. I hope the passage of the bill will not give license to the government or my colleagues across all aisles to simply relax, because the bill does not get to the root of violence against women.

If we are to break the cycle of violence against women, we need to get to the root. The root begins with the family and the way women are treated by their intimate partners and their parents. Domestic violence breeds abuse and violence. There needs to be more education, awareness and a breaking of the code of shame and silence. Speaking with women's shelters, men also need mentoring and accountability. They are a missing part of the puzzle that is necessary to make the healing journey for families and society fullsome.

Indigenous communities need all the support they can get to help their women, and the provinces cannot do all of this alone. We need all tiers of government and all community front-line agencies to work together to create long-term solutions. Prevention will save lives.

My mandate as a member of Parliament is to contribute to the making and passing of laws and policies that will help heal individuals, families and society, so each person will prosper, so Canada will prosper and that personal peace will help build a strong and free nation. Bill C-3 is a bill that I am happy to support and reminds me why I am here. However, let us not applaud too loud, lest we become complacent and fail to do the daunting work that lies ahead: to heal our women and our nation.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I heard many things that really resonate with me, namely respect for women's bodies, their right to not suffer genital mutilation, and the fact that they do not have to enter into a forced marriage. All of this really speaks to me, but there is still one issue remaining, something that was not named.

Points of Order

Sometimes after a rape, a woman might end up pregnant with a child she does not want to carry. When we talk about revictimization, I wonder if leaving the woman no choice is a form of victimization. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on the fact that we must assure women that in future this issue will no longer be debated and that they will not become victims again as a result of what they have suffered.

[*English*]

Ms. Nelly Shin: Madam Speaker, those are issues that certainly require sensitivity and compassion. When it comes to the rights of women, especially after a rape, I do not think it would be questionable for anyone to consider that a woman has a choice to do what would make her feel safe and that she is not being victimized again.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, absolutely no one questions the importance of the issue of sexual assault and the severity of it. There is a need for the House of Commons to deal with it in whatever way it can. This is a very good example. In fact, I am expecting there will be unanimous support for the legislation. I see that as strong and encouraging.

Would the member not agree that when the national government takes a positive action of this nature, it actually has a positive reflection in other jurisdictions? For example, I understand at least a couple provinces are doing something of a similar nature for appointments at the provincial level of the judicial system. How important is it that we, as a national government, demonstrate leadership on such important issues?

Ms. Nelly Shin: Madam Speaker, the reason we are all here is because we want to see a better society. Before we get elected, we go through many processes to come to this place. We spend lots of money and the time resources of our volunteers to be here. We owe it to our country that we do show leadership. I am grateful for opportunities like this on issues that unify the House of Commons, give us the opportunity to inspire the other tiers of government and show that we can work together.

● (1640)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which pointed out that police apathy was indicative of racism and sexism that revictimized girls and women.

What does the member think of the proposed sexual assault and social context aspects of this legislation extending into police services as well as judges? Not in this legislation, perhaps, but overall.

Ms. Nelly Shin: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's sensitivity on these issues. Just as the parliamentary secretary stated, I hope that this does inspire and trickle down to all levels of law enforcement.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Indige-

nous Affairs; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, COVID-19 Emergency Response; the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, Natural Resources.

[*English*]

We are going to resume debate. We are just going to double-check that the technology is working.

I will recognize the member for Calgary Midnapore. Is the member able to check her camera? I can hear her, but I cannot see her.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have had this problem before. I apologize.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seems to be a technical issue. The best thing to do is allow the member to do her speech, and we can maybe work with IT to see how best to resolve this in the future.

There is a point of order from the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

* * *

● (1645)

POINTS OF ORDER

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES OF MEMBERS PARTICIPATING VIRTUALLY

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know this is new and we do not have any established procedures for it, but I wonder if it is advisable to set a precedent of allowing members to speak without being seen. I know it is important for voting, so I feel strongly that members ought to be seen when they are speaking. I am not sure this is the best way forward. I do want the member to be able to speak, so I wonder if there might be some other way of allowing her to speak. I do not know that it is a great precedent to start allowing members to speak without being seen.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the member's comments and point of view. Obviously, this is a process that we are all trying to navigate, and we recognize that there are some technical difficulties.

