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# House of Commons Debates

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Thursday, March 25, 2021

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 25, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)  
[*English*]

### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT

**Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, to authorize certain payments to be made out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and to amend another Act.

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

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## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to the main estimates 2021-22, and reports the same.

On a personal note, I want to thank the clerk for saving the chair from impeachment.

### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following three reports of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: the 14th report, entitled “Taxation of E-Commerce”; the 15th report, entitled “Public Accounts of Canada 2020”; and the 16th report, entitled “Oversight of Government of Canada Advertising”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these three reports.

### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth re-

port of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, entitled “Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## CANADA SHIPPING ACT

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-281, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (certificate of competency).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this morning, I am pleased to introduce a bill to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

This legislative measure will address head-on the labour shortage in the marine industry, which is a major concern. A foreign national who holds a diploma from a recognized school, such as the Institut maritime du Québec in Rimouski, will now also be able to benefit from the privileges that come with the certificate of competency and sail on the majestic St. Lawrence River.

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

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and in an effort to avoid yet another vote this evening, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the opposition motion scheduled for debate later today be amended in paragraph (b) by replacing the word “10 a.m.” with the following: “11 a.m.”

• (1010)

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Town of Erin has been permitted to dump treated effluent into the West Credit River, which is one of the most ecologically sensitive areas in my riding. The West Credit River is one of the last pristine cold-water fisheries in the Greater Golden Horseshoe and is home to native brook trout. Belfountain is also part of the Niagara Escarpment, which has been declared a UNESCO World Biosphere reserve.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to implement a federal environmental impact assessment on this proposed waste treatment plant.

## GANDER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of the mighty little town of Gander. The Gander and Area Chamber of Commerce, God love it, has been putting this petition together for quite some time. There are about 1,000 signatures on it.

This is in regard to one of the greatest little airports in the world. It is the Gander International Airport. In the 20th century, it was the most notable for being one of the largest airports around World War II. It was built for that reason. Of course, in this century, it became famous for welcoming all those stranded passengers on 9/11 and inspiring the great musical *Come From Away*. It is currently in financial trouble.

The petition calls on the Government of Canada to help it out in this time of need, as it is still, to this day, an essential service, not just for central Newfoundland but the entire province, the east coast and, as we have proven, an international asset for aviation safety.

We call on the government to help central Newfoundland in particular, and the Gander International Airport. As Reg Wright, the CEO of the airport, once said, it is the airport that was built for battle and now needs a bit of help.

## OPIOIDS

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with a petition from a group called Moms Stop the Harm, a group of mothers from across the country who have lost loved ones to the opioid crisis, a crisis that is causing devastation in all our communities across Canada.

The petitioners point out that the opioid crisis is one of the most deadly public health emergencies of our lifetime, with a death taking place every two hours and a death toll of over 15,400 in the past four years alone. As the overdose crisis rages, they call on the government to declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency; to take steps to end those overdose deaths and overdose injuries; to immediately collaborate with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive, pan-Canadian overdose action plan; to ensure that any plan considers reforms that other countries have used, such as legalization, decriminalization and changes to flawed drug policies; and to ensure this emergency is taken seriously, with adequate funding and program supports.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am tabling two petitions today.

I am also tabling a petition regarding the opioid crisis. As members know, the opioid crisis is taking the lives of so many. They are preventable deaths, and the petitioners recognize that this crisis needs to be dealt with and the Canadian government needs to declare it a national health emergency.

The petitioners call for action. They call on the government to take steps to end overdose deaths and overdose injuries, and to immediately collaborate with provinces and territories to develop a comprehensive, pan-Canadian overdose action plan. They also want to ensure that the plan considers reforms that other countries have used, such as legal regulation of drugs to ensure safe supply, decriminalization for personal use and changes to the flawed drug policy and policing practices.

We want to ensure this emergency is taken seriously and met with adequate programming and supports. These lives matter. We can end the overdose crisis if we want.

● (1015)

## INDIGENOUS HOUSING

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the other petition I am tabling is with respect to indigenous housing.

The petitioners recognize that over 80% of indigenous people live in urban, rural and northern communities and that indigenous peoples are 11 times more likely to use a homeless shelter. They recognize that the 2017 national housing strategy did not include any specific funding, strategies or policies for urban or rural indigenous housing, even though the mandate letter from the minister specifically outlined such a strategy.

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association and its indigenous caucus have put forward a number of suggestions for the government to act on. This includes for the government to develop a “For Indigenous, By Indigenous” national housing centre; to increase the supply of stable, safe, affordable housing by building 73,000 new units of housing for urban, rural and northern indigenous peoples; to support the tenants’ well-being and long-term success with wraparound indigenous services; and to accelerate action on indigenous homelessness; and to focus on northern housing.

*Business of Supply*

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the government’s revised response to Question No. 373, originally tabled on March 22, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 373—**Mr. Bob Saroya:**

With regard to illegal firearms entering Canada: what is the government’s estimate of the number of illegal firearms that have entered the country since 2016, broken down by year and by method of entry (air cargo shipments, land passenger vehicle smuggling, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO QUESTION NO. 373—SPEAKER’S RULING

**The Deputy Speaker:** Since the government just tabled a revised response to written Question No. 373, this concludes the point of order raised by the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska yesterday.

However, I would like to remind members that Standing Order 32(4) states that “Any document distributed in the House or laid before the House...shall be in both official languages.” That is a principle set out in the Constitution and the Official Languages Act.

I thank hon. members for their attention.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1020)

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—INSTRUCTIONS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ETHICS AND TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC)** moved:

That, with a view to support the authority of committees in their important inquiries of public interest:

- (a) regarding the study on questions of conflict of interest and lobbying in relation to pandemic spending by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics,

(i) an order of the House do issue for due diligence reports, in the care, custody or control of the Privy Council Office, respecting the Canada Student Service Grant, and that these documents be deposited, in both official languages, with the Clerk of the Committee no later than Thursday, April 1, 2021,

(ii) Rick Theis, the Prime Minister’s Director of Policy and Cabinet Affairs, be ordered to appear before the committee on Monday, March 29, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.,

(iii) Amitpal Singh, the Deputy Prime Minister’s Policy Advisor, be ordered to appear before the committee on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.,

(iv) Ben Chin, the Prime Minister’s Senior Advisor, be ordered to appear before the committee on Thursday, April 8, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.;

(b) regarding the study on addressing sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Armed Forces by the Standing Committee on National Defence, Zita Astravas, formerly the Minister of National Defence’s chief of staff and the Prime Minister’s Director of Issues Management and currently the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness’s chief of staff, be ordered to appear before the committee on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.;

(c) should the Prime Minister instead appear before the committees mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b), at any of the dates and times mentioned, for at least three hours, the witness otherwise scheduled to appear, and any other witnesses scheduled to appear before the same committee at a later time, be relieved of their obligation to appear pursuant to this order; and

(d) it be an instruction to the Chairs of the committees mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b) to convene televised meetings of their respective committee, at the dates and times mentioned, for at least three hours, for the purpose of receiving evidence from the individuals then ordered to appear or the Prime Minister, as the case may be, unless the individual has been relieved from attending under the provisions of paragraph (c), provided that the witnesses be required to appear until discharged by the committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Since today is the final allotted day for the supply period ending March 26, 2021, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of the supply bills. In view of recent practices, do hon. members agree that the bills be distributed now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, we are here today to move along business that we started last summer.

It was last summer that Canadians first learned about the WE scandal involving the Liberal government. This is the scandal of the WE organization paying members of the Prime Minister’s family half a million dollars and then being awarded, in an untendered agreement, half a billion dollars of taxpayer funds as part of a proposed or planned pandemic relief program for students.

We heard many different things at the time, both from the PMO and from the WE organization, including that members of the Prime Minister’s family had never been paid. Then, of course, that story changed over time.

When hearings began last summer and members of the opposition began to get answers for Canadians, the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament, effectively killing the work of those committees. At the time he said that when the House resumed in the fall, there would be lots of time for questions. There was certainly lots of time, and that time was spent by Liberal members filibustering across multiple committees.

*Business of Supply*

At the ethics committee alone, the filibuster lasted for the equivalent of 20 meetings. When that filibuster finally ended and we were able to order witnesses to appear, it was December. In December, we initiated that process, but the government's partners in this deal, the founders of the WE organization, Craig and Marc Kielburger, took until March to agree to appear at the committee, and then eventually said they would not, even if summoned.

A summons was issued to them, and they did appear. During that appearance, we heard more contradictions to previous testimony and sought to have more witnesses called as a result.

The Prime Minister's testimony in the summer was before the heavily redacted document dump that came on the eve of the cover-up prorogation in August, and so here was no opportunity for members to compare and contrast the answers given by the Prime Minister, his chief of staff, other witnesses from cabinet, and the information that was in that document release. As more information has come out, the need for more questions to be asked has come to pass, and we need these witnesses to appear.

I should note, before I mention the defence committee, that I will be sharing my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. He sits on the defence committee and is the shadow minister for defence.

This is happening at the same time that the defence committee is dealing with the study with respect to sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. The allegations it is dealing with concern the former chief of the defence staff. The former chief of the defence staff is alleged to have perpetrated sexual misconduct. It was reported to the Canadian Forces ombudsman in 2018. That information was relayed to the Minister of National Defence and to the Prime Minister's Office, at which point one would expect that a thorough investigation would be undertaken, one that would include the appropriate authorities.

However, a blind eye was turned. Instead, the alleged perpetrator was given a raise by the Prime Minister, and the victims were left without justice. Other members of our Canadian Armed Forces are left wondering what protections are being afforded them by the government that they serve with unlimited liability.

It is important to note that members of our Canadian Armed Forces serve this country with unlimited liability. They ask very little of us in return, but guaranteeing them a workplace that is free from sexual misconduct, particularly when it is perpetrated by Canada's top soldier, seems like the least we could do for them. However, that is not the case, so members of the defence committee have looked for a witness to appear. Those efforts have been blocked.

• (1025)

There was a due diligence report with respect to the Canada student service grant that was committed by the Privy Council. That report was not tabled with the committee, so we are seeking that information as well with this motion.

It is important to note how we came to this point. With dozens of hours wasted to filibustering and dozens of meetings lost to delays and obstruction, parliamentarians were not able to fully engage in

the defence, finance, PROC or ethics committees, among other committees. I was going to make it an either/or between the defence and ethics committees, but the filibusters were across multiple committees.

The study at the ethics committee has to do with pandemic spending. We had intended to wrap this study up in the fall, but of course those obstructions prevented us from doing so and prevented us from getting on to the other important work that the committee intended to undertake, such as to protect victims of sexual exploitation online and to examine emerging technologies, such as facial recognition, as is the mandate of our committee, and the defence committee barely has its feet under it in the study with respect to sexual misconduct in the military. It is facing a brick wall from the government.

It is tremendously concerning that when it comes to accountability and how the government spends the public's money. Half a billion dollars in support for students was originally billed as \$912 million, but members of the Liberal Party do not want answers and accountability for Canadians.

It is alleged that this program was designed to help students. They could have devoted those funds to the Canada summer jobs program, which was already in place, with some modifications that were made to it last year, but instead of committing those funds to an established, tried, tested program, the Liberals cooked up something new and gave it to friends of the Prime Minister. They let down all of those students who did not have employment opportunities, and in fact let down the business owners who could have benefited from having the labour of the students who would gain experience when they were already facing hard times. These businesses would have had subsidized labour in that time, and the charitable sector also missed out by not having the volunteers that were promised in that program. The Canadians who were let down in that process make up a laundry list. It is incumbent on us to get answers on how that came to pass. We need to find out what happened so that it does not happen again.

We are looking at another budget. It is the first time I have been able to say that in years. We have not had a budget here in over two years, and we want to make sure, when we go through that process, that that we do not see the government set to repeat the same mistakes that we have seen over the past year in particular.

The opposition is looking for a very measured result from today's motion, and that result is to have witnesses appear at committee to testify on studies at those committees. We have to devote a supply day to this. Earlier this week we used one of our opposition supply days to talk about what the government's plan was, asking for it to table a plan for the House and for all Canadians to see on coming out of the pandemic. A year ago, it was reasonable to say that there were some things the government might not have planned for. There was some things it could have planned for and did not, but now, with a year's experience, it ought to have a plan.

Today we are looking to make committees work and we are looking to make the House work, so we are asking for these witnesses to appear. Of course, if it is the position of the government that these witnesses should not appear, then there is the option for the Prime Minister to appear at committee. The choice is certainly the government's to make. The opposition has made the choice to make Parliament work, and I hope that all members of the House vote with us to make the House of Commons work and to make committees work so that we can get answers for Canadians on how their money was spent and so that we can ensure that we have a safe, respectful work environment for all members of our Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1030)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have just been reviewing the motion. I know that the opposition motion is calling forward a whole laundry list of individual people and I realize the member said that the Prime Minister could come instead. It would appear as though the member is trying to hold these people hostage at the expense of the Prime Minister, but I would refer him to a quote: “Mr. Speaker, our precedents and practices are very clear. It is the ministers and the ministry at large who are responsible to the House and to its committees, not their staff members. Their staff members are responsible to the ministers and members for whom they work.”

I have another quote: “Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, when there is a question about conduct in a minister's office, the committee obviously can call the ministers and the ministers will answer those questions.”

Do members know where those quotes are from? They are from May 25, 2010, and the Right Hon. Stephen Harper.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that the opposition members would agree that Stephen Harper had it right, so why do they have it wrong—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have many more questions to get through.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, I find myself agreeing with the member opposite. Stephen Harper had it right about a lot of things, and when it comes to this matter, if the ministers came to committee and provided forthright answers to the members who are asking them questions, it would be a different story.

A minister of the current government, under questioning at committee by me, provided a misleading answer. When we cannot get forthright answers from ministers, when we have contradictory information in documents that are released, and when we have obstruction from the government with illegally redacted documents, as verified by the parliamentary law clerk, we are going to continue to call witnesses. We cannot count on the ministers. We are going to have to hear from their staff.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I received an extraordinary letter on Twitter last night from the

### *Business of Supply*

lawyer representing WE's financial people, attacking us on Twitter for the fact that they have not answered a number of key questions about how the organization works, about financial connections and about how many schools were actually built. I would say for any member of the House that after eight months, Parliament has no clue as to how the financial operations of WE work.

However, I would like to raise a question that was in the letter. The lawyer stated that answering the question about how many schools they actually built would require months of work and an analysis of thousands of pages of documents. This is a group that told children to give them \$10,000 and they would build a school, and that for every \$10,000 they would build a school.

I ask my hon. colleague if he does not think that a multi-million-dollar charity would simply have a list of how many schools it has actually built, and that it would be fairly straightforward to say that it was given this money and built these schools? Instead, we are getting these letters from lawyers on Twitter.

• (1035)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, the manner in which that letter was received via Twitter is extraordinary. The government said that this organization was the only one in Canada that could administer \$912 million—or, later, half a billion dollars—in taxpayer funds, so the claim that it does not even keep a list of the projects that it has built is extraordinary.

If this individual, as stated in this public letter, is unable to answer those questions, I would expect that Craig and Marc Kielburger would be able to furnish members of committee and this place with that answer, because they were the only organization, as claimed by the government, that could administer half a billion dollars. Let us see how they administered all the money they took from school kids.

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague. I want to compliment him on his speech and get him to comment on the latest rendition of the Liberal cover-up.

Yesterday at the public safety committee, I asked the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness if he would have his chief of staff, Zita Astravas, who is avoiding the defence clerk, to come and speak and testify, as she should be required to do as a member of staff when an officer of Parliament is asking it. Of course, the Liberal chair of the public safety committee blocked the question and would not allow the public safety minister to answer.

Could this member comment on the fact that there continue to be cover-ups on all committees and on the sanitization of the corruption in this party?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, there has been evidence across multiple committees of the lengths to which Liberal members will go, under instruction from the Prime Minister's Office, to prevent accountability and to prevent the truth from coming to light.

*Business of Supply*

We were told, in 2015 and earlier, by the Prime Minister that sunlight was the best disinfectant. Let us let the sunlight shine on the testimony of these witnesses. Let us let the sunlight shine on the due diligence report that the Liberals failed to table. Let us let the sunlight shine on all of the redactions in those illegally redacted documents. Canadians deserve answers.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my thanks to the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes for bringing this motion to the floor. I think it is important that we demonstrate to Canadians that the Liberals are blocking the work of parliamentary committees, and that they are stopping us from getting to the bottom of some very serious scandals within the Liberal government, including the WE scandal and the sad case of sexual misconduct by the top officers in the Canadian Armed Forces.

There is talk about ministerial accountability, but then we have ministers who refuse to be accountable. That is why we need to hear from key witnesses, including their staff and chiefs of staff, so that we can shine the sunlight and show Canadians the truth.

Looking at the coordinated effort by the government to stop committees from hearing from witnesses and getting to the bottom of what is actually taking place, it is evident that Liberal members would rather protect their political skins and their political staff than protect those who serve us in uniform. It has become abundantly clear. With revelations of sexual misconduct allegations against the former chief of the defence staff, General Jonathan Vance, and the allegations against the current chief of the defence staff, Admiral Art McDonald, it is all too obvious that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have a serious and ongoing problem with stomping out sexual misconduct.

We ask a lot of the brave men and women who serve us in uniform and, in return, we as parliamentarians have a duty to protect those people who have sworn an oath to protect all of us. We cannot allow our daughters, sisters and mothers to work in these unsafe environments. No one should ever be subjected to sexual harassment when they show up to serve our nation.

I want specifically to address the part of the motion calling the former chief of staff to the Minister of National Defence, Zita Astravas, before our national defence committee. She is currently the chief of staff to the minister of public safety. On February 9, revelations had already come to light that General Vance was alleged to have not conducted himself with honour: he had sent an email to a subordinate that was sexual in nature, and that information had been presented to the Minister of National Defence on March 1, 2018. When those revelations came out in early February, we had an emergency meeting of the national defence committee and we brought forward a motion calling a number of witnesses to appear, including Zita Astravas. Nothing ever came of the invitation that was extended to her, dating back to February 9.

Fast forward a month, and we had a situation with allegations coming out against Admiral Art McDonald. We had expanded the study and we brought forward the motion to again call Zita Astravas to appear. Originally we asked to summon her, because it had already been a month since she had actually been at committee and she had refused to appear, so that time we wanted to issue a sum-

mons. That was amended by members of the committee to invite her once again. Here we are, almost a full four weeks after that time, and she has not yet appeared.

On Monday, March 22, we brought forward a motion at committee to summon her, to ensure that she did appear to speak to this issue. Again, the Liberals stood and filibustered for a couple of hours to prevent the motion from being carried. It is a sad state when we have government members stopping witnesses from appearing on something as disgusting as sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces. They would rather block hearing from witnesses than stand up for the brave men and women in uniform.

● (1040)

I can also confirm that the clerk of the national defence committee has called Ms. Astravas's office at Public Safety. He has left voice mails, he has gone through the PMO switchboard and he has also sent emails. Ms. Astravas has not returned any of those calls or emails. That is why it is so important that today's motion passes: so we can finally get to the bottom of what Zita Astravas knew.

We know that on March 1, 2018, when Gary Walbourne, the former ombudsman, presented the evidence to the Minister of National Defence, the minister pushed away from the table and said no. He mumbled something about maybe having the ombudsman take it to the National Investigation Service. We know the very next day that his chief of staff, Zita Astravas, reached out to the PCO, the Privy Council Office. We know that they also talked to PMO senior adviser Elder Marques, who has agreed to appear before committee.

There is mounting evidence that Zita Astravas was involved in what happened with that information after the meeting, when it was presented in confidence by Gary Walbourne to the Minister of National Defence. Rather, she took that information and shared it with who knows who. We need to talk to her about everyone who was brought into the loop. It could have included Katie Telford, who is chief of staff to the Prime Minister. It definitely could have involved the Clerk, and we know it involved the Deputy Clerk of cabinet in the Privy Council Office. There is so much out there that we need to dig down on.