This is not about setting a precedent. We did see the member when she was first trying to connect, so we know that it is her. I know that some exceptions have been made because of this problem, and hopefully it will not happen in the future. This is beyond the member's control, and we are not talking about a vote at this moment. However, I will test the House to see if members are in agreement.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can appreciate the member for Elmwood—Transcona's concern. I share that concern. Having said that, given the fact that we have seen the member as she was prepared to deliver her speech, I am prepared to allow her leave, if required, to present her speech. However, I suggest that the Speaker give very clear and decisive direction from this moment on after the speech has been delivered.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will also mention that this is an issue that should be brought up with the House leaders as well, given the fact that this could happen to any party member. I know that once members have a speech prepared, they are ready to move forward, so I would highly recommend that this be brought to the House leaders.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think all parliamentarians understand that this is an issue, but there is a concern with setting precedents. If we allow it to happen once, it could continue to happen. I know how passionate the member for Calgary Midnapore is about women's issues, but unfortunately I think we should move on to our next speaker.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Are there any further interventions?

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the Conservative Party. That sounds to me like a good way to proceed in the circumstances. Perhaps it is something we could get a clear ruling on from the Speaker at a later time. I appreciate that you may not be prepared to rule on the floor, but if you could come back to the House with some clear advice on how the Chair will proceed in cases like this going forward, it would be very much appreciated. I believe that was the suggestion of the member for Winnipeg North as well. That would be very welcome.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I greatly appreciate the additional information and all of the input on this very important matter, and I know that the hon. member who wishes to make her speech is probably pretty anxious about this. I will certainly take all of it under advisement and will get back to the House on this issue.

Is there unanimous consent to allow the member to deliver her speech at this point?

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There being no unanimous consent, we will resume debate.

The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

• (1650)

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. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is to my surprise and privilege that I rise and speak to the bill, but I am happy to do so. This is an issue that has gripped this Parliament for several years, starting first in the 42nd Parliament and then into this Parliament, not just the first session but now the second session.

I too want to commend Ms. Ambrose for bringing the bill to the floor of the House of Commons. Thanks to her hard work and the work of colleagues, it would appear the bill is receiving broad support. It is long overdue. It is unfortunate this bill, Bill C-3, did not pass in the 42nd Parliament. It is equally unfortunate the bill was upended due to the prorogation the government triggered just a few weeks ago in order to avoid further committee investigation into the WE scandal.

Of course we now hear government members complaining about the democratic process, a process that is there to ensure members of Parliament from across this country have the opportunity to examine and speak about bills like this, even when they have broad support. For no other reason, I think the voices and debates we have today will echo and be that much louder, as opposed to passing it quickly as the government would like.

If the government members wanted to move quickly on this, they had that opportunity. Instead they tried to play politics on other issues and they are now paying the price and trying to blame everyone but themselves, when they should look in the mirror.

I want to thank as well my colleague from New Brunswick, the member for Fredericton, who I thought made a very strong bipartisan point about the importance of allowing members to speak up on issues. This chamber sometimes does move very quickly and at moments like this we are all given a chance to speak on important bills like Bill C-3.

The bill serves to do a number of things that are frankly long overdue. I hope in this go-around it will be three times lucky and the government will finally have the support to do something that should have been done years ago. I would remind the government, which is quick to point to the opposition and say we should advance the bill, that we have been doing everything we can. We have been talking about this the longest. We have been talking about it and trying to make it an issue, but at the end of the day, it is not our responsibility to shepherd legislation through the House of Commons. It is the government's responsibility. If the government is not prepared to do that or is unable to do that, we are happy to take over for it at any time and get legislation through.

Government Orders

This has been a pattern with the current government. It makes grandiose announcements, such as on infrastructure, and fails to deliver. This is another example of good work getting sidelined because of politics.

Why is the bill important and necessary? Let me give the House some facts and evidence. Victims are female, overwhelmingly so. They are young and too often they know their assailants. This of course makes it more difficult, not easier, to come forward when an assault has taken place. Sadly, the vast majority of sexual assaults are not reported to police. This is something we need to change as a country to ensure that when a wrong happens it is righted. Less than half of the sexual assault cases that end up in adult criminal court result in a guilty verdict.