The stories from the Prime Minister and the defence minister on the sexual misconduct allegations against General Vance continue to change. When this news first broke on February 4, the Prime Minister and the defence minister were pretty much saying that they were not aware of these allegations prior to what was reported in the news. That is false, because we know that evidence was presented to the minister on March 1, 2018, and the Prime Minister later said that he and his office were aware on February 24. They keep changing their stories. He admitted in question period on March 10 that he knew there were allegations, but did not know the content of the allegations. That is not good enough. If they were aware of those allegations on March 1, 2018, why did they extend General Vance's contract by three years and why did he get a raise of \$50,000? Where are the facts on this?



*Business of Supply*

If we look at the testimony of Gary Walbourne, the minister refused to talk at committee about private conversations with the ombudsman, and then he pushed away from the table when he was presented with evidence. He now admits that he would not look at the evidence and said it would have been political interference if he had gotten involved in the investigation. Gary Walbourne said yesterday that was “bizarre” and “weak”. That is not a proper excuse.

Yesterday, the Minister of National Defence directed the Royal Canadian Navy to look into an investigation they did of a comment about a red room on a Zoom call, which implied sexual misconduct. The Minister of National Defence cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that he cannot be politically involved and then give instructions to review an investigation. This is a cover-up at the highest levels. The Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence refuse to be accountable. There was the big raise and the extension for General Vance, who was overseeing Operation Honour, which was signed off on by the Prime Minister.

We need to find out if Zita Astravas waved any red flags to the minister, the Prime Minister's Office, the Prime Minister or the PCO to stop the raise. Was she complicit? Were all of them complicit? We cannot forget about the role of Richard Fadden in all of this. When we heard about these rumours in 2015, the national security adviser, Richard Fadden, investigated them. When this happened with the current Prime Minister's Office and the PCO, they did not even talk to Daniel Jean, who was the national security adviser.

All of this is so sad, and it is important that we address this going forward and have witnesses appear at committee so we can get to the bottom of the facts and to the truth.

• (1045)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a little later I will get the opportunity to talk about the destructive parliamentary force the Conservative Party tends to want to play, but my question is specific to this member.

I will quote from a CTV News article, which says:

When considering Vance's appointment for the military's top post, Ray Novak told the House of Commons defence committee on Monday that, in March 2015, the National Security and Intelligence Advisor briefed then-PM Harper that the general was in a relationship with a subordinate U.S. officer who was “not in his chain of command” during a NATO deployment in Italy.

If we are going to start to have these types of investigations, would it not be appropriate to maybe even call Stephen Harper before the committee for his behaviour or lack of action?

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Winnipeg North often has trouble understanding how investigations work, how national defence works, and for that matter, the roles and responsibilities of Parliament.

Ray Novak, the former chief of staff to former prime minister Stephen Harper, was actually very candid in his comments about how we investigated General Vance. When we contrast that to the Liberals turning a blind eye, we see that they talk about having zero tolerance for sexual misconduct, but they took zero action.

It is a testament that yesterday we learned from Lieutenant-General Wayne Eyre, the acting chief of the defence staff, that he had to cancel Operation Honour because it did nothing to protect the women of the Canadian Armed Forces from sexual misconduct. That is an indictment upon the government and the Minister of National Defence.

• (1050)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I find this remarkable. We know now that Stephen Harper and Jason Kenney, when he was defence minister, were aware of the allegations and investigated them back in 2015. However, they then went on to appoint General Vance to lead the program to stamp out sexual misconduct in the military with Operation Honour.

In hindsight, do the Conservatives believe it was an error to appoint an individual to head up a military operation meant to stamp out sexual misconduct, when that individual was in fact alleged to have been involved in precisely that kind of behaviour?

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, back in 2015, I was the parliamentary secretary to the then minister of national defence. We thoroughly investigated the rumour and the allegations of fraternization when General Vance was posted in NATO at Naples. Based upon the investigation and all the advice we received, no evidence could be found of wrongdoing. Essentially, the person he was investigated about in Naples was his fiancée at the time he was appointed as chief of the defence staff.

Unlike the Liberals, we talked directly to General Vance about it. Unlike the Liberals, we carried out an investigation that lasted months, and we were prepared to delay the timeline of holding the change of command ceremony. Looking back, I question if General Vance gave us all the details and facts. I do not think so. We also know that at the end of the day, the Liberals renewed his contract in 2018, after they knew about actual evidence of sexual misconduct.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, does the member think the Liberals actually care about protecting women in the military? From where I sit, I just do not see it.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are all talk and no action. A case in point is that in 2018, we passed Bill C-77, which would have brought a victims bill of rights to National Defence, and protected the privacy and security of victims and witnesses in proceedings involving certain sexual offences.

Three years after the fact, the Liberals have not even brought that bill into force, and they did nothing to General Vance. For three years they knew there were sexual misconduct allegations against him and evidence of it. Again, the Liberals failed. They failed the women in the Canadian Armed Forces more than anyone else.

*Business of Supply*

It is our responsibility as parliamentarians to get to the bottom of this and shed light on what actually happened to ensure it never happens again.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my responsibility as Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and as a minister to be accountable to Parliament. That is why I am participating in today's debate on the Conservatives' opposition motion.

For those of us on this side of the House, our priority is helping Canadians. I want to take a moment to remind opposition parties about something they may have forgotten: We are in the middle of a pandemic. People across the country are suffering. Thousands of Canadians are grieving their dead, but what the Conservatives want to do today is engage in petty partisan politics.

The Conservatives could have opted to debate climate change, but that would mean believing it is real. They could have debated the inequities in our justice system or reconciliation with indigenous peoples, but that is not what they chose to do. They chose to engage in partisan politics. That says a lot about their priorities.

The motion before us today orders certain members of ministerial staff to appear before committees.

I would like to begin by making it clear that ministers are accountable to the Administration of the House of Commons for duties carried out within their departments and for the actions of their political staff in their political offices, period.

Page 30 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states the following regarding the fact that ministers are responsible to Parliament:

In terms of ministerial responsibility, Ministers have both individual and collective responsibilities to Parliament....The principle of individual ministerial responsibility holds that Ministers are accountable not only for their own actions as department heads, but also for the actions of their subordinates; individual ministerial responsibility provides the basis for accountability throughout the system. Virtually all departmental activity is carried out in the name of a Minister who, in turn, is responsible to Parliament for those acts.

● (1055)

[English]

Now, this is not a new concept. It is quite the opposite. I ask members to allow me to quote the former prime minister, who, in the 2006 publication "Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers", stated, "Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the exercise of their responsibilities whether they are assigned by statute or otherwise.... Ministers are personally responsible for the conduct and operation of their office."

Former Conservative House leader Jay Hill strongly made the case on behalf of the former Conservative government on May 25, 2010. I was there, and he was extremely clear. Mr. Hill said:

In our system of government, the powers of the Crown are exercised by ministers who are, in turn, answerable to Parliament. Ministers are individually and collectively responsible to the House of Commons for the policies, programs and activities of the government. They are supported in the exercise of their responsibilities by the public servants and by members of their office staffs.

It is the responsibility of individual public servants and office staff members to provide advice and information to ministers, to carry out faithfully the directions given by ministers, and in so doing, to serve the people of Canada....

Ours is a system of responsible government because...ministers are responsible to the House for everything that is done under their authority. We ministers are answerable to Parliament and to its committees. It is ministers who decide policy and ministers who must defend it before the House and ultimately before the people of Canada.

I could not agree more with the remarks of the former Conservative House leader. However, there is more that Mr. Hill had to say on this, and I am in complete agreement with what he said.

[Translation]

In his remarks, Mr. Hill clearly stated that ministerial staff, much like public servants, are not accountable to Parliament for either government policy or decisions regarding government operations.

Public servants may be called to testify in committee on the implementation of policies, but they must defer to the minister to answer questions about the policies themselves and the decisions pertaining to them.

As for ministerial staff, the scope of information available to them is even more limited than it is for public servants, because they are not involved in the department's operations.

[English]

Ministerial staff have no authority to make decisions on behalf of ministers. As I have said, they report to and are accountable to ministers. Ministers are accountable for their actions.

Ministerial staff did not put their names on ballots. They were not elected. They do not have the same rights and privileges as MPs. The opposition will likely point to ministerial staffers called before committee in 2010. There is a big difference here. There was clear evidence of staffers breaking the law. The Privacy Commissioner subsequently issued two reports that found that ministerial staffers had interfered with the release of records under the Access to Information Act.

It is critical to point out that there was much debate about the decision by the government to send ministers to committees rather than staff. Ultimately, this position was accepted by the Liberals, who formed the official opposition at the time. We accepted that, and it was the right thing to do. There was a clear acceptance of the principle of ministerial responsibility.

Today, we find ourselves in a similar position with numerous staff members being called before committees. Now we have this heavy-handed motion. There is clearly a lack of due process with the motion. Mr. Hill touched on due process in his intervention in 2010 when he said, "People's conduct is being attacked without any of the fairness or procedural safeguards or principles of justice that would be found in a court or a tribunal."

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

That is exactly what is happening at the Standing Committee on National Defence. The Conservatives moved a motion calling for a ministerial staff member to appear before even getting a response to the invitation.

Today's motion goes even further. Staff are receiving orders to appear before committees and, in some cases, before even getting an invitation. It is unprecedented. This is certainly an abuse of the powers and privileges they have as MPs.

[*English*]

We have sent a staffer to testify at committee, and we all saw what happened. The staffer was badgered by the Conservatives, repeatedly interrupted, accused of a cover-up, accused of being untruthful, accused of something that was false and easily verified with a simple Google search.

We have also seen a preview this week of how the opposition would treat staff appearing at committee. The member for Carleton, without any evidence, accused a staff member of giving a handout of half a billion dollars to a friend of the government. So much for due process.

Just yesterday, the member for Carleton smeared one of the staff members in question, falsely accusing him of destroying documents. This is completely unacceptable, and is a further demonstration that the Conservatives are only interested in partisan politics.

We know now how the opposition treats staff who do not have the privilege and immunities that members enjoy. Their actions speak for themselves. Members of this House are protected from intimidation through our parliamentary privilege. It is totally irresponsible for members to turn this protection into weapons against those who are not covered by these protections. Not only is it irresponsible, it is a clear abuse of power.

[*Translation*]

Our government has co-operated with and supported the parliamentary committees in their important work. When documents were requested they were provided. When ministers were invited to appear, they appeared.

On the matters raised in today's motion, we have demonstrated ministerial responsibility many times.

The Prime Minister and his chief of staff testified. The Minister of Defence has testified several times. The Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth has testified. The former finance minister testified. The ministers have assumed their responsibility of being accountable to Parliament. It is their responsibility to be accountable and that is what they did. They will continue to do so, in fact.

[*English*]

What we are seeing here is the opposition using the tyranny of the majority to walk all over the rights of the minority. It is seeking to weaponize our parliamentary institutions to reach a preconceived conclusion. It is seeking to undermine the public's trust in our institutions.

### *Business of Supply*

Calling for staff to appear before a committee is not the only case of the opposition behaving this way during this Parliament. It has been using its majority at committees to call for the production of papers, which is fine, as that is its right and its job, while questioning the neutrality and integrity of the public service. It is refusing to trust the non-partisan public servants to redact documents. At the finance committee, the Conservatives wanted to find public servants guilty without even hearing from them. How low can they go? They have undermined faith in the public service as an institution during a pandemic, which is not the time for Canadians to lose trust in our institutions. The Conservatives are playing a very dangerous game.

I want to take a moment to step back and provide a few other examples of the irresponsible behaviour of the opposition, and there are many. To be honest, we had to choose. The deputy leader of the Conservative Party posted a telephone number of a private company on social media and encouraged Canadians to call and demand that the company break Canada's privacy laws and release information. This led to harassment and personal threats that left employees fearing for their personal safety and required the police to get involved. Moreover, the Conservative ethics critic sent a letter to a private company asking it to break the law. The opposition tried to compel the release of personal information of private citizens.

Those are just a few examples that we picked among so many others.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

It is the type of thing that undermines everyone's confidence in the House of Commons, in its capacity to be a positive agent of change in the life of all Canadians. I am referring to the point that the former Conservative House leader, Mr. Hill, made 11 years ago. Our constitutional principles require that ministers be accountable to Parliament. It is a fundamental principle.

[*English*]

Let me quote Mr. Hill on that important point. He states:

This is no substitute for ministerial responsibility. When ministers choose to appear before committees to account for their administration, they are the best source of accountability and they must be heard. Public servants and ministerial staff support the responsibility of their ministers. They do not supplant it. They cannot supplant it.

By using its majority on committees, the opposition is trying to deflect accountability from the minister to ministerial staff. That is unacceptable.

Let me end my remarks with some wise words from that former Conservative minister whom I have quoted extensively today. He is right. He stated this about the staff:

They bring to us many talents and I expect many of them, when they accepted their jobs, never imagined that one of the skills required was to stand up to the interrogation of a bitterly partisan parliamentary committee.

*Business of Supply*

As a result of the actions of the opposition today, like the approach of the Conservative government in 2010, I say here today that ministers will instruct their staff not to appear when called before committees and that the government will send ministers instead to account for their actions.

[Translation]

While the Conservatives continue to play political games, we continue to focus on keeping Canadians healthy and safe, as well as protecting their jobs and stimulating the economy during this time of crisis. Everyone makes choices.

• (1110)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we go to questions and comments, I would ask hon. members to keep their questions, comments and answers to one minute each. A lot of members want to speak and participate in this period.

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

[English]

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, would the government House leader agree with his Minister of National Defence at the defence committee on March 12 who, when asked, “Who is responsible and accountable for the failure of this allegation being investigated?”, replied, “Yes. I’m absolutely responsible”?

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, today’s motion has to do with inviting employees to committees, to take advantage of what I referred to earlier as the tyranny of the majority to walk all over the minority, to force people who were not elected and who did not choose to come forward to testify. These people are often treated with no respect.

What is clear is that the principles of ministerial responsibility must apply here as they have always been applied and as they must continue to be applied.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. colleague has been talking about keeping Canadians safe and so on and so forth.

We are talking about sexual misconduct by some of the highest-ranking members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We have to wonder whether the public is truly protected. If misconduct is happening at such high levels, what is going on at the lower levels? Is that the culture of the organization? How can we put partisanship aside to make real change and avoid simply creating a fancy program that ultimately does nothing?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, which is very serious and extremely important.

Every individual must be able to work, live and grow without feeling threatened and without discrimination, sexist remarks or threats. This principle applies to everyone at all levels of management and governance.

I believe that everything must be done to protect everyone in our society, especially women who, all too often in the past, and even

today, have experienced these types of threats and attitudes. I believe that is what the government is trying to do. As we have said, never again—this must not be allowed to happen again, whether in our armed forces or in society as a whole.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about support for students. We are here today to talk about some of the scandals, such as the WE scandal and where that money went. Right now the government has promised time and time again to follow through on, for example, my unanimous consent motion to halt student loan payments. The Liberals have not stopped taking interest on those loans, which they also promised to do.

The \$912 million that was supposed to go to students never did. We keep hearing about how students will be getting support, but what I am really interested in today is how we can expect students and recent graduates to believe the government. How can we trust the government to do the right thing when it breaks its own promises, when it breaks the promises it has made to Canadian students and recent graduates, when \$912 million goes missing and does not go to help the students who need it so desperately right now?

The member talks about how Parliament needs to work. Well, the government members need to do what they say. They need to follow through on their word and the government is not doing that, so we have to find other methods to hold them to account.

• (1115)

[Translation]

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It is a very important question as it has to do with students, who are the future of our country. Students are the future leaders of unions and businesses, and will probably be future members, ministers and prime ministers.

Our government was there for students from the very start of the crisis. We gave them access to funds because we knew that student jobs were most at risk. What do students do between semesters or in the summer? They often work at restaurants, hotels, patios and festivals, those sectors of the economy that have been affected almost more than any other. It was no longer possible to get those types of jobs.

With the Canada emergency student benefit, we helped them get through that extremely difficult period. We created other programs. Unfortunately, the opposition often criticized those programs, but they were needed to help our students.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask my colleague if he thinks it is petty partisan politics for Parliament to want to know about why there was no investigation into alleged sexual impropriety at the highest levels of our Canadians Armed Forces? Is it petty partisan politics to want to know why the government gave an almost billion-dollar contract to someone who was friends with the Prime Minister? There is clear evidence that perhaps the Prime Minister's Office did help the program.

Let me suggest that the over 20 meetings of filibustering by the Liberals is, indeed, petty partisan politics. What have they got to hide?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, we are hiding nothing; absolutely nothing. The minister went to the committee when invited and he will go again when invited. What is petty politics is not recognizing the principle of ministerial accountability. It is funny that when the Conservatives were in power, it was so important to them. Mr. Hill gave great speeches. I was there. I quoted him today. Now all of a sudden, the principle of ministerial accountability is not important anymore and does not count. Did we throw it out the window? We invent other ways of making this Parliament work. We can change it every day if we want to. Why not? Ministerial accountability is fundamental; it was then and it is today.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his commitment to drawing the line between what is appropriate and what is not. The reality, unfortunately, is that in the six years I have been here, I have seen opposition members do some pretty incredible stuff when it comes to staff people, including the folks who work at this table in front of me, yelling and screaming at them as though they are political and partisan people when it comes to this place. We must draw a line, the line between what is acceptable and what is not. Who is responsible and who is a staff person who is working under the direction of a minister?

Can the minister expand on some of what he has witnessed over the last number of years when it comes to partisan attacks? If the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman had invested half the amount of time into actually trying to solve some of the problems as they relate to the military, instead of just going on a witch hunt day after day, he would be so much further ahead.

Can the minister reflect on that?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I really thank my colleague for his thoughts and the question. I think what it raises is extremely important. We are the public face of this Parliament. We put our faces on signs and posts and decided that we would run for the parts that are fun and the parts that are not that fun, and are difficult actually. Our staff did not make that choice. They chose to work for one of us, whatever the party, to change the world, to change and improve our society through their advice, support and help to ministers.

They did not sign up to come here and to go before committee to get insulted and treated badly. They do not deserve to be treated like that. No one, none of us, deserves to be treated like that. Where the line is drawn, to directly answer the question by my colleague,

is at the level of ministerial responsibility. That is a fundamental principle of our democracy and system, and we respect that system. I hope my colleagues do too.

• (1120)

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Shefford.

Hearing the government House leader tell us just now that the ministers are responsible and accountable and that it is not up to their staff to answer for them was music to my ears. I completely agree with him. It would make no sense.

The problem is not that we disagree on the principles, it is that they do not walk the talk. The minister can tell us that he is responsible and that he is taking care of all this, but he and the government are not dealing with the situation.

We spent the better part of last summer on the WE scandal. We were making such good progress that we were starting to shed light on the matter. The only thing the government could come up with was to prorogue Parliament to prevent the committee from continuing its work. We were forced to stop, and when the work resumed, they still kept us waiting for the documents.

Last summer, I asked the Prime Minister and the former finance minister whether due diligence had been done before the government invested in WE Charity. They said that yes, it probably had. When I spoke to Mr. Shugart, the Clerk of the Privy Council, he confirmed that due diligence had been done. I asked him to send us the due diligence report, and he promised to do so. However, we never received it. That is an important document.

When someone invests money, regardless of the amount, they need to know who they are doing business with. If I have \$2,000 to put into an RRSP, I am not going to give that money to the first peddler who comes along without knowing who he is and what he is going to do with my money. I make sure to give my money to a bank or trust, a responsible organization that is going to manage my money responsibly and ensure that I am not wasting it.

When the government, which manages my taxes, decides to invest my money, I expect it to be at least as diligent as I am, if not more. Normally, when someone is managing other people's money, they should be even more careful than when they are managing their own.

The WE Charity contract was not a \$2,000 deal. It was a contract for \$43 million, possibly more because of the potential for subcontracts. Clearly WE Charity was willing to subcontract the work. It gave National a contract and could have given contracts to its other organizations, such as ME to WE, and other shell corporations. We were shown quite an extensive organizational chart, actually. There was at least \$43 million involved, plus more for student grants that could have totalled almost \$1 billion. It could have been as much as \$904 million.

*Business of Supply*

It was the middle of the pandemic, so the government decided it did not have time to manage the program and would not bother with a tendering process, which is due diligence 101. It awarded the contract to the only organization it thought could provide the service: WE Charity.

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics and the Standing Committee on Finance heard from experts who said that a tender is essential but that if the situation is truly beyond one's control and a tender is not possible, even greater vigilance is needed. Based on what we know so far, the government, which should have been even more vigilant than usual, awarded the contract having done no due diligence whatsoever. It awarded a \$43-million contract without checking into the recipient at all.

Then there was another emergency. We parliamentarians kept digging and realized that WE Charity, the entity the government had entrusted with \$43 million of our money, was just a shell corporation. It was a new company. The Kielburger brothers are no fools. Their lawyer informed them that this was a big contract worth up to \$1 billion and that they would be paid \$43 million. The idea, then, was to put this into a separate company, because if the deal ever fell through, they did not want WE Charity to go belly up too. That was the plan in a nutshell, and I did not make it up. The Kielburger brothers told us the story themselves.

• (1125)

Their lawyers are the ones who recommended that they put \$43 million into a new shell corporation, with no financial history, to manage nearly \$1 billion, without due diligence or a tendering process.

What did we learn as we kept digging? We learned that the corporation in question was not even capable of providing services in French. Everyone likes to talk about how Canada is this great bilingual country, but that is pure fiction. Yet again, the government is all talk and no action on languages, as on everything else. The organization was not capable of providing services in French, so it was forced to subcontract services in Quebec to National.

What else did we learn as we dug deeper into this scandal? We found out that people from WE Charity had helped the government design this program. The people who wanted to get paid for deciding where our money should go were telling the government what to put in the contract that they would then be awarded. On top of that, they were told to put it in a shell corporation so that they would not lose anything if the project were to fail. Unbelievable.

Not only were they the ones designing the program, but what else did we learn? The people who were telling the government how to design the program were not even registered as lobbyists. No one from WE Charity was registered as a lobbyist. However, certain individuals were working with public servants every day to design a program that would get them a \$43-million contract. That is hardly small potatoes

The icing on the cake is that by asking questions, we learned that the Prime Minister and the finance minister at the time were in a conflict of interest when they issued that contract. The worst part is that they were aware of it. They knew that they should not get involved, but they did so anyway.

There was an initial cabinet meeting, as the Prime Minister testified last summer. He saw the subject on the agenda and said that he was not sure he could get involved because he was in a conflict of interest. He knew the Kielburgers, and his family, namely his mother, brother and wife, had received contracts worth approximately half a million dollars from them. In order to reassure the Prime Minister, the meeting was postponed for two weeks.

The Prime Minister then had two weeks to think. Nevertheless, he and the then finance minister ended up voting on a contract in which they had a conflict of interest, a contract that was problematic for all the reasons I just outlined.

They do not want to answer our questions. They prorogue Parliament when they think we are asking too many questions. We therefore put our questions to the Kielburger brothers, who confirmed a few things. One of the brothers—I believe it was Marc Kielburger—confirmed that he had sent a message through LinkedIn to several employees in the department, thanking them for working with him to shape the program. The government, meanwhile, tells us that everything is fine, that it prepared the program itself, without any help from WE Charity.

WE says that it was thanking public servants for preparing it. We want to get to the bottom of this. If the ministers do not want to give us an answer, we will ask the employees involved, the ones the Kielburger brothers referred to. We want to ask them what really went on, but we are being told that the ministers have to take responsibility.

I agree with the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I would love to see the ministers take responsibility. That is music to my ears. I invite them to testify before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics and to answer for their staff. However, they must actually give an answer. They cannot do what they have been doing over the past few months, such as sending 5,000 pages of redacted documents, including 349 pages that, according to the law clerk, were redacted in a way that did not comply with the committee's instructions.

I hope they will not prorogue Parliament or call an election to prevent us from continuing our work. They must stop beating around the bush. They must take responsibility. Unfortunately, we have lost faith in them. At this point, we are determined to get to the bottom of this matter. It is taxpayers' money, and it is not peanuts. We are talking about \$43 million to manage almost \$1 billion. We want to hear from those responsible for this program. I want to see the due diligence report that we have been promised since August.

• (1130)

[English]

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, I heard the government House leader, in response to multiple questions, say over and over that committees were “masters of their own work”. That seems to be a standard reply. In other words, committees can decide how to conduct their business. However, today, we have the revelation that he does not really think that anymore. Now he is saying that they are not really masters of their own work, because the Liberals do not like it if they want to call certain witnesses as opposed to other witnesses.

I wonder if this is a concern for the member as well and whether he thinks this shift in government position away from the autonomy of committees is of concern.

[Translation]

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very important question.

I agree with him. In fact, I did not mention this in my introductory speech, but I was surprised by what the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said. I have a great deal of respect for him because we can trust him on his word. He is intelligent and honest and a man of integrity. A few minutes ago I heard him say that if the committee ordered officials to appear before the committee, he would advise them not to obey those orders. It is quite unusual for a minister to tell his employees to disobey committee orders.

I would like an explanation on this. I think this is pretty serious. My colleague is absolutely right. It is one thing to say that you take responsibility, but it is another thing to do it. When the committees call on the ministers, it is not to get together for a cup of coffee. It is to honestly answer questions without beating around the bush. If the committee thinks it is important to hear testimony from officials, then it is the minister's job to tell his employees that they must obey the orders. He must certainly not encourage them to revolt against the orders given by the committee. It makes no sense. I have too much respect for the leader—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will now move on to other questions.

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

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for his speech and for the months he has spent working on the whole WE Charity scandal.

He painted quite a captivating picture of all of the Liberals' mistakes. However, I want to mention the students, who have been overlooked in this scandal and who did not end up getting the money or assistance. The Liberals dragged their feet on the Canada emergency student benefit. We had to twist their arms. They broke their promise to pay the interest fees on student loans. They completely mismanaged the program. There were conflicts of interest and oversights, and students ultimately paid the price.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

### *Business of Supply*

I think he is absolutely right about students and citizens paying the price. Based on what we were told, WE Charity has reimbursed all the money it was given, so there may be no loss there. We need to look into that, but that is the information we have now.

I think the program was a good idea initially. Getting students who need to earn money into the labour market and, by the same token, helping organizations that need workers is a good idea. I have nothing against good ideas. I do have something against the insidious way they tried to do it. To be blunt, the government was trying to help its friends. WE Charity helped Mr. Trudeau's family, and Mr. Trudeau's family helped WE Charity in return. The really despicable part is that they claimed they wanted to help students and organizations.

I agree that we should help students and organizations. In fact, I do that myself. I help organizations in my riding. For example, I participate in the various events that they organize. I try my best to help them. I think they need help, especially during the pandemic. As for students, there is no question that we should help them. I will reiterate that the program is not the problem. The problem is the way the program was implemented. It was not done properly. Basically, helping students was just a pretext. The real objective was to help WE Charity. That is what was done.

• (1135)

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for his hard work and his speech on these two files that we are talking about today, namely WE Charity and the cases of sexual assault within the Canadian Armed Forces.

These two files provide clear evidence of this Liberal government's lack of transparency with regard to all of the things it is trying to hide from us for various reasons. That is really hurting our democracy and fails to meet our need to know the details of these key files, namely the WE Charity and the cases of sexual assault within the Canadian Armed Forces.

As my party's critic for the status of women, I rise today to speak to the following part of the Conservative motion:

That, with a view to support the authority of committees in their important inquiries of public interest:

...

(b) regarding the study on addressing sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Armed Forces by the Standing Committee on National Defence, Zita Astravas, formerly the Minister of National Defence's chief of staff and the Prime Minister's Director of Issues Management and currently the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness's chief of staff, be ordered to appear before the committee on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.;

(c) should the Prime Minister instead appear before the committees mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b), at any of the dates and times mentioned, for at least three hours, the witness otherwise scheduled to appear, and any other witnesses scheduled to appear before the same committee at a later time, be relieved of their obligation to appear pursuant to this order; and

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(d) it be an instruction to the Chairs of the committees mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b) to convene televised meetings of their respective committee, at the dates and times mentioned, for at least three hours, for the purpose of receiving evidence from the individuals then ordered to appear or the Prime Minister, as the case may be, unless the individual has been relieved from attending under the provisions of paragraph (c), provided that the witnesses be required to appear until discharged by the committee.

Today, therefore, I will be addressing this part of the Conservatives' motion, the sensitive matter of sexual assault that is currently being considered by both the Standing Committee on National Defence and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I will focus on three aspects. I will begin with a brief history of the issue and the reason why the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is studying it. I will then talk about the current debates, before concluding with a few hopes for the future and for the follow-up to the investigation.

In 2015, former justice Marie Deschamps published a devastating report on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, which led to an article by Noémi Mercier in *L'actualité*. That same year, shortly after the Deschamps report was released, the Conservative Party appointed General Jonathan Vance chief of the defence staff. As Ray Novak, former chief of staff to Stephen Harper, confirmed, allegations of sexual misconduct were already circulating when Mr. Vance appeared before the national defence committee in 2015. The Conservatives called for an investigation, which found that nothing inappropriate had taken place. Mr. Vance's appointment was then confirmed. Immediately after he was appointed chief of the defence staff, General Vance launched Operation Honour, aimed at eliminating sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

In 2018, former Canadian Forces ombudsman Gary Walbourne received a complaint against Mr. Vance supported by evidence deemed credible. The victim, however, did not want to go any further, which prevented the ombudsman from pursuing the investigation. His hands tied, on March 1, 2018, Mr. Walbourne tried to warn the Liberal Minister of National Defence and show him the evidence of General Vance's inappropriate behaviour. The minister apparently refused to look at the incriminating documents or discuss the matter with the ombudsman. This is clear evidence of the government's lack of transparency, which it tried to hide.

Mr. Walbourne described the meeting as hostile. The minister apparently refused to speak with him seven times, until Mr. Walbourne retired. It seems the Minister of Defence simply had his chief of staff at the time, Zita Astravas, notify the Privy Council of the allegations, without following up in any way or calling for an investigation. An email from Mrs. Astravas dated March 5, 2018, confirmed that the Minister of Defence heard the allegations against Mr. Vance and that she herself forwarded the information to the Privy Council.

In 2019, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women looked into the matter just before the end of the session when the general election was called. The study was put on hold. When we tried to refer the study back to the committee, the Liberals first tried to say that the matter should not be considered in two committees, and that the Standing Committee on National Defence could do the job. At first, the government even tried to hide from the Standing Com-

mittee on the Status of Women that members wanted to address this feminist angle from the start.

• (1140)

Now we are finally discussing it. The study started last Tuesday, but we had to work hard to be able to discuss this aspect, the treatment of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women can now examine the issue from that angle.

Let us go over the timeline of events. General Vance announced his retirement on July 23, 2020. On February 2, Global News reported that allegations of sexual misconduct had been made against General Vance. The Standing Committee on National Defence looked into the matter, paying particular attention to the actions of the Minister of National Defence, who had known for three years that General Vance was the subject of serious allegations.

When the Minister of National Defence first appeared before the committee, he systematically refused to answer questions on the pretext that the case was before the courts.

The testimony of Gary Walbourne, who confirmed that he had informed the Minister of National Defence and that the minister had not even wanted to look at the file, was a real black eye for the government.

Other witnesses at committee confirmed that the minister should have taken action and that he had several tools at his disposal to order an inquiry. None of the witnesses could understand why the minister failed to act.

The Minister of National Defence appeared before the committee again in March. This time, he agreed to speak in order to defend his handling of the case. He admitted that he had refused to look at Walbourne's file, claiming that he did not want to do the investigating himself, though no one was asking him to do that.

One of the missing links for finding out exactly what happened and what the Liberal government did, or rather did not do, is the Minister of National Defence's former chief of staff, Zita Astravas, who is currently serving as chief of staff for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. She was the one handling the case.

The committee tried to contact her several times to invite her to testify, but she never even responded. The committee tried to force her to appear, but the Liberals wanted to invite her again rather than force her. The Conservative motion was defeated by the Bloc and the Liberals. The Bloc Québécois wanted to give her one last chance before forcing her to appear because, let us be frank, that is an extreme measure.

I remind members that the Trudeau government had no problem dragging Mark Norman, second in command, through the mud. The Prime Minister even said twice that the case would be going to court, while Mr. Norman wanted to sound the alarm about Scott Brison's plot to withdraw the *Asterix* contract from the Davie shipyard to help his buddies at Irving. There is a double standard here.



The Crown finally dropped the charges and Scott Brison resigned. Meanwhile, as the Trudeau government was doing everything it could to take down Mr. Norman, the Liberals did absolutely nothing with Mr. Vance. General Vance's successor as chief of defence staff, Admiral McDonald, even pulled out after some allegations of sexual misconduct against him—

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been reluctant to raise it, but the speaker prior to the current member and now the member have, on two occasions, referred to the Prime Minister by his last name instead of using his title or his constituency. Members know full well that we are not supposed to be making reference to members by name.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his comments. He is quite right.

I am sure the member is aware of the rules. I would ask her to respect them as she continues her speech.

The hon. member for Shefford has two minutes remaining.

• (1145)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I am on target for time.

Since Tuesday, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has resumed its study of the issue of sexual misconduct. The Standing Committee on National Defence is also examining it. Our first witness was the Minister of National Defence, who basically repeated that he found these allegations concerning and disturbing, yet he did nothing about them for over three years.

The Department of National Defence, meanwhile, continues to say that sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces is unacceptable. While Operation Honour was supposed to reduce the number of sexual assaults, we now know that senior officers have committed assaults with impunity.

Because generals outrank military judges and cannot be disciplined by anyone in the Canadian Armed Forces, we are now seeing many cases of sexual misconduct at the highest levels.

General Vance, the former chief of the defence staff who launched Operation Honour, had already been accused of sexual misconduct back in 2018. According to former ombudsman Gary Walbourne, the defence minister refused to even look at the incriminating evidence.

That the defence minister did nothing for nearly three years is quite troubling. By failing to take action against the highest-ranking officers, the government chose to protect the generals instead of the victims who were in the worst work environments possible. Members of the military are subject to the Code of Service Discipline, which means that the senior officers are in a position of power over the members. It is therefore easy for the officers to abuse their power and their subordinates, a point that was mentioned on Tuesday in the Standing Committee on Status of Women.

The Bloc Qu b cois believes it is important to learn from the General Vance case, to prevent such things from happening again.

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The Bloc Qu b cois is in favour of the motion to have the defence and status of women committees study this issue.

In conclusion, some solutions could be implemented, but it will take political will to make the Canadian Armed Forces safe again for women and to break the culture of silence. You cannot call yourself a feminist and continue to tolerate sexual violence in the Canadian army. For all these reasons, I believe it is high time we took action.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will try to speak French. I thank the member for emphasizing the importance of dealing with allegations of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

In the member's opinion, what is the next step that should be taken to get answers—

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am going to interrupt the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. We are not getting his video. Could he check to ensure it is on? We had video initially and then it disappeared.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I am getting a whole bunch of errors and I cannot start my video. I do not know why it kicked off. I will reboot the system and try to get back in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member. We have heard enough of the question to get started, and I compliment the hon. member for using his second language. The hon. member for Shefford can respond to the part of the question that we did hear.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

The reason I read out the motion is that witnesses who have not yet appeared are named in it. We had this same debate at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. There were attempts to not summon certain people who were key witnesses.

I think the key to getting to the bottom of this whole thing is letting both committees do their investigations.

Today, during the second hour of the status of women committee meeting, from noon to 1 p.m., we will be joined by retired Justice Marie Deschamps. As I said, in 2015, she wrote a report and recommendations, not all of which were implemented. The least we can do is revisit those recommendations to find out why they were not implemented and what can be done as soon as possible. Let us give the defence committee and the status of women committee a chance to study the issues simultaneously.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am a bit concerned. It appears the Bloc, whether willingly or unwillingly, seems to be falling into what I would suggest is the Conservative trap of playing a very destructive role.

Whether it is in committees or on the floor of the House of Commons, the government House leader referred to the whole idea of tyranny of the majority walking over the rights of the minority. The government's focus is on the coronavirus, and that is where our focus needs to be. Committees can do the work.

Why does the Bloc now want the House of Commons to override what is taking place in our committees today?

• (1150)

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I am shocked to hear my colleague say that we are undermining the work of the committees.

I would remind my colleague that with respect to the other part of today's motion regarding the WE Charity, we had a report before us and it was the government that slammed the brakes on the work of the committees by proroguing Parliament last summer.

I can give other examples. A major report on the effects of COVID-19 was being examined at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The same goes for the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which was studying an important topic. The Liberals were the ones who ended the work of the committees with prorogation.

The same was true for the work on the WE Charity. The Bloc and the Conservative Party are not the only opposition parties that want to shed light on these affairs. The NDP wants to as well. At the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, among others, we want to shed light on the allegations of sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The opposition parties are not responsible for tearing down the government. It is the government that is tearing itself down and preventing the work of the committees.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for all of the work that she has done over the years to support women's rights.

I want to come back to the scandal involving sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Liberal government's many versions of what happened there.

The Minister of National Defence told us in committee that he had never heard of this scandal. We then learned that the ombudsman had informed him of it three years ago. The Prime Minister said that he learned about it from the media, but he too was actually informed of it by the Privy Council a few years ago.

Does my colleague from Shefford think the Liberals tried to cover up this scandal rather than standing up for women?

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

When listening to the testimony at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I felt like I was watching a ping-pong match, with the ball flying back and forth between the ombudsman, the minister and the Prime Minister's Office. I assume my colleague is seeing the same thing at the Standing Committee on National Defence.

In the end, who are the big losers in all of this? They are the victims of sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces. They are the ones who no longer know where to go to report cases of assault because of this process, which was completely lacking in transparency.

We need independent authorities to look into these complaints. We need to find solutions.

In order to do that, the committees need to continue their work. The government needs to stop saying that we want to do away with committees. We want the committees to work and find solutions for the well-being of women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

*[English]*

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to join the debate today, albeit not from within the House itself but from within my constituency of Edmonton Strathcona. I will be splitting my time today with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

This is a long motion, so I am going to speak about a number of different portions of it. I am going to start by talking about the committee work and the important, vital role committees play in our parliamentary democracy.

We heard from the government that it is the opposition that is causing problems and preventing committees from doing their work. I have to flag that I just do not see this as accurate. We know committees must be empowered and we know they must be independent, but they are not able to do their work right now because of obstruction from Liberal members of these committees. A perfect example is the committee on which I sit, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Sitting on this committee for the last few weeks, I have been listening to members of the Liberal Party talking about their cats, about cutting their lawns and about a number of different things in order to not have to discuss the very important issue of global vaccine equity.

At the committee I would like to talk about vaccines, about how they are being dispersed around the world and how we are making sure dangerous variants appearing around the world are not endangering Canadians. I want to talk about why we do not have national capacity to develop vaccines in Canada. I want to talk about why we are the only G7 country taking vaccines from poorer countries through the COVAX program, despite having negotiated 10 times what we need through bilateral agreements. However, we cannot talk about that because the Liberals have been filibustering.

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What is even more disturbing is that while I would love to talk about what I think is one of the most important issues of the moment, which is the equality of vaccine distribution, the committee also needs to be talking about all the things happening around the world. The committee needs to be talking about arms sales to Saudi Arabia. It needs to be talking about what is happening with China, Hong Kong and Myanmar, and what is happening with Yemen, which is named as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. We cannot do that work either, because of the obstruction by the government.

When we hear the government say it is in fact the opposition that is preventing it, it is very clear to me that this is in fact not the case. It is the filibustering, the withholding of documents, the redacting of documents and the obstructing of work. Our democracy is in a very sad state when we are not being enabled to do the work we need to do. Because the NDP strongly supports anything that adds to the transparency and accountability of the government, I will certainly be supporting this legislation.

The next thing I want to talk about is the WE scandal and some of the things that have happened around the WE scandal. As an NDP member, I have been very pleased over the pandemic to see the support we have been able to get the government to agree to for Canadians. The CERB was always just going to be a tweak on EI, but the NDP was able to convince the government to make it \$2,000 and extend it into the CRB. We knew the wage subsidy was going to be 10%; we convinced the government to get it to 75%.