I am not here to second-guess the judiciary today with respect to sentencing, but I think it is important for voices to be heard and for victims to have their day in court and be given every opportunity to express themselves and to be treated fairly and in a judicious manner. There are far too many cases, and we have heard about some of them today, repeatedly so, where that is just not happening. If we as parliamentarians can change that and set a better tone so that our judges are treating young people, young women in particular, with the respect they deserve, I think we should view it as a good day and something we should strive for.

• (1655)

I do want this bill to pass, as my colleagues do, and I think that is on both sides of the Commons.

The opposition is not here to do the government's work for it. We are prepared to replace the government and do a better job. We would do it with fewer scandals, with less WE, and with less rule breaking, law breaking and ethical violations. At the end of the day, it is up to the government to get the bill through. We are not going to make it difficult, but we are going to respect the rules of this place. While the government would prefer to govern alone, there are 338 members in this chamber and they should all have the opportunity to speak out on these issues as they see fit.

We hear a lot about the other place. We are breaking tradition here in referring to it as the Senate. In the other place, Conservatives do not hold a majority of seats. Not only that, as one of my hon. colleagues pointed out today, the bill failed in the 42nd Parliament because, again, the government mishandled the legislative business.

Maybe the government should prioritize what is actually important, which is bills such as this, and getting them through as opposed to focusing on handouts for their friends, and the WE scandal, and some of the other scandals we have seen over the years that resulted in Parliament being shut down and the work stopping. On this side of the House, we want to see bills like this pass. We want to see the committees going.

Even if my hon. friend on the government bench had his way and passed this bill today, to what end would it be? The committees are not sitting, because the government and this Prime Minister closed down Parliament weeks ago to protect him from the investigations of numerous committees into the government's malfeasance when it came to dealing with friends and cronies and the handouts to family

members of the Liberal Prime Minister and the former finance minister.

Let us do the work, but set priorities and make sure they are the priorities that Canadians care about, not what is important to Liberals and their friends. The case for this bill has been made time and again. I echo the support of this bill, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today, suddenly and with little notice. I look forward to taking some questions on it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government has very clearly demonstrated just how important the issue is. Even though we were in the midst of a throne speech debate, we brought it in on Friday. We brought it back yesterday, and here we are debating it for quite a few hours today.

The member says that all members should have the opportunity to debate the bill because that is part of the process, and debate should be encouraged where it can be encouraged. We have literally hundreds of private member's bills and motions that eventually come for debate. There is always a limit of two hours of debate before a bill goes to committee.

Should the same principle of allowing all members to speak on private member's bills apply, so that the member opposite and others would have the same opportunity to voice their passion on so many of those critical issues? Some of them are very important to our society. There are very strong, socially progressive moves in many of those private member's bills, but they are limited to two hours of debate.

Does he believe all members should be afforded the opportunity to have those debates too?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, that was a nice try. This is a government bill, and government bills have in the past—

• (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind hon. members they are not to have conversations back and forth. The question has been asked. The member needs to answer the question, as opposed to the heckling that is going back and forth.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, I recognize the parliamentary secretary would like me to agree to that in order to drag out the time for private member's bills. Governments tend not to support private member's legislation because it tends to upend their agenda. Therefore, no. We can recognize the difference with a piece of government legislation.

We are not extending debate. We are not asking for anything unusual here. We just keep hearing this drumbeat from the government side saying, “end it, end it, end it, let's get on with it,” but you have had five years. You have had three years since this bill was introduced. Let us hope that the third time you get it done.

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

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I also thank him for agreeing at the last minute to say the final words in the debate on Bill C-3.

I think we have covered this issue. We are nearing the end of the debate. Everyone agrees that it is important for judges to receive training in order to fight the stereotypes associated with sexual assault.

I think there are two major grey areas that have not yet been addressed. I would like to tie this in with what the member for Saint-Jean said and what my colleague from Repentigny brought up last year. A woman's body belongs to her and her alone. This is a stereotype that we are trying to eliminate in cases of assault. A woman has the right to do what she wants with her body. That does not mean that she is asking to be assaulted. To take that even further, a woman's body belongs her and her alone. She even has the right to decide whether to carry a pregnancy to term. I would like to hear his opinion on that.

I would also like to hear what he has to say about the massive budget cuts that the Conservatives made to Status of Women Canada in 2015. The Conservatives have repeatedly said that it is important to broaden the debate and give training not only to judges but also to others, such as those in the education system. Thanks to the cuts and the current crisis, there is a risk that the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the member, but we are running out of time.

The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, the member did not quite finish asking her question. Since I was not here following the 2015 election, I cannot really comment.

What I can say is that the bill ensures that women who have been raped or abused by men have the opportunity to be heard in court and that they are treated with respect by the judge. We support the bill that is before us today.

I hope that this will be the last word on the subject. As I already said, it is the government's responsibility to move the bill forward in the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

Adjournment Proceedings

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

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, we will not call for the yeas and nays. As a result, if a member of a recognized party present in the House wants to request a recorded vote or request that the motion be passed on division, I invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we would request a recorded vote please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23 the division stands deferred until Monday, October 19, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 6:30 p.m.

• (1705)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that there is still some business left in the House. For those individuals who are leaving, I wish you all a happy Thanksgiving weekend.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here today because, earlier this week, I asked a question on the realities of murdered and missing indigenous women across Canada. What I really want to point out is that within communities across this country there are organizations fundraising to help find missing indigenous women and girls across Canada, and how unacceptable that is.

I spoke about the Lil' Red Dress Project, which was created in 2018 when Jeannine Lindsay and Carla Voyageur came together around a kitchen table to discuss what they could do to raise awareness and how they could do something more for the families who had lost or were missing one of their beloved female loved ones.

Adjournment Proceedings

These amazing women came together, and they have many volunteers, including Carla's own children, who help bead small red dresses for earrings and pins. All the money and proceeds they get from those beautiful pieces of art go into putting up billboards across communities that identify indigenous women who are missing.

What is most ironic about this is that they got the idea from a non-indigenous woman's family, which collected funds to put up a sign to identify that she was missing. This was an amazing thing.

However, we understand that we have a terrible situation in this country, where missing and murdered indigenous women are lost. They are falling through the cracks, and now the only way these folks can actually get action is to fundraise to get these signs up.

Too many families across Canada are missing their precious loved ones. I think all of us in this House have to take responsibility for understanding that there are families, indigenous families, across this country who every day do not know where that beautiful soul is. They are afraid when their girl children, their wives and their sisters go out into the world, because they do not know if they may become one of these sad stories.

I think of the fact that in 2016, local families in the Comox Valley created an annual Women's Memorial March in memory of Selina Wallace, who went missing February 7, 1971. Her sister Verina has been a strong advocate for the inquiry. She even appeared at the inquiry to share her story about losing her sister and how, at that time, the RCMP did very little to help the family find her. She was able to participate in the inquiry, but she is still waiting to see action.

That is why I have brought this serious issue forward. It is because so many families across this country want to see action now. They want to see preventative measures so that this does not happen again, when again and again, what we see are indigenous women and girls murdered or missing, and not found.

I also think it is important to recognize that all of these communities are coming together across Canada to get these voices heard. The red dress campaign continues to be a fight, but we want to see action, and we want to see the inquiry action items actually put into place.

I am hoping to hear from the government today that there will finally be action.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge that I am speaking from the territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

We share the sense of urgency of the hon. member. Our hearts are with the survivors and families of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse people. Addressing violence against indigenous women and girls has been an urgent priority of the Government of Canada since the pre-inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was launched in 2015, to inform the design of the first ever national public inquiry into the ongoing tragedy. The final report of the national inquiry calls upon federal, provincial, territorial and indigenous gov-

ernments, as well as indigenous leaders, survivors and families, to develop a national action plan that sets a clear road map to ensure that indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse people are safe. That is exactly what we are doing.

As the Speech from the Throne highlighted, our priority is to accelerate the work to develop a national action plan. This work is being led by indigenous women, two-spirit and gender-diverse partners. Guided by families, survivors and grassroots community groups, the national action plan will respond to this national tragedy in an accountable and enduring manner.

Our government invested \$30 million over five years to support indigenous-led engagement throughout the development and implementation of the national action plan. We have already provided \$2.4 million to national and regional indigenous organizations to ensure that they are resourced, and can meaningfully participate in combined efforts to improve the safety of indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse people. We will not let survivors and families down.

Work is well under way through a series of working groups led by indigenous women. The groups are also comprised of indigenous governments and organizations, federal, provincial and territorial governments, two-spirit and LGBTQ organization leaders, family members and survivors.