The rent program was a deeply flawed program because it was landlord-driven, but we were able to convince the government to fix it. Of course, we were not able to get it applied back retroactively to April, so many constituencies and many businesses in Edmonton Strathcona really suffered, but we were able to get a program for people. We were able to get support for seniors and for people living with disabilities, and we are really proud of that.

We were also able to get some support for students. There was the CESB and there was a moratorium on student loan repayments, but we lost the thread there. In June, there was a huge announcement that there was going to be all this money for students. It was going to be great and help students. We knew they were suffering. We knew that not every student came from a wealthy family and that not every student was getting the support they needed, and they were not able to work over the summer, something they needed to do, so we were delighted to hear about the supports.

● (1155)

However, I was very concerned when I heard the organization being used to develop this program was the WE Charity. As someone who has worked for over 25 years in international development, I was very disappointed when I heard Mr. Trudeau defend the partnership, saying that WE was the only group with a countrywide network capable of operating—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I see now that the hon. member recognizes that little error. That has happened a couple of times today, and I give a nudge and a reminder in that direction for members to avoid that mistake.

We will go ahead with the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Mr. Speaker, it is an error I fall into on occasion. I apologize.

The Prime Minister defended the partnership, saying that WE was the only group with a countrywide network capable of operating a program on this scale for young people. That was not true. That was very clearly not true. As someone who has worked in the sector, I can tell members that there are a number of organizations that could have done that much better.

I can also tell members that the WE organization is not a good international development charity. There is a reason that it is not part of any charitable umbrella group. There is a reason that it is not seen as a player within the sector. It does bad development work. It takes advantage of students. To be perfectly honest, it is basically the Liberal equivalent of a charity: it is all glitter and no substance, or, as we say in Alberta, it is all sizzle and no steak.

There were many organizations that would have been capable of doing that work and developing that program really well, and there are tons of ugly details that I can get into, such as the unethical relationships and the extremely poor judgment that we saw from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, but I do not want to talk about that; I want to talk about students, because, like so many Canadians, I am weary of hearing about scandal after scandal by the government.

What I think has been lost in this discussion is that there was almost a billion dollars promised to help students, and it went missing. Nobody knows where that money went. In Alberta, there have been massive cuts to post-secondary education. Students and recent graduates are really suffering in my province and across the country. The Liberal government promised to relieve student loan debt; it has not done that yet. The Liberals agreed to my unanimous consent motion to halt repayments on student loans until after the pandemic, but again they acted in bad faith and have not done that.

We need to find out why they wanted this money to go to WE charity, because it is in fact a really bad organization to give money to, but we also need to know what we are going to do to protect students and how students ended up having to bear the brunt of these bad decisions by the Liberal government.

Now I am going to talk a bit about what happened with sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Armed Forces.

As the NDP deputy critic for women, gender and equality, I am shocked at the allegations of sexual misconduct in the military. I have dedicated my life to international development, sustainable development and human rights, with a particular focus on the rights of women and girls in Canada and around the world, so I am deeply troubled by these allegations and the continued failure to protect women and to have a reporting mechanism in place that will protect victims.

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For women to be able to serve equally in the armed forces, they have to have confidence that complaints will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, no matter who is the perpetrator. The Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister knew about sexual misconduct allegations against the chief of the defence staff, General Vance, in 2018, yet they decided to leave him at the very top of the chain of command for more than three years.

I have to tell members that I had a phone call last week. One of the victims actually phoned my office and wanted to talk to me about what she had experienced. She felt revictimized. She felt scared of reprisal. She felt that the country that she had devoted her life to was not protecting her safety. It was a very difficult conversation for me to hear. For the government to say that we do not have the right to get the information to get to the bottom of this and to fix the problems within our military for women like the young woman who phoned me is an insult. It is an absolute insult. It insults women and it insults students.

The Liberals have tried many times here in the House and in many committees, and not just in the foreign affairs committee, to obfuscate and filibuster. They have worked to lead a conversation about what needs to be covered. They make excuses, they blame the Conservatives, they blame the provinces, they blame the processes in place, but they have the power to make those changes. They still have not come to terms with the fact that they have the ability to make those changes—

• (1200)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would ask this. Does the member believe the Liberals have any credibility left as champions of women's rights, based on what has been heard at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women?

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madam Speaker, I spoke to a young woman from the Canadian military. It was heartbreaking to hear how much she wanted to support the military and do her job, but under the current government she felt she could not do her job and was not being protected. To hear a proud member of our military say she was afraid and had been abandoned by the government gives me little faith that it is protecting women. That needs to change right now.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I understand and appreciate the member's desire to get the information she wants, but I appeal to her sense of whether it is appropriate to ask staff to come forward to testify at a committee. I know she used to be the executive director of an organization where she had staff below her.

Would it have been appropriate for staff to be called to testify or would she, as the executive director, have said that she would answer on behalf of her staff?

• (1205)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madam Speaker, the key priority here is getting answers, because that is what the opposition's role is. It is what the government needs to do and it is our job within the com-

mittees. I was the executive director of an organization and would feel it was my responsibility to speak on behalf of that organization, but I also had staff who were experts in particular areas and they would be the best people to ask. That is what I am saying. When we cannot get answers from the government, when it does not answer our questions in good faith, what are we meant to do as opposition? I am a new member of Parliament, but not so new that I do not know what my job is. My job is to hold the government to account. The government is making it very difficult for me to do that.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my good friend and colleague for all the work she does. She mentioned students, and when the government rescinded the \$912 million it promised because of the WE scandal. The government failed students, even though it supported my friend's unanimous consent motion to have the loan repayment moratorium extended until at least May 2021.

Can she tell us about the NDP's plan?

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for being such an important voice in Parliament and an important mentor to me.

We would like to see the government stop the interest on student loans, as it should not be profiting off the backs of student loans, and put a moratorium on repaying student loans.

Recent graduates are suffering right now. Let us give them the help they deserve: the same help we have given to other sectors. Let us forgive some debt. Our leader came forward this week and brought a plan to forgive up to \$20,000 in student loan debt per student.

We should be working toward tuition-free post-secondary education. There are 24 countries in the world that have free post-secondary education. That is something we should be working toward.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is always a great honour to rise in the House representing the people of Timmins—James Bay. We are dealing today with another day of immature fighting between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

When the Conservatives were in power, their schtick was conducting everything in camera. Everything had to go in camera. The idea that we could have a public committee was outrageous. Everything had to go in camera.

On the other hand, if the Liberals do not like a question, they filibuster. We have a government actually obstructing its own committees, then the Liberals act like the whiniest picked-upon people. They have a new thing now: there is somehow a tyranny of the majority picking on the minority. The minority here is the Government of Canada.

The Liberals have been filibustering about the fact that the Liberal government is trying to stop accessing vaccines in the third world. They have been filibustering on that. They have been filibustering the very serious issue of sexual misconduct and the failure of the defence department to defend women in the military. Rather than get answers, they are filibustering.

Of course, they have filibustered in the ethics committee day in and day out for so long that, in terms of what is happening at the ethics committee, I think we know pretty much all that we are going to know about the WE group. We know that after eight months, we can honestly and confidently say we do not have a clue how this financial operation runs. This is such an obscure, massive system of all their real estate holdings, their private companies, their supposed public entities, their charities and their holding companies that we still have not been able, after eight months, to get answers. That is very serious. In fact, we just had a letter from their lawyer who is outraged that we are asking how many schools they actually built. Apparently it will take months to get an answer to that.

On the issue of what is before—

• (1210)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has a point of order.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, on the issue of filibustering, I believe it is the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, an NDP member, who holds the record for filibustering in the House. Just—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** That is debate. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, please proceed.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, this is typical. The Liberals believe that if they act like sock puppets for the Prime Minister's Office, they will get advancement instead of actually acting like parliamentarians. It is a typical example that they insult and shout, but then nobody is a victim like a Liberal is a victim. That is certainly something I have seen.

I will say that there is one thing Conservatives and Liberals agree on at committee. As the one member of the New Democratic Party, whenever I try to find a compromise, the Liberals and Conservatives absolutely agree that there is going to be no compromise. It is going to be a fight to the finish.

I have tried to work with the Liberals. I want to get this thing solved. The reason I want to get this solved is because these procedural games are interfering with some very serious work we need to do, so I would say a pox on both their houses. One of the things that we actually need to deal with is the study into Pornhub/MindGeek, which I am very concerned is not going to get finished. There are very serious issues here, and I do not see any interest in compromise from the Liberals or the Conservatives at this point so that we can get that study done.

We have received some extraordinary messages from people around the world who are looking to our committee to do something that has never been done before, and to shine a light into some very dark corners. However, there are powerful statements that might never see the light of day because of the filibustering.

### *Business of Supply*

I was astounded the other day that we actually got a message from Rose Kalemba. I had mentioned her, and she was the first one to come forward. She was raped and tortured as a child, and her abuse was posted on Pornhub, which is owned by MindGeek. The abuse that young child suffered was horrific, and she could not get it taken down. She wrote to us, saying she thought that it would be a monumental moment if we actually got the study done. She said that:

I was the first Pornhub survivor to speak out with my face and real name [that was] initially on social media... and then... [on] BBC World.

I learned of her story from BBC World, but I did not know that she is Canadian.

Her letter continues with:

...I was 14, I was raped, and my attackers videoed the assault and posted it. After my rape, I tried to commit suicide, and after I survived [I] struggled greatly to manage my life... I was revictimized by the posting of the video on Pornhub where an unknown number of others could watch, download and distribute my assault... Six videos of my rape at age 14, uploaded by...my attackers, stayed on Pornhub while they refused to remove them for over half a year. My cries to them where I begged them to take it down, stating that I was a minor and it was non-consensual, both of which were glaringly obvious, went unheard...while ads appeared [alongside] the rape video.

She has reached out to our committee and asked us to do the job that needs to be done in getting answers.

Here is another letter I want to read into the record. In case the filibustering goes on forever and we never get this done, it should be on the record. This is from a person who had worked in management at Pornhub/MindGeek. It says:

I fear for my safety and so I prefer not to give more details...[but] please investigate all the cam-girl sites that MindGeek runs. I am certain many of the "models" are being held captive in trafficking situations all over the world. For example, women trying to escape North Korea will be held captive and forced into the cam studios in China by their trafficker, who they just thought would help them get out... This story repeats globally. MindGeek denies responsibility by separating themselves from the cam-girl studios. Instead, these companies are managed as affiliate relationships, marketing relationships, but MindGeek is making a lot of money off these women held against their will.

The letter continues with:

Ask MindGeek to provide all the financial records for all incoming and outgoing transactions in their affiliate networks for all business units. All pay sites. All Tube sites. All cam sites. All advertising networks like TrafficJunky. It will be very clear that the scope of the problem is much larger than anyone on the ethics committee or reporting in any mainstream media currently realizes. This problem is so much bigger than Pornhub.

This former manager also mentioned that he was:

...discouraged from contacting Interpol when I stumbled on child content by my superiors. I was not allowed to report this kind of content when it crossed my desk.

The issue that is before us is that we have a law in Canada, passed in 2011, that says if an online site has an allegation of child pornography, it has to refer it to the police.

*Business of Supply*

• (1215)

Little Rose Kalemba, who was 14, was held and raped again and again and was physically tortured. When she went forward, she could have contacted Pornhub. It had a legal obligation to contact the RCMP and we would have a record of it.

Serena Fleites, who spoke to us, was sexually abused at age 14, and she begged Pornhub to take the video down. There should be a record. Pornhub said it could not find any record of Ms. Fleites. It was going to check its files. However, there is a law in Canada that says there is a duty to report.

The RCMP came to us, and told us it was difficult, that it needed more funding. We asked if it had ever dealt with Pornhub and asked it about compliance with the law. My understanding is that the RCMP said no. Then we read in *La Presse* that the RCMP went to Pornhub and asked about the duty to report, and Pornhub had said that it was not a Canadian company, that Pornhub, based in Montreal, is not a Canadian company, and the RCMP left.

We are now being told by the director of public prosecutions that it is really a provincial matter, that even though we have federal laws to deal with child pornography, somehow it is the provincial government's responsibility to do this.

These are the questions that we need to get to. We need to have the Minister of Justice come to explain whether or not we are going to have child pornography laws in this country that will be enforced or not enforced. We need to get to the study.

I am encouraging, asking, begging my colleagues in the Liberal and Conservatives parties to stop beating each other with these plastic sticks for the cameras and to get down to the work that we need to do at committee. I would like to move that we amend the motion, if my colleagues would agree, to replace "10:00 a.m." in paragraph (b) with "11:00 a.m."

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes if he consents to this amendment being moved.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, while we are supportive of the concept, at this time we will not be able to support the amendment.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Madam Speaker, having listened to this very passionate speech, I am very thankful for the member standing up and fighting for women in regard to the incredible tragedy we see happening with a company like MindGeek.

Does the member believe that the Liberals have any credibility left as champions of women's rights, based on what we see happening at committee?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, what concerns me at committee, and it is not separate from ethics, is what happened with the investigation after the military ombudsman brought forward an allegation of sexual misconduct by Gen. Vance.

The military ombudsman attempted to meet with the minister. The minister would not hear him. The next day, the PCO demanded to know the name of the woman complainant. Of course, in any case like this, it is the job of the ombudsman to protect a complainant. What concerns me is that Mr. Walbourne says that he was then forced out of his job, in what he said became an increasingly toxic environment.

We have to assure the women of our nation who serve our country and put their lives on the line that this nation will have their back against men who try to use their power to undermine them. I believe we could get to the bottom of what is going on in the military if the Liberals would stop obstructing that part and actually bring forward the witnesses we need so we can get a report for all the women in the military.

• (1220)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the opening remarks about the Liberals and Conservatives, I agree with just about everything the member said in his speech. I know that he spoke very passionately about it.

I, too, would love to see committees doing this very important work. I am assuming that this member is supporting the motion too, because another NDP member indicated that they were. However, I fail to see how this particular motion does anything other than politically go after staff members.

If the member is very much interested in actually studying these very important issues, why would he support this motion that would only clog up the committee with additional partisan business, as opposed to getting to the important work that he talks about?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, if the member wants to talk about clogging up committee, I had to sit through 40 hours of the Liberals talking about the kind of underwear they bought while we needed to get to the issue of parliamentary business.

The Liberals are telling us these poor staffers come in to make the world a better place, but we are talking about political staffers here. When the Liberals were in opposition, I remember when they brought a Conservative staffer before committee in 2006. They were more than willing to bring a Conservative staffer to committee. However, now that it concerns the Prime Minister's Office, the Liberals are saying that they have to protect them, that this is terrible behaviour by the majority somehow. Yes, it is a majority. That is what the committee is.

Whenever the Liberals do not get their way, they do not try to compromise or work out a solution. They just figure that they will talk about ridiculous things like the kind of underwear they bought. That is literally what they were talking about at our committee. They will talk for hours and hours. They wasted the equivalent of 20 straight meetings and then blamed us for all of the work that never got done. I would say to my colleague to just look in the mirror once in a while.

**Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Timmins—James Bay for all the work he has done in the House of Commons.

Canadians have seen too many Liberal scandals over the past few years, like at the Aga Khan's island and the SNC-Lavalin scandals. The Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking ethics laws in both of those cases. Now we have serious allegations about sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces and, of course, we have the WE scandal.

Earlier today, the government House leader stated to the House that today's motion is nothing but petty partisan politics and that we are undermining the public service.

Does the member believe that we should just move on and that this is nothing but petty politics?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I think the Liberals should stop their filibustering on vaccines and stop filibustering what is happening at the defence committee. I think the Liberals and the Conservatives need to work with us and get the ethics committee back on track so we can get to the Pornhub study.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe.

I am pleased to take part in today's debate on the motion moved by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, and to point out to the House that we must once again expose the bad faith of the Liberal government, which is attempting to shirk its responsibility for answering to Canadians.

I have made several speeches condemning this matter and asked many questions about the government's judgment and rather elastic conscience. No one has shown more contempt for ethics and transparency than the Liberal government since it came to power in 2015.

Today's motion essentially seeks to compel the government to talk, something that is apparently easier to do in secret. The government often hides behind closed doors.

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics would obviously prefer to get answers from the Prime Minister, who took an oath to serve our country well. At the very least, the committee would like to get answers from the people who have been summoned. Even that would be better than nothing.

I think it is worth repeating the motion.

That, with a view to support the authority of committees in their important inquiries of public interest:

### *Business of Supply*

(a) regarding the study on questions of conflict of interest and lobbying in relation to pandemic spending by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics,

(i) an order of the House do issue for due diligence reports, in the care, custody or control of the Privy Council Office, respecting the Canada Student Service Grant, and that these documents be deposited, in both official languages, with the Clerk of the Committee no later than Thursday, April 1, 2021,

(ii) Rick Theis, the Prime Minister's Director of Policy and Cabinet Affairs, be ordered to appear before the committee on Monday, March 29, 2021, at 2 p.m.,

(iii) Amitpal Singh, the Deputy Prime Minister's Policy Advisor, be ordered to appear before the committee on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, at 2 p.m.,

(iv) Ben Chin, the Prime Minister's Senior Advisor, be ordered to appear before the committee on Thursday, April 8, 2021, at 2 p.m.;

(b) regarding the study on addressing sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Armed Forces by the Standing Committee on National Defence, Zita Astravas, formerly the Minister of National Defence's chief of staff and the Prime Minister's Director of Issues Management and currently the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness's chief of staff, be ordered to appear before the committee on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, at 10 a.m.;

(c) should the Prime Minister instead appear before the committees mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b), at any of the dates and times mentioned, for at least three hours, the witness otherwise scheduled to appear, and any other witnesses scheduled to appear before the same committee at a later time, be relieved of their obligation to appear pursuant to this order; and

(d) it be an instruction to the Chairs of the committees mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b) to convene televised meetings of their respective committee, at the dates and times mentioned, for at least three hours, for the purpose of receiving evidence from the individuals then ordered to appear or the Prime Minister, as the case may be, unless the individual has been relieved from attending under the provisions of paragraph (c), provided that the witnesses be required to appear until discharged by the committee.

● (1225)

As we heard during the debate, if the Liberals do not want to hear from those witnesses, I hope the Prime Minister would at least be wise enough to appear before the committees to tell the truth and shed light on these long-standing issues. A ridiculous amount of time and House resources were wasted when the Liberals filibustered. That is unacceptable. Making so many people work for nothing is a waste of time. Why are we being kept in the dark? What is so dangerous about all of this that the Liberals want to cover it up?

In a healthy democracy, governments need to be very transparent. This is 2021. Canadians have a right to know what is going on in Ottawa. They have a right to know what the government wants to do with their tax dollars. Why is so much being kept from us? Perhaps the Liberals are looking out for their close friends or are trying to protect certain people, but from what? What did these people do, give or get, and in return for what?

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We simply want to get to the bottom of these events. If there is nothing to hide, the witnesses and the Prime Minister just have to show up and tell Canadians the truth. Then we can move on. However, the Liberals are dead set on hiding certain shocking actions that could hurt the government if Canadians were to learn about them before an election is called. I think that Canadians have the right to know what they are dealing with. They have the right to know everything before they cast their vote. They want to be confident in their vote for the person who will be representing them.

Unfortunately, this government is desperate to hide its close ties with friends who do favours for them. We do not understand what is going on, so we want to find out. In conclusion, the committees have to be able to do their job, and the filibustering must end. The time we are wasting is costing Canadians a lot of money. There is nothing to be gained by making us waste our time.

• (1230)

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his highly speculative speech. I could feel his indignation.

On June 15, 2020, the office of the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth received an email from Helping Hands, which offered its services. These services happened to match the WE Charity program exactly. Did my colleague have the opportunity to ask questions in committee about the fact that WE was not the only organization capable of delivering this type of program, contrary to what was being said in the media?

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, such questions were asked, and if memory serves, WE Charity was unfortunately the only organization that could implement this type of program. Therein lies the problem.