Also, as the member acknowledged, our government did not wait to act to ensure that indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and LGBTQ+ people were safe wherever they live. Some of those actions included reforming the child and family services system, supporting families navigating the justice system through the family information liaison units in place in every province and territorial jurisdiction, and investing in housing and emergency shelters.

We will continue to focus on prevention, healing and putting in place concrete measures to end this national tragedy.

● (1710)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, for me the reality is that right now across Canada at kitchen tables, people are figuring out solutions to try to address this issue because they are not seeing the action that the government needs to take.

I think of the Kumugwe Cultural Society that, in 2016, worked with the Village of Cumberland, the Town of Comox and the City of Courtenay so that it could have red dresses across the community to alert people in the region to the reality of so many missing indigenous women and girls. This is grassroots work. I appreciate their work. I think we should all take an opportunity to really thank them for the incredible work that they are doing in terms of educating and leading people forward, but this is the reality. They keep waiting for action. They want to see the government take leadership and because there is that void, they are taking it.

When will the government be accountable for that?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, our government has also been working since 2015 to address systemic issues that contribute to this tragedy, and our shared work continues.

As was previously mentioned, we have passed legislation to address the child and family services system to preserve and protect indigenous language and culture, toughen criminal law in cases of domestic assault, and eliminate gender discrimination under the Indian Act. We have also made historic investments in education, housing, policing and shelters.

Our government is working with all of our partners to ensure that we get this right for survivors and families, to honour those lost and to protect future generations.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I had asked a question earlier in the week about supports for small businesses, particularly around the rent relief program.

As we all know, COVID-19 has hurt small businesses. I walk around Edmonton Strathcona, around my constituency, and I see far too many businesses have shut their doors, potentially forever.

We know that small businesses are the livelihood of the Canadian economy, that they employ nearly 70% of private sector workers nationwide and they employ 74% of private sector workers in Alberta. We need to recognize that every one of those small businesses represents a hard-working Albertan, a family that is being supported by that business. These people have spent years building these businesses in some cases, investing their own money, their own time and their sweat equity into these businesses.

We were happy to see some of the supports that the government put forward during the pandemic. It was nice to see that the Liberal government was able to listen to the NDP and increase the wage subsidy to 75%, and to make rent and wage subsidy programs available.

However, the supports took so long and sometimes they just were not done properly. These supports were vitally important, but they were frustratingly limited and complicated. I have spoken to small business owners who could not complete the forms because it was so difficult to do that. The goal was to exclude family businesses, new businesses, the self-employed, those who were paid with dividends. They were locked out of the emergency business account loans for months.

Adjournment Proceedings

CECRA, the rent assistance program, is a prime example. Many businesses in my riding are gone forever because they were not able to access that program. Part was because the rent program was for developers and real estate companies, for landlords, not for those individual companies that were paying the rent. Many organizations could not access that program.

Some other businesses turned on a dime. I was so proud of many of the organizations in Edmonton Strathcona, but if they did not meet the criteria of the 70% loss, they were out of luck. If they had a 60% loss or a 69% loss, they were out of luck.

For those businesses that could access the commercial rent assistance program, it was a lifesaver. Hundreds of small businesses in my riding were able to ride out the storm, thanks to the program. More than 100,000 small businesses nationwide can say the same thing.

That got us through to September. Now what are we going to do? Why would the government throw a lifeline to small businesses if it only throws them overboard as the second wave of COVID-19 hits?

Small businesses need rent assistance now and they will continue to need rent assistance for months to come. We need to know from the government that it will be putting forward a plan that will make it easier for businesses to access, with the same loss in business standards as the wage subsidy. We need to know that it will be backdated from the beginning, because businesses are already broke. We need to ensure that it is tenant-driven for small businesses.

We asked our small businesses to close their doors. We asked them to stay closed for the safety of our communities. Now we have to do what we can to protect those small businesses. We need a rent replacement program, we need it now and we need it to be done much better than it was done the first time.

● (1715)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a previous small business owner, I can fully relate to many of the challenges that are faced by small businesses during this pandemic. Canadian businesses are indeed the lifeblood of our communities and the backbone of our economy, which is why our government is committed to helping businesses weather the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, including by assisting them with fixed costs such as rent.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government's record on the support we have provided to date speaks for itself. In the spring, we quickly put in place a suite of new broad measures through Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan to provide urgent support to Canadians and businesses as the pandemic swept across the country, measures that have helped to protect millions of jobs and support Canadian employers, big and small, to help them weather the storm and keep their workers on the payroll.