Why was such a major program, worth almost a billion dollars, awarded without a call for tenders? Any Canadian who wants to win a federal contract worth more than \$25,000 normally has to respond to a call for tenders. In this case, a \$1-billion contract was awarded without a call for tenders, simply by picking up the phone.

• (1235)

[English]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I share much of my hon. colleague's concern and dismay at the lack of transparency and accountability.

Although I wonder if he does not believe that it is important for the ethics committee to complete its study into pandemic spending and report to Parliament in a timely manner, particularly with a federal election rumoured to be on the immediate horizon.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

All I want is for the committee to be able to do its job. I attended the committee meetings, and I can say that countless hours were lost due to filibustering aimed at preventing witnesses from doing what they needed to do and testifying. My only hope is that we can work during the hours allocated for committee meetings and get to

the bottom of the situation as quickly as possible for the sake of all Canadians.

[English]

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, with regard to WE, we know that the government was going to give a contract worth almost a billion dollars. We know that the Prime Minister admitted he should have recused himself and that his family benefited to the tune of close to half a million dollars. We know that the government prorogued Parliament, seemingly to escape this.

We also know that they have spent 40 hours filibustering at committees to avoid answering questions, and we know that there is a LinkedIn message that really can make a person suspicious about the very active role of the Prime Minister's office.

Can my colleague, who sits on that committee, tell us how much they still need to find out from these witnesses and what the government's response has been to date?

[Translation]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Various facts lead us to believe that there were very close ties between the Prime Minister's Office and WE Charity.

Last summer, in August, the Clerk of the Privy Council told us that WE Charity had helped Liberal officials develop the program at the recommendation of the finance minister. That was reported to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. However, when we asked the Kielburger brothers in committee whether they had been involved, they said no. They told us that they had received a call from the government asking them to help implement the program, so there were people at those planning meetings who are unaccounted for.

[English]

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House and represent the people of Red Deer—Lacombe. I am proud to stand in my place, holding a Liberal government to account, using one of the precious few opposition day motions we have to try to force the Liberals to live up to even the minimal ethical standards Canadians expect from their government.

Today's motion is seeking answers. It is seeking to support and empower members of Parliament in their important work and to end the Liberals' coordinated cover-ups at the defence and ethics committees.



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It is deeply disturbing that the Liberal MPs on the committees are continuing to block key witnesses from testifying on both the government's WE scandal and the Liberal cover-up of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. How did we get here? In both cases, the short answer is that we got here because of Liberal cover-ups.

As members and most Canadians will remember, the WE Charity scandal came about when the Prime Minister and the then finance minister Bill Morneau gave a sole-sourced contract to run the Canada student service grant. The program announced was worth upward of \$1 billion, including over \$45 million in fees to WE Charity, an organization with close ties to both the Prime Minister and the Morneau family.

These ties were so close, in fact, that WE received at least \$100,000 in recent donations from Mr. Morneau and his wife. The charity also employed Mr. Morneau's daughter. As for the Prime Minister, WE Charity had paid his family members hundreds of thousands of dollars in speaking fees. Since the Kielburgers' recent testimony at the ethics committee, it is not clear what that exact figure is, but it could be as high as \$566,000.

Recent evidence from the ethics committee has raised additional contradictions to the Liberal government's claims that the public service recommended WE Charity to run the program. Craig Kielburger wrote to Ben Chin, a senior adviser in the Prime Minister's Office, saying, "Hello Ben, Thank you for your kindness in helping shape our latest program with the gov't. Warmly, Craig".

This interaction appears to be in complete contradiction to the Liberal government's talking points, reigniting the concerns of corruption this Prime Minister previously attempted to quash when he prorogued Parliament. Kielburger's explanation that Mr. Chin had no role and that this was a personalized message sent from a staff member is simply bizarre. It simply does not make sense, and it deserves further scrutiny.

On a matter as important as this, we need the truth. That is why we are asking two senior staffers from the Prime Minister's Office and one from the finance minister's office to appear at the ethics committee, so they can explain their interactions with the Kielburgers in respect to the selection of WE Charity to run the Canada student service grant program.

The second cover-up is equally as disturbing and involves the Minister of National Defence's failure to address allegations of sexual misconduct at the highest levels in the Canadian Armed Forces. When the former military ombudsman brought an allegation forward to the minister regarding then chief of the defence staff General Vance, the minister refused to even look at it. Instead, he attempted to pass the buck on to the civil servants in the Privy Council Office. He did not follow up. He did not ensure that the complaint was handled appropriately, and he certainly did not ensure that this matter was treated with the seriousness that it ought to have been.

The minister abdicated his responsibility, and in doing so, he failed the people, particularly the women, serving in the Canadian Armed Forces who came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct. He has tried to claim he was avoiding political interfer-

ence. The reality is that it appears he was trying to avoid doing his job because it was going to be difficult, uncomfortable and potentially embarrassing to the government.

While the minister was not willing to investigate or ensure an investigation took place, or to even make sure that the right mechanisms existed for investigating the man at the very top of the Canadian Armed Forces command structure, he was still able to give him a pay raise.

Throughout this whole ordeal, we have seen shifting narratives of who knew what and when, and of what the Prime Minister knew and when he knew it. Canadians deserve the truth. Serving members of the armed forces deserve the truth. Women serving in the armed forces need the truth. Since the Liberals seem all too happy to coordinate a shameful cover-up, we are left with few options.

In some ways, the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have slowed time down to a crawl. While November 2015 may seem like ages ago at this point, Canadians have not forgotten the commitments made to them back then by the government. This Prime Minister was the one who promised sunny ways and transparency. He promised to be open by default.

Back in November 2015, the Prime Minister wrote a message to his ministers as part of his document "Open and Accountable Government". Do members remember this document? It was made up of lovely words, but they were extraordinarily short-lived in the current Liberal government. Today's motion is essential because of the government's complete abdication of its responsibility to the principles outlined in that very document.

I could easily go back and talk about cash for access, billionaire island or SNC-Lavalin to make my point, but the current Liberal government has such a poor track record when it comes to ethical behaviour, I do not really have to go back that far at all. Just in considering the WE scandal and the Liberals' cover-up of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, which are the two topics that this motion is dealing with, we can demonstrate that the Liberals have gone back on virtually every notion contained in the Prime Minister's flagship message in "Open and Accountable Government".

• (1240)

This is not an exaggeration. If the House will indulge me, I would like to refresh for Canadians the Prime Minister's words in that document, "To be worthy of Canadians' trust, we must always act with integrity. This is not merely a matter of adopting the right rules, or of ensuring technical compliance with those rules." By refusing to look at evidence of sexual misconduct against the then chief of the defence staff presented by the then military ombudsman, the Minister of National Defence did not act with integrity. Refusing to speak with the ombudsman again afterward is not acting with integrity. Turning his back on members of the Canadian Armed Forces who want accountability for sexual misconduct is not acting with integrity.

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The next part reads, “As Ministers, you and your staff must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny.” When it comes to the WE Charity scandal, honesty and impartiality are less achievable than a balanced budget for the government, as demonstrated by the Prime Minister’s and former finance minister Bill Morneau’s ability to arrange their private affairs, which they have both admitted when they acknowledged they should have recused themselves from the selection process for the Canada student service grant.

The document continues, “This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law.” Even if acting within the law was the high bar, the government would have tripped over its own shoelaces two steps in. For those who do not believe me, let us count the number of ethics laws the Prime Minister has already broken.

The document goes on, “The trust of Canadians will also rest on the accountability of our government. In our system, the highest manifestation of democratic accountability is the forum of Parliament. You are accountable to Parliament for the exercise of the powers, duties and functions with which you have been entrusted.” In response to the WE Charity scandal, the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament in the middle of a pandemic to ensure that the full extent of his misdeeds did not come to light. When Parliament resumed, we saw countless hours of filibustering to avoid the truth and the Prime Minister even threatened an election during the pandemic just because members of Parliament wanted to create a committee to investigate the WE scandal, all to avoid accountability.

The document goes on to state, “This requires you to be present in Parliament to answer honestly and accurately about your areas of responsibility...” When it comes to both the WE scandal and the defence minister’s failures to address sexual misconduct, we have seen countless revisions to the stories about who knew what and when. Honesty and accuracy have been replaced by deception, deceit, duplicity and the distortion of so-called facts, so much so that they bear little to no resemblance to the truth at all.

It continues, “to take corrective action as appropriate to address problems that may arise in your portfolios, to correct any inadvertent errors in answering to Parliament at the earliest opportunity...” Corrective action has been in short supply. Instead, the government has continued to double down on mistakes by trying to cast the blame on others, like the former military ombudsman, or civil servants at ESDC or the Privy Council Office. The only problem that the Liberals seem to try to actually address is their problem of parliamentary accountability and the pesky opposition members who continually demand the truth from them.

Instead of working to live up to the high standards they claim to have for themselves, they coordinate filibusters across numerous committees, while repeating clunky talking points in the House of Commons that, at best, dance around the question or do not even relate to the topic at all.

The excerpt ends with the following, “and to work with parliamentary colleagues of all political persuasions in a respectful and constructive manner.” This is where we can hold out a little hope.

So far, we have seen very little constructive and respectful engagement from the Liberal government. The Liberals prefer to use procedural manoeuvres to keep Canadians in the dark, refusing to allow the sunshine that they once touted as the best disinfectant to shine in.

However, this is the Liberals’ opportunity to change. This is the opportunity to demonstrate that they believe what they said five years ago, that it was not just virtue signalling put forward at the beginning of their mandate, that it was actually something that they continue to aspire to even when it is inconvenient. I guess we will see how the vote goes.

I would like to move the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended in paragraph (b) by replacing the word “10:00 a.m.” with the following: “11:00 a.m.”

● (1245)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes if he consents to the amendment being moved.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, with a hat tip to the member for Timmins—James Bay and thanks to the member for Red Deer—Lacombe, I consent.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have some questions for my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe on the impacts he sees the current government’s obstruction and scandal around the WE Charity might have on the charitable sector.

We have talked about how this has hurt students and how, frankly, it has hurt our democracy in Canada. However, I also have some real concerns that when we see a charity like WE do things like it has done, when we see a bad example of the charitable sector, that there will be impacts felt by other charities even though, of course, the vast majority of charities do the important work that needs to be done and we depend upon the work they do.

Does the member feel the government has caused damage to the charitable sector by its work with the WE Charity.

● (1250)

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Madam Speaker, first, today is my youngest son’s birthday; he turns 19 today. As a result of the pandemic, he missed his graduation last spring from high school and spent his first year of college basically at a computer in one of the rooms of our house. He is a student who is trying to work his way through the pandemic.

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In answer to my colleague's question, integrity matters in all aspects of what we do in government and what we do in business. If we do not conduct ourselves with integrity, then there is no ability to move forward, whether it is donating to the charitable sector or getting it to do work. Whether it is in business or in government, integrity is what matters, and the current government is sorely lacking it.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member highlighted the Conservative Party of Canada's spin on the importance of character assassination to discredit whenever one can the personalities of politics as opposed to trying to play a more proactive role in dealing with issues important to Canadians.

Could the member explain why the Conservative Party continues to shy away from what its membership mandated, saying to the Conservative leadership that climate change is not real? Could the member make a clear statement in recognizing that climate change—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Madam Speaker, again, as I outlined in my speech, the Liberals obfuscate and ask questions not relevant or even germane to the topic at hand. Asking me about climate change during a motion about accountability at a committee shows just how out of touch the member and his government are.

If he does not believe me, we can just check with the reputation of the Aga Khan, or the reputation of the office of the Governor General or the reputation of the past Liberal ministers who have been cast aside. We can check with the reputation of those who organized the WE Charity. We can check with the reputations of those at SNC-Lavalin. We can check with the reputations of everybody the Liberals have thrown under the bus who have gotten in their way or have been cast aside through their mismanagement and the fact that they have been exposed for their dealings with well-connected insiders.

That is what this debate is all about today, and I am sorry the hon. parliamentary secretary has not figured that out.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, when the WE Charity scandal broke, one of the things we asked the government to do was immediately pivot and put these funds into the Canada summer jobs program so small businesses and non-profits that needed help could hire students who also needed help.

Could the hon. member comment on the lack of the government's pivoting at this moment to use those funds in a way that would have helped Canadians when they needed help the most?

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Madam Speaker, my simple answer for my colleague is that when one is mired in scandal and paranoia sets in, one is unable, through paralysis, to get anything achievable done. This is where the current government is and that is why it is unable, in my opinion, to even deliver something as simple as a budget two years after the last one.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I asked a question intentionally, because the Conservative Party, as an opposition party, has many days in which it gets to set the agenda of the House of Commons. This is its second time this week.

I would like to emphasize, as I did in the question, that the Conservative Party of Canada is more focused on personal attacks and looking under every little rock as much as possible to try to create a negative image toward politicians in general, with a special focus on ministers of the Government of Canada. The Conservatives have an opportunity to debate something I think Canadians would welcome. For example, this past weekend, the Conservative Party of Canada and its membership failed to pass a motion to declare that climate change was real. They failed to recognize that most Canadians recognize that climate change is real, but not the Conservative Party of Canada.

The Conservatives had a golden opportunity in an opposition day motion to be more relevant to what Canadians from coast to coast to coast have an interest in. As opposed to trying to further their beliefs based on their membership, they have chosen once again to focus on character assassinations and trying to be as disruptive to the Parliament of Canada as they can be. They are not happy with what is going on in the committees, because Liberal members of Parliament are there during the day, afternoons and evenings, ensuring that there is a higher sense of ministerial accountability.

I saw some of the behaviour of opposition members during the summer and the character assassination that was taking place. They should be ashamed of some of the actions and some of the questions they were putting to us. Then they get upset when the Liberal Party members say just wait a minute. We disagree with the direction in which the Conservatives want to take standing committees. We will stand up for ministerial accountability, but I think Canadians would be upset with the irresponsible behaviour we have seen from opposition members on the floor of the House of Commons and in committees.

The Conservatives are critical because Liberal MPs are filibustering. Conservative, NDP and Bloc members of Parliament have all filibustered at different points in time. It is an unholy alliance. I do not know how the Conservatives conned the New Democrats and the Bloc to come onboard with them in what they are trying to accomplish today. They are joining the Conservatives in filibustering this Parliament. Shame on them.

*Business of Supply*

They do not recognize what the Conservatives are really up to. This has nothing to do with championing women's rights. Conservative members have asked whether the government has any credibility on this issue. Of course, the Government of Canada has credibility on this. One only needs to look at things like the appointment of cabinet ministers shortly after the Prime Minister took office and the many actions our leader has taken to reinforce how important it is that we champion women's rights. All members of the House of Commons should be champions for women's rights.

It is a tyranny of the majority to walk over the rights of the minority. That is in fact what we are witnessing. After all, the opposition parties combined can pass whatever they want in the House. They do not like what is happening in the committee, so now they are trying to take control of the committees by passing motions on the floor of the House of Commons.

• (1255)

Imagine the outrage if the government attempted to do that in a majority situation and tried to take control of the standing committees. Then we would have the current unholy alliance bellowing from all the balconies how terrible it is that the government is using the floor of the House of Commons to force the committees to do what the House of Commons wants them to do.

It is a tyranny that we are seeing from the opposition parties not recognizing the important role that standing committees play. I get agitated, because I believe what the Prime Minister has been saying for months from day one, namely, that we need to be focused on helping Canadians. That is something this government has been focused on since day one.

I must thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, and I know that his mother in Windsor, Marta, and his constituents would be very proud. They would be very proud of this member of Parliament, because as the Conservatives are so focused on looking under those rocks, we are actually doing work. This particular member is developing, promoting and encouraging the summer youth program. We understand how youth have been affected by the coronavirus and we are going to see an expansion of the youth program, because, as the parliamentary secretary who is responsible for it recognizes, that as much as the opposition party wants to play their destructive force, we still need to do a lot of good work. We will continue to do that.

I cite the parliamentary secretary as an example, because it was just yesterday or the other day this week that I heard a presentation by him and sensed the excitement about a program that will help young people from coast to coast to coast, whether as a result of the efforts of the parliamentary secretary, his minister, the government as a whole, or the strong leadership we have seen from the Prime Minister, mandating that Liberal members remain focused on helping Canadians.

Every so often I hear from opposition members that it is the Liberals who are filibustering and that it is causing all sorts of issues that make them feel uncomfortable. Do members know how many hours I have sat in committee hearing New Democrats filibuster? It is more than I have heard from Conservatives. I did not like it, but I never moved a motion on the floor of the House of Commons to try

to prevent an opposition member, or a member who is not in the majority, from being able to communicate.

Let there be no doubt that if this motion passes, we would be saying to standing committees that it does not matter what takes place at committee, because we will be telling them what they should be doing. Where are those great defenders of our standing committees among the opposition?

I believe that the opposition collectively is more concerned about things like elections. I have heard them talk about elections. I do not hear the Prime Minister or Liberal members talking about elections. I do hear the opposition parties talking about elections. I hear them constantly working together. I witness and see them working together to see how they can try to talk more about scandals than about the coronavirus. It was a different story 12 months ago, when we saw a much greater sense of co-operation and a much greater sense of wanting to remain focused. That does not mean that we cannot be critical of government.

• (1300)

Look at the thousands of questions that were asked back in June and July by the opposition. How many of them were about on the vaccine? If my memory serves me correctly, back in June and July, zero or not such questions were asked. How many questions were asked about WE? There were hundreds if not maybe even thousands. I do not know. I do not have the research capabilities to find out those numbers.

At the end of the day it is about priorities. More and more, we hear the collective opposition as being more concerned about frustrating the government and what it needs to do to be there for Canadians than about taking care of the interests of Canadians. I say shame on the Conservative, Bloc and NDP members for not recognizing what they should be doing. The government House leader himself said if they want to have ministers come before the committees to provide that sense of accountability, we are prepared to do that. It was good enough for Steven Harper when he was the prime minister of Canada, but it is not good enough here. There is so much more that we could be doing.

It is truly amazing that when the Prime Minister put out the challenge of taking a team Canada approach to combatting the coronavirus, we were quick to give a lot of thanks to people who came to the table.

The other day I was talking to my daughter, Cindy, the MLA for Tyndall Park, about Manitoba's personal care homes, supportive housing and assisted living residences. Think in terms of the nurses, health care workers, providers, custodians, managers and volunteers. They were doing absolutely critical work, working with hundreds, if not thousands, of people who needed them there. They provided a critical service.

I know I speak on behalf of all members, from the Prime Minister down and from my daughter, when I give our thanks for their being there. We recognize how important their role was through this last 12 months, but we are not through with the coronavirus. That third wave is very real. It is tangible.

One of the members who spoke before me said they wanted the committee to do this, that they would like to have more on that and more on this. I too would like to see committees debating different types of issues and maybe try to refocus on them, if I could. I hope to be on PROC. I would like to be able to share my thoughts with PROC, hopefully later this evening. I can tell my colleagues that these standing committees play a critical role in Parliament. One only has to look at some of the principles that we have established. Here I refer members to page 30 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which states:

The principle of individual ministerial responsibility holds that Ministers are accountable not only for their own actions as department heads, but also for the actions of their subordinates; individual ministerial responsibility provides the basis for accountability throughout the system. Virtually all departmental activity is carried out in the name of a Minister who, in turn, is responsible to Parliament for those acts. Ministers exercise power and are constitutionally responsible for the provision and conduct of government; Parliament holds them personally responsible for it.

That is what the former prime minister believed. It is in our Standing Orders, but it is not what the Conservative Party of Canada wants to focus on now. There is actually nothing that could come forward on the WE issue that would make the Conservative Party happy. It would like debate on that to never end.

• (1305)

As opposed to debating important government legislation, the Conservatives do not mind tying up committees. They do not mind bringing committee issues to the floor of the House to try to stir the pot to fit their agenda. Do they really want to talk about issues like climate change? I do not think they do. Unfortunately, the House leadership of the Bloc and the NDP seem to concur at times with the official opposition. Maybe I am wrong, but wait and see what happens with this vote.