For example, the Canada emergency business account, or CEBA, is helping small business owners and not-for-profit operators to cover their unavoidable costs at a time when their revenues have been temporarily reduced. CEBA has already issued over 767,000 loans totalling more than \$30.6 billion.

The Canada emergency wage subsidy is helping business owners and other employers to keep employees on the payroll. Since its launch, the wage subsidy has supported over 3.6 million Canadian employees, with more than \$39 billion paid out in wage subsidies.

Also consider the Canada business availability program and other credit and liquidity support, totalling \$286 billion, which have ensured that business owners have access to the credit they need to pay their bills and help their businesses stay afloat.

We must mention the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program. Since its launch, CECRA has helped some 130,000 small business tenants who employ over 1.1 million employees by providing over \$1.8 billion to pay their rent.

In addition to these measures, the government has provided \$85 billion in tax and customs duty payment deferrals to meet liquidity needs of business owners and Canadian families.

In the face of an uncertain economic situation and tightening credit conditions, these measures have supported businesses while protecting the valuable Canadian jobs that depend on them. However, we recognize that many small business owners and entrepreneurs continue to need help with cash flow and paying their operating costs, including rent, and we intend to use our fiscal firepower to make the investments needed to help businesses across Canada face this challenge.

We laid out our intent to continue supporting Canadian businesses in the recent Speech from the Throne, including the extension of the Canada emergency wage subsidy into next summer to help business owners and other employers keep their employees on the payroll.

We will take further steps to bridge vulnerable businesses to the other side of the pandemic by expanding the Canada emergency business account to help business owners with fixed costs and by improving the business credit availability program.

We know that the viability and success of small businesses are essential to our economy. That is why we continue to support them during this unprecedented time, while helping them to build back better and stronger.

• (1720)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, as usual, the Liberals are congratulating themselves on what they have done in the past instead of looking at how we need to support those people who

fell through the cracks, those small business owners who were not able to access support.

Going forward, we need to know there is a plan in place for rent assistance for small businesses across Canada. This is an urgent need. This is an urgent call for action for our small business owners. There is no value in saving small businesses through the summer if we allow them to fail in the fall.

The pandemic is not over, not by a long shot, but one day it is going to be over. We need to know that the small businesses in our community, the small businesses that make Edmonton Strathcona unique, will be able to thrive and will be strong going into the future.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, as I have already said, Canadian businesses are the backbone of our economy. They provide good jobs that support families across the country. Members can be certain that supporting business owners and other employers during this unprecedented time remains an integral part of Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan.

Extending measures such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency business account will be critical to assisting Canadian business owners across the country in weathering the COVID-19 storm and building back stronger.

Our government will continue to do whatever it takes to keep Canadians and the businesses on which our jobs and livelihoods depend healthy and stable, so that together they can emerge from this crisis stronger than ever.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to put a question to the Minister of Natural Resources earlier this week in the wake of massive new layoffs in the energy sector both in Calgary and in Newfoundland and Labrador. My question was particularly about Calgary. The answer was wholly unsatisfactory. Perhaps the minister came a little closer to answering the question and acknowledging the role his government played in the exodus of employment from the oil and gas sector.

He spoke about oil and gas companies having to redeploy resources and capital, while adapting to all the challenges within the energy industry worldwide. That is exactly the point. That is exactly what energy companies are doing. They are making business decisions to locate outside of Canada precisely because of the five-year war on the energy industry that has been waged by the government. In my riding, thousands of people have lost their jobs over the years since the government was formed precisely because their employers are making decisions to move to other jurisdictions. They are doing so because of the regulatory uncertainty that has been created by the government through bills like Bill C-69 and Bill C-48.

We hear the rhetoric from the Prime Minister and on down through many members of his cabinet and his party's caucus. There are real repercussions of that in lost jobs and lost livelihoods. I talked to families throughout the 2019 election. They are giving up hope. Families are split because members of the family have had to go to other countries to find work. Calgary is their home and they want to be there, yet they are having to go overseas to find work. The government has to acknowledge that its legislation, its rhetoric and the signals that it sends to the investment community have a direct impact on these lost jobs.