To try to give the impression that motions of this nature do not have any ramifications for what is taking place in Parliament is irresponsible. I believe that standing committees could be doing a whole lot more to protect the interests of Canadians from coast to coast if they could get down to business and start to do what our Standing Orders actually say they could and should be doing.

I listened to the New Democrat member for Edmonton Strathcona when she was talking about the WE issue. It has been discussed quite a bit. The opposition has declared the WE volunteer organization to be a real mess, a terrible organization. I understand it. They are official about that, but do my colleagues know that the Province of Manitoba also has contracts with WE, not only once but at least twice? I say that to my colleagues from Manitoba. Maybe they should be talking to Brian Pallister.

What about the Province of Saskatchewan? It too has contracts with WE. Are they talking to the premier in Saskatchewan? I do not know about the rest of the provinces. I have not made any other enquiries in regard to them. Are they giving them a heads up of all their so-called inside information that disqualifies them? It is not my responsibility to defend WE. It is interesting that Conservative and NDP members try to give a false impression. If it were up to them, they would like to say that it was the Prime Minister who said “yes” and that he wanted WE to have this contract. That is false, balderdash, a bunch of garbage.

### *Business of Supply*

All opposition members know that it was a civil servant who made that recommendation to government. What does that say about the civil servants? Do members have confidence in the civil servants? I wonder to what degree members of the opposition are being straightforward on that issue.

The mover of the motion and other Conservatives kind of tipped their hat a little. They say that the motion is about these two issues, yet on the other hand, they talk about all sorts of ethical breaches. Imagine if we had the same set-up we have today, with an ethics commissioner, in the eighties during the Mulroney years, or even before then. Members will often refer to the number of times the Prime Minister has been cited.

The Conservative Party can continue to play that destructive parliamentary role all they want. My appeal is to the Bloc and to the NDP to recognize that what is happening today on the floor of the House of Commons is not in the best interests of Canadians. It is not in the best interests—

• (1310)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Winnipeg North for the excellent job he is doing as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

In his speech, he mentioned that the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservatives do not understand, as though our problem is that we are asking questions. My problem is that I want to know why the Liberal government will not answer our questions and send its witnesses to committee, rather than drawing out the debate and filibustering.

Is there a code of silence? What does the government have to hide? Let us be honest and transparent, and Canadians will be better off.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the Liberal government's code of silence.

• (1315)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, again that is not accurate. Over the summer, we saw a long list of witnesses, right from ministers to the Prime Minister, including the Minister of Diversity. There were a number of ministers who went before committee. We even saw civil servants before committee.

I understand opposition. After my 30 parliamentary years in the Manitoba legislature and in Ottawa, I understand the role of opposition. I also understand what the coronavirus is doing to our country. I am suggesting to the member that the Conservatives might be able to fool the Bloc and the New Democrats, but they do not fool me with respect to what they have been doing over the last few months.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party and all the people I know, I offer my sincere sympathy to the member for Winnipeg North. I have never seen a man suffer more from, or be more beleaguered by, the very notion of democracy. How it vexes him, how angry and frustrated it makes him, that the majority of the House of Commons could actually make a decision that disagrees with the Liberals, as if it is such a terrible thing. I wonder if we could have boxes of tissue sent across the nation to comfort him as he whines, because I would like to say this.

Here we are in a discussion about House procedures, and the Liberals are shutting it down. With respect to foreign affairs, they are shutting down an investigation into how the Liberals took the COVAX vaccine from the third world. They shut down discussion on a Uighur genocide motion. They have been using their position to stop an investigation into sexual assault allegations in the military. Of course, they have interrupted the ethics committee time and again.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague this question: Why do the Liberals not stop playing games and let the majority of the House actually do the work for the Canadian people?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I must say that I have my own tissues, but I appreciate the gesture.

I can assure the member that I am very much familiar with opposition tactics and aware of what is taking place in our standing committees. The member himself raised issues and concerns about a wide variety of different issues that the standing committees could be dealing with, and I concur with those thoughts.

Where we might differ is that the member seems to be of the opinion that no matter what, the government has to respond to what has been mentioned on a few occasions today as the tyranny of a majority in walking over the rights of a minority.

On occasion we are seeing that, and today is a good example. We will wait to see how the NDP and Bloc—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party is accusing the Conservatives of filibustering, and the Conservatives are accusing the Liberals of filibustering. What a sorry spectacle. My colleague seems to think that speaking loudly will save him from having to answer embarrassing questions.

The truth is that it was the Liberal government that prorogued Parliament last year, which is why we now have so many unanswered questions. For example, earlier, he was talking about the WE program in the provinces, but a note from an official to Minister Chagger said the organization—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I will remind the hon. member not to refer to sitting members by name.

• (1320)

**Mr. Denis Trudel:** Of course, Madam Speaker.

As I was saying, an official sent a minister a note saying that WE Charity had no offices in Quebec and that its staff did not speak French, so it might not be a great idea to choose that organization, especially seeing as community organizations were ready to do the work.

We want to ask these questions, but we cannot. What does my hon. colleague have to say about that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the member seems to think that I might be shy in terms of asking questions. I would ask if there would be leave of the House to allow me to continue to answer any number of questions members would like to ask for the rest of the day.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I believe the member has—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I would like to propose an amendment to the minister's motion that we continue with the debate today: He could remain and answer questions for the evening, after the hour of ordinary adjournment, until midnight.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I think we are entering into debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I listened to the intervention earlier today by the member for Timmins—James Bay. He talked about filibustering and accused the Liberal Party of filibustering.

This member also talked about filibustering, but the funny thing is that if we google “filibustering” and end up at the Wikipedia page as it relates to Canada, there is no mention of the Liberal Party. As a matter of fact, it is just the Conservative Party and the NDP that are mentioned there.

I would note that the NDP holds the record for filibustering in the House—

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, do we have a member here who can only participate in an intelligent conversation by using his Wikipedia notes to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** That is debate.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, former member David Christopherson filibustered for eight hours in 2010. In a PROC meeting earlier this summer, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby actually bragged about the fact that he had the record, and that is how I knew it, for the longest filibuster.

I am wondering if this member could shed some insight into whether or not he really thinks—

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, just on issues of personal space, I am very worried about the coronavirus, so could the member move down about eight rows? I am worried about him intervening in my personal space.

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands answering the point of order.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I find it very troubling when the member is making points of order that are completely not points of order, and he knows it. It is especially offensive because this member routinely calls out the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan online about intervening and interrupting when people are speaking.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We are entering into the realm of debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I hope you are going to make sure to deduct the time spent on those points of order.

On the issue of filibustering, I have witnessed many filibusters over the years. One of the more intriguing ones was by the member for Carleton when there was a budget debate. The member for Carleton literally consumed every hour of that debate, except for the last 20 minutes, so that he could let the New Democrats speak before we actually came to a vote. He denied everyone else the opportunity to speak. That was on the floor of the House.

Not to be outdone, the NDP did it too, a few years ago. We could talk about David Christopherson and other members. I have seen many filibusters and have had to put up with them.

Filibustering is done for a reason. I suspect there is a very good reason for what is taking place in our standing committees. There is a good rationale for that.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Madam Speaker, what we have here is a perfect example of a Liberal technique on display, brought to us by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader's railing against the opposition simply for pointing out that Liberals have not a shred of credibility left as champions of women's rights, based on what has been happening at committee.

It seems the government is saying that if a big lie is told often enough and loudly enough, eventually Canadians will believe it. Is that what the parliamentary secretary is trying to do here?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, no, not at all.

I would never disappoint my daughter, who is an MLA in the Manitoba legislature. I will always be a champion for women's rights. I would like to think that all members of the House would do likewise.

Whether it is the Prime Minister of Canada today or Stephen Harper, who was prime minister when the Vance issue first came up, I like to believe that even Stephen Harper, at times, was there to champion women's rights.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question that relates more to democracy.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that the opposition was not being honest, among other things. I would like to quote something the House leader said this morning:

“As a result of the actions of the opposition today, like the approach of the government in 2010, I say here today that ministers will instruct their staff not to appear when called before committees and that the government will send ministers...”

I have to wonder. If a motion is adopted by the majority of the House, I do not understand how the government could not respect it. It seems to me that this is what democracy is all about.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I can appreciate what the member is saying, and I would ask her and the Bloc members to read page 30 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. It makes it very clear that it is the ministers who are accountable, and we have gone out of our way to ensure that there is a high level of accountability.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, let us start, of course, at the beginning. In the beginning, this Prime Minister created a program that already existed. That program is called the Canada summer jobs program, and it is a program that lets young people work for charities, small businesses and other organizations that serve the community. The federal government simply reimburses a share of the wages paid to that student employee.

Now, the Prime Minister was suddenly hit by a lightning bolt that caused him to think it was necessary to contract out the very same program that had been functioning for so many years, and with such great success, to a group that just happened to have paid his family half a million dollars in speaking fees and expenses. He told us that there was no other way this could have been done. He told us that a bureaucrat in the employment department, the very department that has been running the successful in-house program for decades, concocted this scheme to give the money to this particular organization called WE.

The entire government's defence, as the member for Langley—Aldergrove will be saying, as I am splitting my time with him, is that the Prime Minister had nothing to do with any of it. The defence is that a mid-level bureaucrat rammed it all down his throat, and he was suddenly hit with a surprise attack at a cabinet meeting, when he apparently pushed back and said, “Hell no, I'm not giving all this money to my friends. Come back to me in a week and I'll reconsider.” That is the basis of his defence.

*Business of Supply*

There is only one problem with this defence and that is the documents. Let us start with correspondence between the WE organization and the Prime Minister's own senior adviser, Ben Chin. Craig Kielburger, the founder of WE, sent Ben a message about the program. The message read, "Hello Ben, Thank you for your kindness in helping shape our latest program with the gov't. Warmly, Craig."

We would think that if Ben actually had no role, and that it was in fact a mid-level employment department bureaucrat who did it all, he would write back and say, "Craig, thanks for the message, but you're being far too kind. I had nothing to do with setting up that program. It was designed by an employment department bureaucrat, with no involvement from the PMO. I wish you well in all of your future endeavours." However, he did not write that. Instead, he wrote, "Great to hear from you Craig. Let's get our young working!"

In other words, he was not for a moment suggesting that the message he got from Craig Kielburger was wrong, but rather, he was validating that it was, in fact, right.

If Mr. Chin has nothing to hide and if he played no role in setting up this program, then surely he will have no difficulty coming, as this motion from the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has proposed, and testifying under oath to explain his lack of involvement in establishing that very program. He would have to be careful because he would be followed by Rick Theis, the Prime Minister's director of policy and cabinet affairs.

Mr. Theis is the man who puts things in front of the Prime Minister at cabinet, so he would know if the Prime Minister really did push back on this half-billion-dollar grant to the group that paid off his family. If so, he would be able to answer very specific questions before a parliamentary committee, putting the whole thing to rest.

That is exactly what we are proposing in this motion. We are proposing that Mr. Theis come to explain who really set up this program and whether the Prime Minister really did push back on paying off this group that had done so much for his family.

• (1330)

What we find instead when we look at Mr. Theis's correspondence with the Kielburgers is that Mr. Theis was actually quite involved in the early stages.

I have a quote directly from correspondence from Craig Kielburger to this senior prime ministerial adviser, "Please find attached an updated version of the project plan and budget.... We appreciate your assistance both on timelines for a decision, and, if relevant, potentially assisting with streamlining the contribution agreement.... [W]e would appreciate a list of names with whom to discuss the youth entrepreneurship program to ensure that it's...[ready] for phase-2 recovery...[plans]."

In other words, the contribution agreement, which again we were told was not the purview of the Prime Minister's Office but was being handled by a mid-level bureaucrat far away on the other side of the Ottawa River, was in fact being discussed between Mr. Kielburger and Mr. Rick Theis, the top adviser to the Prime Minister.

In fact, we have correspondence from Sofia Marquez, a lobbyist for the WE organization. She wrote, "Hi, Rick, Just wanted to let you know that I and, our co-founders Craig and Marc Kielburger are on the line waiting for you. Thank you! Sofia".

To Ms. Marquez, Mr. Theis responded, "Sorry! Joined!" Then began the telephone conversation between the Kielburgers and this second to the top prime ministerial adviser.

We are now getting to a summary of the program. It says here that Rick Theis spoke to Craig Kielburger, Marc Kielburger and Sofia Marquez, and according to Mr. Theis, the call lasted for approximately 25 minutes, so it was a substantive conversation. The summary states, "WE Charity raised their ongoing work with ESDC on the [Canada student service grant]". That is the employment department and the half-billion-dollar grant. It continues, "as outlined in the attached document, and a proposal for a social entrepreneurship. Mr. Theis asked WE how what they are proposing for the [student service grant] would ensure diversity of placements. The Kielburgers expressed concern that this type of program would need to get off the ground soon. At no point were expenses discussed, nor any commitment, assurances or advice given by Mr. Theis to WE on any subject, other than to contact the ESDC." That is Mr. Theis's claim.

It took 25 minutes for Mr. Theis to tell them not to ask him, but to ask ESDC because he has nothing to do with this. How long does it take to say to call someone else because they have the wrong number? They spoke for 25 minutes on May 5, during which time, as is documented here, the Kielburgers were in a rush to get the money flowing. Do members know what happened? On May 5, their expenses became eligible for taxpayer reimbursement.

It was a total coincidence that this 25-minute conversation was about nothing. They would have us believe that this is a *Seinfeld* conversation. It was a 25-minute conversation about nothing, except that the Kielburgers asked if they could please hurry up because they wanted to get busy spending all that money promised. What do we know, on that very same day those expenditures became eligible for taxpayer reimbursement. This is a top adviser to the Prime Minister, who had nothing whatsoever to do with setting up this whole affair. It is incredible.

These two gentlemen in the Prime Minister's Office would have seen the promotional material that WE circulated in the PMO. Do members know who was in that promotional material? The Prime Minister's mother and wife.

By the way, everyone in the PMO, the boss's wife and mother get money from WE. Maybe take that into account when deciding whether to give them some money. I am sure that Mr. Theis was so nice because he knew that the boss's wife and mother were getting paid by the organization with which he was having that 25-minute *Seinfeld* conversation about nothing.



*Business of Supply*

The Liberal government might think a half-billion dollars is nothing. To the working people, to the people who are bagging groceries and serving on the front lines paying taxes throughout this pandemic, half a billion dollars is not nothing. They do not get speaking fees from powerful organizations like WE. They work hard every day for their money, and they deserve answers on what the Prime Minister did with that money.

If the government has nothing to fear, if the Prime Minister has any courage, he will support this motion and let us get to the answers.

• (1335)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on November 5, 2013, there was a vote on a motion before the House. The motion stated:

That the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics be instructed to examine the conduct of the Prime Minister's Office regarding the re-payment of Senator Mike Duffy's expenses; that the Prime Minister be ordered to appear under oath as a witness before the Committee for a period of 3 hours, before December 10, 2013; and that the proceedings be televised.

This member voted against that motion. I am curious if he can explain what the difference is between the request that came from the House at that time and the request proposed today. Why would one warrant it when the other did not? It is a genuine question.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, actually, I am glad to have a chance to explain the difference, because back in the Conservative era, we were getting in trouble for giving too much of our money to the government. That was the scandal of Nigel Wright. He wrote a cheque with his own money and gave it to the government.

Liberals get in trouble for precisely the opposite reason, which is taking money from the government, or in this case, through third party organizations funded by the government and funnelled to the Prime Minister and his family. Of course, that is the pattern with illegal Liberal law-breaking.

SNC-Lavalin had given countless illegal donations to the Liberal Party, which earned it the right, according to the Prime Minister, to avoid criminal prosecution for bribery and corruption. In the case of the Aga Khan island, the Prime Minister took hundreds of thousands of dollars—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am not even going to raise the issue of Bill Morneau because what else can be said about that? Let us talk about the minister, the one from Waterloo. Talk about throwing civil servants under the bus with misrepresentations and falsehoods.

The minister from Waterloo was asked the straight-up question of whether she had met with the Kielburgers in the lead-up to this. She said that she never discussed the Canada summer student grant. Of course, we naively thought that meant she had not met with them, but there was an April 17 meeting. When she was asked about it, she did not remember the meeting. She said nothing.

However, we have Craig Kielburger writing to her, thanking her for setting him up with a civil servant. Over the course of that weekend, the WE group wrote a plan and wrote back to thank that minister. She was asked in committee, and she would not admit to that meeting. Craig Kielburger was asked about that meeting, and he did not seem to remember it. Sofia Marquez, the government lobbyist, was also asked about that meeting.

It is in the documents. The documents show us the clear political connections that led to civil servants being told to direct this program to the WE group.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, the member rightly points out all the political involvement, whether it was that minister from Waterloo, who is not a public servant but a politician; whether it was the two PMO staffers I just mentioned, whose fingerprints are all over the set-up of this program; or whether it is Amitpal Singh, who then worked for Bill Morneau. I guess to keep him quiet they moved him into the office of the Deputy Prime Minister after Bill Morneau became Bill “no more”.

We have an email transaction from him, an email from Amitpal Singh to Michelle Kovacevic, who is a public servant. We were all told the public servants were just leading the charge to set up this program.

This political staffer wrote about connecting them with Sofia, from WE, and about speaking that day about the Canada student service grant and the work ahead of on the national file. In other words, hint hint, nudge nudge, get to work and get these people their money. That is a message from a political staffer. No wonder the bureaucrats at finance said that WE was “besties” with the finance minister at that time.

• (1340)

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am looking to find out from the member for Carleton a little about the culture of the Liberal government. We heard of course that it wants to point the guns or the bus at the civil service as responsible for it, but one of the witnesses we are looking to have testify is Ben Chin, who was implicated in the destruction of documents with the B.C. government, the destruction of documents in the gas plant scandal with the Ontario Liberal government and the SNC-Lavalin scandal with the current government.

I am just wondering what it says about a government's ethical views if it has someone like that as the Prime Minister's top adviser.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, well, it says a lot, and none of it is good.

*Business of Supply*

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Carleton, for splitting his time with me today so that I can speak to the opposition day motion before us in the House. I also want to thank my colleague, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes and Conservative shadow minister for ethics, for moving this motion. I appreciate the opportunity to represent my community of Kelowna—Lake Country.

The motion states very aptly in its first sentence, it is “to support the authority of committees in their important inquiries of public interest”. It should be no surprise that I believe committees do some of the most important work in the House of Commons when it comes to studies and getting answers. I have spoken on the importance of committees several times in the House before. I expressed concerns when the Liberals shut down committees almost completely in the early stages of the pandemic in 2020, leaving a lot of gaps in the scrutiny of legislation, emerging issues and important studies that needed more review. Many committees barely sat for most of the year.

One of the other issues is how committees can hear from witnesses, and I have seen first-hand how important committee work can be. During much of 2020, I was on the industry, science and technology committee, which met until the Liberals shut it down due to the prorogation of Parliament. It had important studies and heard testimony on emerging issues such as from the largest grocery stores, Internet giants on contact tracing and censorship, tourism stakeholders and more.

I have said in the House before that the committee I sit on now, the Standing Committee on International Trade, only met once between April and September of 2020, losing time to do important work such as hearing from exporters and importers on how COVID-19 and its related restrictions had affected them, doing studies on domestic wineries having to pay excise tax due to a WTO challenge, and doing a pre-study on the Canada-U.K. trade agreement, which the committee finally began halfway through November 2020. This was only thanks to the Conservatives moving a motion, as there were deadlines that we knew had to be met in order to give certainty to businesses.

My colleagues on the Standing Committee on National Defence and the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics are working to get answers on two very important issues that Canadians and my constituents are concerned about. Unfortunately, the Liberals have gone to great lengths to prevent MPs from getting answers and finding out the truth, including blocking key witnesses from appearing.

The ethics committee has been working to get answers on the WE Charity scandal and the \$500-million contract offered to it to manage the proposed Canada student service grant. Let us not forget how the Prime Minister and the then finance minister, Bill Morneau, failed to recuse themselves from cabinet discussions on this issue despite their personal ties to the charity. As Conservatives and other opposition parties tried to get answers, Liberals prorogued Parliament and filibustered committees to try to delay and cover up this issue for as long as they could. This put the governance of our country at a standstill.

Speaking of committees, let us remember that five months ago, in October 2020, the official opposition sought to pass a motion to establish a committee to look into the government's actions and further investigate exactly what transpired with the sole-sourced WE Charity contract. During this time, the government threatened to call an election over this and the motion did not pass.

It is important to note that this was the first time in over 150 years of Canadian history that a prime minister turned a motion to create a committee into a confidence vote, where the government could fail. How incredibly desperate were the Liberals to not have their actions looked into? Canadians deserve an ethical government that is focused on their priorities. It was disappointing that this vote failed at the time, as it would have allowed parliamentary committees to get back to work for Canadians rather than be tied up by Liberal time-wasting filibusters.

Further to the importance of supporting the authority of committees in their important inquiries of public interest, as is outlined in this motion, at a recent defence committee meeting, testimony from the Prime Minister showed he was aware of the allegations around sexual misconduct by the former chief of the defence staff. This was confirmed by the defence minister, and the Prime Minister knew for three years.

At a recent ethics committee meeting, Craig and Marc Kielburger claimed that a senior adviser in the Prime Minister's office, Ben Chin, had no role in setting up the \$500-million Canada student service grant. However, documents released to the finance committee last summer proved that this was simply not the case.

● (1345)

This is a serious contradiction, and Canadians deserve answers about what actually happened. Craig Kielburger said that the Prime Minister's Office had no role in setting up the grant, which would have given the WE Charity a half-billion-dollar program to administer, and that is taxpayer dollars. Then we heard that Mr. Chin had a written message about the PMO adviser's efforts to “shape our latest program”. The committee absolutely must hear from top Trudeau advisers. Canadians deserve the truth.

A constituent in Kelowna—Lake Country wrote me to say—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have a point of order from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there have been a number of instances today when members have referred to the Prime Minister by his name. It would appear as though they are just reading text that was provided to them. However, as you would know, they cannot say the name of a sitting member of the House in here. I would encourage you to not just correct this member but, indeed, ask all members who are preparing to speak today to consider that.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member is quite correct. It has been quite repetitive today with the mentioning of members' names. Please be mindful of that norm that we have in the House.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Speaker, a constituent in Kelowna—Lake Country wrote to me to say that “...the stonewalling and contempt for the intelligence of the electorate is staggering”.

We have seen their true character through the actions of the Liberals during this pandemic. Someone's true character often comes out during times of incredible stress. In times of crisis, we see heroes emerge who perform incredible acts of courage and physical strength, or beautiful gestures of care to help someone, or laser-focused leadership. What we saw from the Liberals during this time of crisis and stress was their true character: turning to the easiest of solutions and turning to Liberal friends. There was a lack of requests for proposals, giving sole-sourced contracts to known Liberal friends and not bothering with declarations of conflicts of interest. The Liberals and their friends will say, “Move on, there's nothing more to see here”, but every time a document is released or someone testifies, we gain new insights into the true character of how the Liberals govern.

In the end, we know that accountability comes from the top. That means there has to be accountability from the Prime Minister, his government and all who have been involved. It is also why this motion specifies that, should the Prime Minister instead appear before the committee mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b) at any of the dates and times mentioned for at least three hours, the witnesses otherwise scheduled to appear, and any other witnesses scheduled to appear before the same committee at a later time, would be relieved of their obligation to appear pursuant to the order.

The other part of this important motion is regarding the national defence committee and getting answers there. I want to thank my colleagues on the national defence committee, including our shadow minister for defence and the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, for holding the defence minister to account and getting answers.

We learned, through defence committee testimony, that the Prime Minister was aware of the allegations around sexual misconduct by the former chief of the defence staff. This was confirmed by the defence minister, and the Prime Minister knew for three years.

Tens of thousands of women have served, and continue to serve, Canada honourably and without compromise in our military, but the government has failed to ensure that women have a safe environment, free from abuse or harassment by superiors and colleagues, to do this important work. We must ensure that this is corrected. We need to hear from those involved, including the Minister of National Defence's former chief of staff, on what transpired in the minis-

ter's office and why actions were not taken earlier, promptly, to get answers when the allegations first became known to them.

This government often likes to portray itself as a feminist government, yet it spent years without taking action and thoroughly investigating the sexual misconduct allegations the defence committee is finally looking into now. This is unacceptable. What message does this send to any woman who currently serves, or may in the future serve, our country in the military?

In summary, committees need all the tools available to them to do their work and to get answers for Canadians. We need to hear from these senior members of the government to ensure that the record reflects what has occurred, whether with the WE Charity scandal or with the allegations against the former chief of the defence staff. This motion would ensure that there would be accountability from the government, it would ensure that those who make decisions are accountable to parliamentarians and it would ensure that committees could continue to do their jobs: scrutinizing government decisions and finding answers we would normally not get out of question period or debate here in the House of Commons.

• (1350)

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I share many of the member's concerns. I know that most Canadians probably want not only to get to the bottom of these very concerning issues, but also allow the ethics committee to finish its work on pandemic spending and the other important matters it has before it.

I understand that my colleagues on the ethics committee have proposed a compromise, which is that perhaps the senior staffers from the PMO could respond in writing to the questions that the opposition members have. I wonder if my colleague could comment on this proposed compromise as a way to break the deadlock and move on with the important work of the committee.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Speaker, what we are seeing here is a coordinated effort to stalemate committees. As to the filibustering, we have seen these actions continue since last summer. We then saw the prorogation of Parliament, so these committees have not really been functioning properly for quite a long time. This is one of the reasons why we have this motion here: so we can get on. The member is absolutely right. Committees need to get on to the important work and look at other studies that are important to Canadians.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, one of the things that the sexual misconduct scandal has done is trigger people. A woman in my riding spent 20 years in the military. She was raped. Her son was assaulted on the base because of her reporting. She lost her job. She lost her career, and she wants to know what the process is. Who does she report to? How do people deal with these kinds of things in the military and the police forces, when they are not taken seriously and when they see impunity in this system?

*Business of Supply*

I would like to get the member's comments about how women are supposed to deal with impunity in our Canadian Armed Forces and in the RCMP. We have a legacy of this.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments and for sharing that really sad situation. My colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound wrote an opinion piece titled, “Canadian Armed Forces needs more Eleanor Taylors—not fewer”. It goes into her situation and looks at what some of the issues are. It is a really good opinion piece that I would encourage people to read. It lays out the desperate situation that a lot of women feel. It is definitely something that needs to be worked on.

• (1355)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in opposition, the Liberals always tried to bring political staffers to committee. Now they are making this argument that we should not call staffers. It is ministerial responsibility. However, we have done something completely different in this motion. We have given the Prime Minister the opportunity to be accountable. The Prime Minister has the opportunity, if he believes in this principle of ministerial accountability, to appear in place of his staffers at the committee and answer questions for them. We have done something that Liberals did not do in opposition, which is to give the government that alternative.

The government has spoken about filibusters, and Conservatives use the filibuster tool from time to time. We have done it to prevent the government from trying to unilaterally change the Standing Orders. I was part of a filibuster to prevent the government from trying to dramatically change the rules unilaterally and neuter the role of the opposition. It is a question of what we are filibustering for. When we have filibustered, we have been protecting the rules or prerogatives of Parliament. Liberals have been filibustering to prevent studies into their own corruption. If they are filibustering to prevent a study into their own corruption, I would say that is completely different from the necessary efforts that opposition parties have undertaken in the past, when the government has tried heavily-handedly to completely change the rules and neuter the important role that opposition has to play in the House. I wonder if my colleague has any comments on this.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country has 10 seconds.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member said it very well and obviously his experience shines through. Basically we are dealing with a government that is not focused on transparency and accountability. Liberals are filibustering the committees in order to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have to resume debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister will have three minutes for his speech and will be able to complete it after oral questions.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance,**

**Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time. I expect I will only have time to hit on some introductory points.

I view this motion not necessarily to be the best use of the House's resources, and perhaps that is obvious, given the nature of the debate we have had so far. The principal reason is that it flies in the face of ministerial responsibility, which is a fundamental pillar of our Westminster system of parliamentary democracy. Of course, I could regale the House with quotes of the former prime minister Stephen Harper, who confirmed this repeatedly at every opportunity, but the point has been made along those lines already.

My sense is not just that it is an issue of ministerial responsibility. There have been exhaustive studies looking into some of the matters. I will speak specifically to some of my own experiences before the finance committee, which the ethics committee is now seeking to re-examine. Literally hundreds of hours at various committees have been dedicated to the study of the same issues. There have been thousands of pages of documents. Not only have there been political staff already testifying on these matters, but the opposition has demanded that public servants, who are non-partisan in nature, show up. The Prime Minister himself showed up at the finance committee to testify in respect of certain matters.

My experience during those committee appearances was that certain committee members of the opposition parties, primarily the Conservative party, were completely inappropriate during those hearings. I heard drive-by smears, not only of the political staff who did attend but of their families as well. I had to ask for an apology and on one occasion, I actually received one for the level of disrespect that was lobbied toward the Prime Minister's chief of staff.

Though I only have about one minute remaining, perhaps by way of introduction, I do think the motivation behind this motion is not truth seeking in its function. It seems to be a distraction, because the opposition members do not seem to have any ideas that they wish to put forward to consider. In the era of a global pandemic, they could be making suggestions on how we could foster a strong, inclusive and sustainable economic recovery. They could be pitching solutions to climate change or vaccine deployment. They could be making suggestions on how the government could improve its public health response to COVID-19. Instead, they want to demand that individual political staff come before parliamentary committees to testify about a matter that has been before several committees for a number of months.

I will cut my comments off here and resume after question period.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1400)

[Translation]

### AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to subsection 8(2) of the Auditor General Act, it is my duty to lay upon the table reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), these reports are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

We will now move on to Statements by Members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today, Greek Canadians celebrate their 200th anniversary of the Greek revolution. The Greek bicentennial is a time to remember and celebrate the outstanding contribution of Hellenic Canadians.

Today, I want to share a true Canadian story of the Dimakarakos family of Brampton. Steve Dimakarakos' father, Kyriakos, came to Canada in 1958 with his wife Georgia in search of a better life.

Kyriakos had a lifelong career with CNR while being an active member of his church and community. His son Steve moved to Brampton in 1972. He and his three siblings went to university and made their contributions in small business, finance, the public sector and to community organizations. Eric, Ken and Stephanie continue this legacy, and the next generation of the family, Zara-Rose and Leo, will see the CN Tower lit blue tonight.

Happy Greek independence day to Greek Canadians—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

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### BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this past February, a local St. Thomas resident, Fred Kondal, turned 25 again. I know to so many members this might not seem noteworthy. It is quite amazing for someone to have celebrated the same birthday two years in a row. This is not some trick to hide his age. It is true. Fred was born on February 29, 1920, so last year he turned 25, despite having made 100 trips around the sun.

All joking aside, Fred has made contributions to some of the most beloved franchises in movie history in his career as a makeup artist, working alongside Harrison Ford while filming *The Empire Strikes Back*; Christopher Reeve in *Superman*; and Sir Roger Moore, who took up the mantle of James Bond 007 in the seventies.

### Statements by Members

Whether he is celebrating turning 101 or 25 and one-quarter, I would like to wish Fred a belated happy birthday for this year and many more to come.

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### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Dr. Gulzar Cheema and iCON for their work supporting multicultural and multilingual communities, patients and caregivers across British Columbia. Their work includes community education, knowledge sharing and technology of chronic disease prevention and self-management.

Dr. Cheema has been the leader of the South Asian portfolio of iCON since 2008. His work includes engaging communities and educating patients in the Indo-Canadian community on critical health issues, including the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Through public health forums and community workshops to help patients and families optimize best practices in chronic disease prevention and self-management, Dr. Cheema's leadership at iCON has helped the organization reach over 7,000 Punjabi-speaking patients.

I thank Dr. Cheema and iCON for their work and dedication to health care for multicultural communities in our region.

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[Translation]

### SAINTE-GERMAINE-BOULÉ

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the risk of snapping my suspenders, I just want to say that the world capital of suspender snapping is in my riding, Abitibi-Témiscamingue. At least, so claims Sainte-Germaine-Boulé, in Abitibi West. They are going to defend that title against the rest of world in a week, on Thursday, April 1, at 10:30 a.m., in front of the giant statue of “Monon'c Jack”. They will be going toe to toe with major cities, but I can guarantee that Boulé will be the global, virtual reigning champion of suspender snapping.

People from my community came up with this creative, eccentric and fun idea to inject a bit of magic and joy during these tough times. Ours is a tight-knit community. In Quebec, when we say we are “snapping our suspenders”, we mean we are proud, we are boasting.

The Bloc Québécois is certainly proud, and I just had to share this initiative and boast about the people in my riding, especially Mr. Tremblay. I cordially invite you, Mr. Speaker, and my riding neighbour to come to Sainte-Germaine-Boulé to snap your suspenders.

*Statements by Members*

● (1405)

**MADAWASKA-RESTIGOUCHE**

**Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the immigration initiative of businesses in my riding. Like other areas in Canada, Madawaska-Restigouche has a significant shortage of skilled labour. To address this shortage, many of our employers have no other choice but to turn to immigration.

I want to salute the businesses that attract skilled newcomers. In turn, these newcomers will participate in the growth of our economy and the overall development of our communities. Last Saturday in Edmundston, I was honoured to meet and welcome 11 Togolese families who, after a mandatory quarantine at a hotel, were able to come out in public for the first time. The smiles on the faces of these families and their children were something to see, as was the pride of the people who were there to welcome them to Canada.

I tip my hat to the employer, Nadeau Ferme Avicole, and the people of Upper Madawaska, and I thank our new families for choosing us. We are honoured.

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[English]

**COMMUNITY LEADERS**

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Peace River—Westlock is a large riding, with many towns, municipalities, Métis settlements, first nations and municipal districts. My job as MP overlaps with over 500 other elected representatives.

I rise today to honour these men and women. Their hard work over the past year has been exemplary. When these leaders let their names stand, they had no idea that they would have to deal with COVID. They have remained faithful, serving their citizens. They have listened, they have helped and they have stood up when needed.

For many, these positions are part time, yet in the face of COVID, they stepped up, took on extra responsibilities and still tried to look after their own livelihoods. It is no small task to serve others while keeping one's own family above water.

I very much thank all the chiefs, chairpersons, mayors, reeves, school councillors and board officials and the MLAs. Their work is appreciated.

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**GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,

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

One hour of freedom is worth 40 years of slavery and prison.

[English]

This is a famous Greek phrase as we mark the bicentennial of Greek independence today.

[Translation]

March 25 marks the 200th anniversary of the beginning of Greece's struggle to regain independence after four centuries of oppression under the Ottoman Empire. This fight ultimately led to the return of democracy in Greece, 2,000 years after its birth.

This victory was won thanks to the sacrifices of all Greeks who loved their freedom, their language, their culture and their religion.

[English]

It is with immense pride that I rise in the House to pay tribute to the sacrifices of my ancestors and celebrate the vibrant culture and heritage of Greece. I invite all Canadians to join our community in celebrating this historic milestone.

[Member spoke in Greek]

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**PENNY APPEAL CANADA**

**Mr. Adam van Koevreden (Milton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am delivering a statement written by Milton's Daughters of the Vote delegate Wardah Shaikh. She states:

"As we all know, the COVID-19 pandemic has put immense strain on families and businesses across the country. Too many people have been unable to work, and local businesses have been struggling to make ends meet as this crisis persists. Fortunately, there are many organizations committed to helping them get back on their feet while supporting community members who are in need of food. One such organization is Penny Appeal Canada, a Muslim aid and development agency delivering aid both domestically and internationally. During Ramadan, throughout April and May, Penny Appeal Canada will be partnering with local restaurants in Ontario and Alberta to purchase 6000 meals which volunteers will deliver to families in need. Penny Appeal's goal is to support our communities through small changes that make a big difference in people's lives."

Milton is extremely proud of Wardah, and I am proud to say that Wardah will be volunteering with Penny Appeal Canada this Ramadan. I would invite everybody to join her and to join her team, called "Team Orange". Visit pennyappeal.ca to sign up today. I thank Wardah.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE**

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 15th anniversary of Kraft Hockeyville, an exciting event that celebrates family, community and the spirit of hockey. This year, the historic village of Bobcaygeon is one of the four finalists.

Many across Canada will recognize Bobcaygeon from, of course, the Tragically Hip song written about escaping the hustle and bustle of the big city for the quiet country life. Others will know Bobcaygeon as the hub of the Kawarthas for its amazing shops, restaurants, trails, boating and, of course, fishing.

For me, it is my hometown. It is where I grew up. In fact, it was in 1991 when the Bobcaygeon Cougars Bantam hockey team, which I was part of, went to the all-Ontario finals, where the community centre was bursting at the seams, while family and friends cheered us on. Indeed, hockey has always been a big piece of the village's character, and the arena serves as a focal point for the area, not just for sports but for such events as the famous Bobcaygeon Fall Fair.

Voting opens April 9, at 9 a.m., and goes until 5 p.m. the next day. I encourage everyone all across the country to register now and vote Bobcaygeon.

\* \* \*

#### GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, March 25, marks 200 years since the Greek war of independence began, the start of the revolution which would allow the people of Greece to regain their freedom after 400 years of Ottoman occupation.

On this day in 1821, the words *eleftheria i thanatos*, freedom or death, became the slogan of the nation, and brave men and women fought courageously for a better future for their country, for a liberated Greece.

It is thanks to the heroes of 1821 that Greeks are still around today to thrive in communities around the world.

The bicentennial of Greek independence is a momentous occasion for hellions and philhellenes to remember and honour these heroes, but it is also a moment to reflect on how far Greeks, both in and out of Greece, have come in the 200 years since independence and where they are headed in the future.

[Member spoke in Greek]

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#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if by chance the Liberals intend to have us continue business here, in a few weeks I will be presenting a motion to support Canada's energy workers, my constituents and all Canadians. When we support our oil and gas industry, it generates billions of dollars in tax revenue. We support thousands of direct and indirect jobs that support business, our communities and the families that thrive within.

If we are to recuperate from the pandemic's economic fallout, we cannot twiddle our thumbs with Canada's most important export resource at the mercy of foreign competitors. I call upon the government to support my motion to further stand by our energy sector workers.

We have world-class resources, with the highest environmental standards. It is time we celebrated.

\* \* \*

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, responsible government means accountable government.

#### Statements by Members

Responsible government is why we are here now, in this place, to hold the government accountable. However, the Liberals seem to believe that government exists for them and their friends and that charity begins at WE. In the words of former Liberal minister David Dingwall, "I am entitled to my entitlements."

Sadly, the Liberals are known for such choice phrases. That is why Canada's Conservatives will bring in the toughest accountability and transparency laws in Canadian history. Conservatives will toughen the Conflict of Interest Act and impose higher penalties. Conservatives will tighten the Lobbying Act to end the abuse by Liberal insiders. Conservatives will increase transparency to end Liberal cover-ups. That is responsible government.

\* \* \*

#### VELMA'S HOUSE

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the families of MMIWG2S, survivors of violence and advocates who have been fighting for years to see Velma's House open in Winnipeg Centre this Friday.

Velma's House, named after the late elder Velma Orvis, who was a tireless supporter and advocate for women, girls and two-spirits, is a 24-7 low-barrier safe space that will be open 365 days a year to provide safety, comfort and connection to those experiencing violence or exploitation or who are unsheltered. The space will serve our community with a trauma-informed and harm-reduction approach, have an in-house elder, and be staffed by a diverse team, including those with lived experience.

I want to thank Ka Ni Kanichihk and the 24-7 safe space planning committee, the Manitoba Coalition of Families of Missing and Murdered Women, the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, End Homelessness Winnipeg and the West Central Women's Resource Centre for their tireless efforts in making this happen for our community.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[Translation]

#### QUEBEC SOCIAL WORKERS' WEEK

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this week Quebec is recognizing the vital contribution of social workers.

We are talking about 15,000 professionals who protect young people, help seniors, bring comfort and propose solutions for people in all sorts of situations, and that is important.