I called upon the minister to admit that the Liberals' policies had played a role in these job losses. There are 2,000 more employees gone from Suncor. This economy and my province cannot handle 2,000 more unemployed workers. The answer that was provided during question period was completely unsatisfactory. It will do nothing to give any sense of hope to the workers in my riding and across Canada.

• (1725)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I go into my script, maybe the member should know what is going on in the world.

In the United States, 107,000 workers have been laid off in the oil and gas sector. BP has laid off 10,000 workers around the world. Shell has laid off 9,000 workers around the world. The member wants to tell us that because of Canadian policies, this is going on around the world. He could not be further from the truth, obviously.

Our government is working hard to help the oil and gas sector, and his question is a very important one. We know that in Canada's resource sector, workers and suppliers have been hard hit by the fallout of COVID-19. Nowhere has this been more pronounced than in the petroleum sector, where producers have faced the added challenge of record-low prices caused by the dual impact of a price war and a collapse in demand, something obviously ignored by the member, either willfully or because he is not sure what is going on in his backyard.

The success of Canada's petroleum sector is critical to the successful restart and recovery of the economy. That is why our government is working hard to support the petroleum sector through these difficult times.

As a government, we believe in the future of this sector. I will say it again: We believe in the future of this sector. This includes its

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role in driving investments in clean technology and new opportunities in areas such as hydrogen and carbon capture, use and storage. That is why we have put in place measures over the past several months that are key to ensuring that Canada emerges with a stronger, more innovative economy in a cleaner energy future.

We started with the Canada emergency wage subsidy, which supported maintaining jobs in all sectors across Canada. For the oil and gas sector, the wage subsidy meant sustaining 80,000 jobs at the height of the crisis across Canada, with 60,000 jobs in Alberta alone.

We went further, with almost \$2.5 billion for the energy sector, providing \$1.7 billion to clean up orphan and inactive oil and gas wells. This is expected to create thousands of jobs, including an estimated 5,200 in Alberta alone, and provide lasting environmental benefits. I must say that the Alberta government and Alberta's Minister of Energy were ecstatic when we partnered to do this with the Province of Alberta.

There is up to \$750 million in repayable contributions, through our new emissions reduction fund, to lower greenhouse gas emissions in Canada's oil and gas sector, with a focus on methane. The fund includes \$75 million, some of which will be non-repayable, to help the offshore industry in Newfoundland and Labrador create and maintain jobs through emission reduction efforts, and expanded eligibility to help Canadian businesses get the financing they need during this period of uncertainty. This support is available to medium-sized businesses with larger financing needs, beginning with companies in Canada's energy sector, to help them maintain operations and keep their employees on the job.

More recently, our government announced \$320 million in funding to support workers in Newfoundland and Labrador offshore. This will stimulate and maintain employment and economic activity in the province and will ensure that it can support middle-class families and communities.

Our government will continue to pursue all avenues to ensure that Canada's energy sector continues to be a key source of the jobs that support a strong economy. We are supporting workers. We are supporting families. We are supporting our oil and gas sector. We are supporting Albertans.

• (1730)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the arrogance of much of that response reinforces what my constituents have told me on their doorsteps.

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The parliamentary secretary mentioned job losses resulting from both COVID and a global price collapse. However, 200,000 jobs were lost in this sector before COVID. Before COVID, Shell, which he mentioned in his response, left Canada, divested itself of Canada. I do not know off the top of my head how many of the employees Shell has shed worldwide were in my riding, but I can assure the member that this is close to home. The government has chased jobs out of Canada, and he knows this if he knows his file.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, the member was in the last Parliament with us when we did everything to get TMX built, and it is being built right now. He should know this, and I am sure he does. It is such an important file. I know that behind closed doors, from talking to my colleagues in the Conservative Party, they are happy about that. Albertans are also happy that we are proceeding with TMX, and the thousands of jobs that are being created right now because of it.

I want to reiterate that our government believes in the success of the petroleum sector and that it is critical to the successful restart

and recovery of the economy. That is why we put in place the measures over the past several months that I have just referred to: because we understand the importance of supporting a sector that is a source of well-paying jobs for Canadians across the country.

We understand that by supporting a strong economic recovery, particularly in the oil and gas sector, Canadian businesses such as Suncor will continue to attract investment and good projects that will support environmental and social priorities and create jobs for Canadians now and into the future.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:34 p.m.)

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