### Oral Questions

Social workers want to understand our reality, listen to us and guide us, and that is important.

Social workers focus on our strengths, believe in us and help us regain confidence, and that is important.

Social workers help us change things, and that is important.

These professionals address the social determinants of health to improve the standard of living in their communities, and that is important.

As a social worker myself, I want to commend my very competent and dedicated colleagues and recognize the important role each of them plays in helping people and the community.

Never forget, dear colleagues, we have you, and that is important.

Thank you for everything.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HEALTH

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday it was reported by our local newspaper, the Langley Advance Times, that there were five overdose deaths from illegal drugs in Langley in January and February. In the past, this number would have represented the entire year in my city.

All reports are pointing to the fact that the illicit drug market has become far more toxic. Despite this, the Liberals want to reduce the penalties for these drug traffickers who are responsible for the harms in our community. It is shocking.

Sadly, drug dealers are not the only culprit. Since the start of this pandemic, overdose deaths have doubled in B.C. Social isolation from lockdowns and a lack of clarity about the future are creating serious consequences on the mental health of Canadians, and the government voted down our motion to create a data-driven plan to get out of it.

Thankfully, Canada can count on the Conservatives for a robust plan to secure our mental health on the other side of this crisis.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, enough is enough.

The escalation of domestic violence in our society is extremely disturbing. Over the course of seven weeks in Quebec, seven women were killed by violent men. It is clear that what we are doing as a society to fight violence against women is not enough. All governments should immediately intensify their efforts to enhance support for resources dedicated to protecting women and fighting domestic violence.

The pandemic has changed people's living conditions, making problems worse. We need to act fast. We want to express our deepest condolences to the families of Elisapee Angma, Marly Edouard,

Nancy Roy, Myriam Dallaire, Sylvie Bisson, Nadège Jolicœur and Rebekah Harry. We owe it to them to do better.

**The Speaker:** There have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, and I believe there is unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of the seven Quebec women who recently lost their lives and of all victims and survivors of gender-based violence.

[English]

I now invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

## ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

### HEALTH

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has failed to get a vaccine delivery guarantee from the European Union. Reports indicate that vaccine deliveries from India could be delayed for all of April. Canada lags the developed world on vaccine deployment.

How many more months of lockdowns will these new delays cause?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has already received half a million vaccine doses from India, on top of what was originally scheduled, and Canadians can also expect 1.5 million doses from the United States on top of what was originally scheduled.

We are using every diplomatic channel and relationship possible to increase and advance our deliveries. Montreal is now at 17% of the population having received a vaccine. There is more work to do, but we are delivering.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, other countries are opening up, and Canada has not even hit 15% to 20%. That is a failure.

This morning Health Canada officials confirmed the four-month delay in doses is an off-label use of a COVID-19 vaccine. Health Canada also confirmed this morning that there will likely be more changes to dosing directions. Canadians are left wondering: Is there a plan? Why did the Prime Minister create a science problem because of his vaccine supply problem?



*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is failing to recognize that as science has evolved and recommendations have changed, the government has changed recommendations associated with the evidence and experience and expertise of scientists, researchers and public health experts. The government believes that the best way to respond to the pandemic is by using science, by understanding that as our knowledge and our understanding of the virus changes, so will our responses.

[Translation]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister failed to secure delivery guarantees for vaccines from Europe. Vaccine deliveries from India will be delayed for all of April. Canada is already behind all our allies.

How many more months of lockdowns will these delays cause?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me set the record straight.

Not a single shipment of vaccines from the European Union has been blocked or delayed to date. Shipments of millions of vaccine doses continue to arrive in Canada, as planned. The Prime Minister spoke with the President of the European Commission yesterday, and she reassured him that this will continue to be the case.

[English]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General report on pandemic preparedness found that it was the Liberal government that shuttered the global pandemic monitoring system and left Canada vulnerable. The audit also found that the Public Health Agency relied on a risk assessment tool that was not designed to consider pandemic risks.

Why did the government shut down Canada's pandemic warning system in the lead-up to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, perhaps the member opposite would like to read the expert panel's interim report, wherein the expert panel indicated that although there were changes made to the global public health information network, these did not delay the response by Canada.

We have reviewed the Auditor General's report. We agree that this country, along with all countries, will need to review our response to the pandemic and make investments in public health, as we have been doing since the beginning of the pandemic.

• (1425)

[Translation]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Madam Speaker, according to the Auditor General report on pandemic preparedness, it was the Liberal government that shuttered the global monitoring system. The audit also found that the Public Health Agency relied on a risk-assessment tool that was not designed to consider pandemic risks.

Why did the government shut down our warning system in the lead-up to the COVID-19 pandemic?

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, this government has used science and evidence every step of the way to respond to COVID-19. I will also say that since the beginning of the pandemic, we have expanded the Public Health Agency of Canada by more than 1,000 employees to date, to bolster our capacity in a number of critical areas. I would urge the member opposite to stop stalling and pass Bill C-14, which would allot a further \$690 million for the Public Health Agency of Canada, as dedicated in the fall 2020 economic statement.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today the Liberals are finally recognizing the need to increase health transfers to Quebec and the provinces. After years of effort by the Bloc Québécois, Ottawa is finally acknowledging that the federal government is underfunding health care. It is a first step.

Unfortunately, the amounts in Bill C-25 are not recurring and they are seven times lower than what Quebec and the provinces are asking for. As the ancient Chinese proverb says, even the longest journey must begin with a first step.

Will the government commit to recurring health transfer increases, up to 35% of costs?

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we have been there for provinces and territories to support them in their pandemic response, including \$19 billion in direct transfers and the purchase of PPE, vaccines and medical equipment. The Prime Minister has committed to continue to be there for provinces and territories to support them as the country recovers from COVID-19.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Quebec proverb says it is not enough. The Bloc Québécois is not saying it, the Quebec premier and all the provincial premiers are saying it. I will even quote them: short-term funding, while helpful, does not permit the provinces and territories to address Canadians' long-term health care needs. They need \$28 billion to make up for chronic federal underfunding, coupled with annual indexing.

We are talking about \$4 billion. That is seven times less than what they asked for and it is not recurring.

Does the government promise that this is a first step in a journey leading to 35% federal funding of health care costs?

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I have said repeatedly in the House and what the Prime Minister has committed to repeatedly in the House is to be there for Canadians, to be there for Quebeckers and to be there for the Province of Quebec throughout this pandemic and beyond. That is our commitment today to Canadians. We will do whatever it takes to get Canadians through this pandemic and back on the road to recovery.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, seven women were killed in the span of six weeks in Quebec. We must put an end to this femicide immediately.

Violence against women is a pandemic within a pandemic. Organizations that support women need help immediately. We need a plan.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for?

What is the plan to stop femicide and save lives?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one life lost is too many. We grieve with you.

We continue to put survivors at the centre of what we do.

[English]

There were 160 lives lost in 2020, and seven women lost in seven weeks in Quebec. Even one life lost is one too many. Our government will continue to work with frontline organizations that have already, over the past year, supported close to a million women, children and non-binary folks in their hour of need. We all must do more and in their memory, we will.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as a nation, we are dealing with the crisis of the pandemic. On top of that, the climate crisis continues to persist. We have the Conservatives, a party that denies there is even a problem, and the Liberals who continue to delay taking any real action to fight the climate crisis. More than just delay, we have a Prime Minister who is all for show. He bought a pipeline, he continues to exempt the biggest polluters and he continues to subsidize the fossil fuel sector.

How can Canadians trust the Prime Minister to take on the climate crisis?

• (1430)

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question on such an important day when the Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of Canada's approach to pricing carbon pollution, because carbon pollution should not be free anywhere in this country.

Canada brought forward a strengthened climate plan in December. It is one of the most detailed and comprehensive climate plans anywhere in the world. It provides a detailed path through which we will not only meet but exceed our current Paris Agreement targets. We have indicated that we will be bringing forth a new target that we will be announcing at the Earth Summit in April.

This government takes climate change very seriously. It is an existential threat, but also an enormous economic opportunity for this country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the chief of the defence staff of our armed forces is facing allegations of sexual misconduct involving a female member of the Canadian military, which is very troubling. That is why it is important to get to the bottom of this and determine who in the government knew what and when.

One key figure in this matter who has not yet testified is the former chief of staff to the Minister of National Defence. Will the Prime Minister allow that individual to testify before a parliamentary committee so these matters can be studied thoroughly?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that departmental responsibility is a fundamental principle.

Ministers are there to answer questions, whether in the House or in committee. I find it very serious that the opposition is trying to use its majority to bring in people who are here in good faith to work hard for Canada, to intimidate them, to mistreat them in committee and to disrespect them. Ministers are here to answer questions. It is the very principle of departmental responsibility, and we are going to follow it.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, “very serious”, “mistreat”, “intimidate”: Is the minister aware of the nonsense he just spouted?

We have to get to the bottom of this. This person, the former chief of staff, is at the heart of the government, the army and the Prime Minister's Office. That person has to say what she knows. That is why we want her to appear. Will the government allow this person to testify before a parliamentary committee so that the whole truth can be told?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, in our parliamentary democracy, it is a member of cabinet who is accountable to Parliament, it is a member of cabinet who is accountable to committees, not their employees.

It is something the Conservatives have always supported. I clearly remember when the leader of the government at the time, Jay Hill, defended departmental responsibility tooth and nail. A number of people sitting on the opposition side today were there, applauding it and were in full agreement. I am very surprised that they changed their minds today.

[English]

### ETHICS

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that his office had nothing to do with the half-billion-dollar grant to a group that had paid his family half a million dollars.

However, there is something about the timeline that does not add up. I have the contribution agreement that gave WE the half billion dollars. It was signed on June 23. However, the Kielburgers got authorization to start spending taxpayer reimbursable money on May 5, six weeks earlier.

Did the Kielburgers speak to anybody in the PMO on May 5?

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as committee members have requested, I have testified at committee and provided this information. As we have confirmed, the contribution agreement was negotiated between the professional non-partisan public service, and this information is all on the public record.

The member opposite seems to be very concerned about students and youth. It would be great if his Conservative colleagues would stop holding back Bill C-14 so that we could help students with interest relief and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, as we are still in the midst of the pandemic and have a lot of work to do.

• (1435)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the question was whether or not the Kielburgers spoke to anyone on May 5.

They had to have found out somehow they were eligible to spend taxpayer funds on May 5, and it certainly was not from the contract, which was signed by that minister on June 23, unless they have some telepathic abilities.

It turns out they do not have telepathic abilities, but they do have a telephone. They spoke to Rick Theis, top adviser to the Prime Minister and cabinet, on May 5, the day they started spending money.

Will they let Mr. Rick Theis be nice and testify at committee to answer questions?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ministers are accountable to Parliament, not staffers. It is a long-standing tradition, something my colleagues supported at the time. That is why our ministers are in question period and appear at committees to answer questions.

Let me quote Jay Hill, government House leader under Stephen Harper:

When ministers choose to appear before committees to account for their administration, they are the best source of accountability and they must be heard. Public servants and ministerial staff support the responsibility of their ministers. They do not supplant it. They cannot supplant it.

My colleague agreed with that at the time. Why did he change his mind?

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here we are in the middle of another series of Liberal cover-ups, all to protect the Prime Min-

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ister. It is in the middle of a pandemic when other countries have governments spending their time making sure they get their economies back on track, and these Liberals are looking to cover up corruption. Canadians want a great Canadian comeback, and with these Liberals, they are focused on a great Canadian cover-up.

Will the Prime Minister allow these staff to testify on what they knew about sexual misconduct in the military and the half-billion-dollar WE scandal?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the Conservatives are trying to cover up for the mistakes they made during their convention this weekend and the important decision by the Supreme Court today, so they want to switch channels. They are getting into petty politics. They know very well that there is a principle of ministerial responsibility. At the time they formed government, they fought very hard for this principle.

I remember the MP for Carleton and other colleagues sitting there in the House and how much they believed in and fought for this principle. What happened? Have they changed their minds all of a sudden?

**The Speaker:** Before we go to the next question, I want to remind hon. members who are joining us virtually to adjust their microphone so that it is either slightly above, between their nose and their upper lip, or slightly below, between their chin and their lower lip, so we do not get any popping sound. Our interpreters do yeomen's work and we do not want to jeopardize their health.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, even adjusting the equipment would not improve the quality of the answer by that minister.

It is the same old song and dance. They shut down Parliament, filibustered committees for the equivalent of 20 meetings alone at the ethics committee, and yet they are talking about another party trying to change the channel? It is a cover-up of corruption of the highest magnitude.

Members of the Prime Minister's family got a half million dollars and then they gave that organization a half billion dollars. The chief of the defence staff is alleged to have perpetrated sexual misconduct against the soldiers he was entrusted to lead and protect, and the minister and Prime Minister knew about it. They gave him a raise and did not protect the enlisted men and women who serve our country.

These people need to come testify. We expect the staff to testify. Will the Prime Minister let them?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Conservatives that we are right in the middle of a pandemic, that Canadians are suffering and dying, and people are losing their jobs and we should be debating that today. How can we help Canadians, how can we help workers, small businesses, families and seniors? Instead, what do the Conservatives do? They fall into petty, partisan politics and personal attacks, like my colleague just made. That is a shame. There is a principle that they know and defended, the principle of ministerial responsibility, and now they have changed their minds? Seriously?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is crazy. The Prime Minister refused to acknowledge the need to increase health transfers, but eventually said we could discuss it after the pandemic.

Today there was an announcement that the federal government will be increasing health transfers slightly during the pandemic. They have a hard time understanding, but they get there in the end.

Does the Minister of Finance understand that a permanent, substantial increase to health transfers is needed immediately, and will she include that in her upcoming budget?

• (1440)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, funnily enough, the Bloc usually wants to hear a yes, but it does not want to hear a yes this time. We already told them that yes, we will increase health transfers.

We are in a pandemic right now. We are working very hard with all the provinces and Quebec in particular. We are focusing our efforts on helping the provinces get through the crisis, either by providing equipment and vaccines or bringing in various measures.

We have been there for the provinces, and we will continue to be there for them.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about that.

From the start of the pandemic, the federal government left Quebec and the provinces to fend for themselves. At the start of the pandemic, for every \$100 it spent, the federal government invested 15¢ in health during a health crisis. With today's announcement, for every \$100 spent, \$1 will go to health during a health crisis. That is an improvement, but it is obviously nothing to applaud. Again today, despite the announcement, Quebec and the provinces are asking for more.

Will the government increase health transfers to 35% on an ongoing basis?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no reason to applaud, because during a pandemic we do not applaud, we work. We roll up our sleeves and we work. We work with the provinces.

There is one thing that the Bloc Québécois may not like these days. It sees how well we are working with Quebec through the agreements reached, for example, to help Lion Électrique, or to provide Internet service in the regions. The Bloc Québécois clearly sees that the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec are working hand in hand for Quebec and Quebeckers, and it does not like that.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, the Canadian Medical Association released a new study showing that the cost of elder care alone will increase by \$490 billion over the next 10 years. Ottawa has responded with a single \$4-billion transfer.

This study reminds us that, as the Bloc Qu eb ois has always reiterated, seniors do not need national standards, they need health funding to increase on an ongoing basis.

What is the government waiting for to implement a significant, unconditional increase in health transfers on an ongoing basis?

[English]

**Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the opposition of what we have been doing for seniors.

For many months we have been providing support for seniors through tax-free payments and enhanced community supports. While the government does remain committed to implementing policies that were reaffirmed in the throne speech, at this time they know that we are focusing on managing the COVID-19 public health crisis, and we have given billions to provinces and territories to help with public health at this time of the crisis.

Seniors can be assured that our government will be there to support them.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**LABOUR**

**Mr. Luc Berthold (M gantic—L' rable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Port of Montreal has been described as the lifeblood of Quebec's and Ontario's economies. In total, \$100 billion worth of goods move through the port every year.

A number of Canadian businesses rely on the Port of Montreal to import and export goods. Unfortunately, a strike seems likely because the government has failed to facilitate the negotiations on the port workers' collective agreement.

Why has the Liberal government not ensured that the two parties could come to an agreement that works for everyone?

[English]

**Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we understand that the parties have not yet reached an agreement, but the good news is that the parties are back at the table. We also recognize the central role of the port and we are aware of the uncertainty of the current situation and the anxiety that it is creating in supply chains. We have heard concerns from many stakeholders in recent weeks. We understand these concerns and take them very seriously. Right now our focus is that the parties are at the table. We have supported that negotiation through providing mediation services, and we look forward to a resolution at the table.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a 19-day strike last year at the Port of Montreal resulted in \$600 million in losses. These economic losses are unacceptable for businesses.

The Liberal government has been dragging its feet long enough. Canadians should not have to suffer economic hardship as a result of the government's inaction.

Is the Liberal government waiting for another crisis before it steps in? With the pandemic, the Canadian economy cannot withstand a new strike.

Why did the government not do more to make sure that the parties could come to an agreement that works for everyone?

• (1445)

**Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

We have been on this file from the very beginning. These parties have been negotiating for two and a half years, and the federal mediation and conciliation service has been there at the table to support the parties. We realize the economic harm that this potentially can cause. Last month I took the extra step of appointing two senior mediators from the mediation service.

I want to assure the member that we are in close contact with the parties, we are monitoring the situation very closely, we are aware of the potential harm this could cause, and we are providing every support possible to have an agreement made at that table.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yet there is no resolution.

On Sunday, Port of Montreal longshoremen completely rejected the collective agreement proposal, and a strike at one of our most vital ports is looming. Our rail lines are reducing service, ships are being rerouted and we could see some major delays in receiving essential goods. Our reputation as a reliable trade partner is in serious jeopardy.

Will the minister start taking Canada's supply chain seriously and ensure our port system remains open for business?

**Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we absolutely recognize the central role of the port and we are aware of the uncertainty that the current situation is creating. There is a great deal of anxiety in supply chains across the various sec-

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tors, and it has the potential to cause significant reputational damage and economic harm across Canada, particularly in Montreal, in Quebec and in Ontario. We are absolutely fully on top of this situation. We are providing the supports. The mediators have been at that table for almost two and a half years. We will continue to monitor the situation and we strongly encourage the parties to come to an agreement at the table.

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today's Supreme Court ruling is good news. Canadians are concerned about the climate crisis, but they are also concerned about the Liberals' lack of action.

Canada has missed every single climate target. The Liberals continue to hand out billions of dollars to big oil companies instead of putting that money into transit, energy-efficient homes and clean energy, and good jobs for workers in the low-carbon economy. They failed to deliver on their promise of a just transition act.

When will the minister stop treating the carbon tax as a silver bullet, stop leaving workers behind and stop subsidizing big polluters?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, I am very pleased to speak to the climate issue on a day when the Supreme Court reaffirmed the federal government's ability to ensure that we are pricing pollution in every part of this country. It is an important component of a comprehensive climate plan that is focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building an economy that will drive prosperity in what will become an ever increasingly low-carbon universe of the future.

Certainly Canada has a climate plan. It has perhaps one of the most detailed climate plans in the world. We announced that plan in December. It demonstrates to Canadians very clearly how Canada will not just meet but will exceed the targets that it has established—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, The Globe and Mail reports that Canada's nuclear safety regulator gave a 10-year licence extension to the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, despite inspection data that government experts said appeared to defy the laws of physics. The concern is around the aging pressure tubes holding the nuclear fuel bundles. A tube failure could result in a billion-dollar repair bill, at best, and a catastrophic Fukushima-like meltdown at worst.

Why has the government taken this hope-for-the-best approach to nuclear safety?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadians and the environment are our top priorities when it comes to nuclear energy. Canada has a comprehensive and robust regulatory framework for nuclear safety, one of the best in the world. We are committed to continuous improvement. We are working closely with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and we welcome all its recommendations.

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**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

**Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, representation matters. All aspects of our society and our institutions, including the justice system, must reflect the diversity of Canada. After introducing critical reforms in 2016, our government has made the appointment process more open and transparent, leading to the appointment of more than 400 highly meritorious jurists.

Could the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada update the House on ongoing efforts taken by our government to increase diversity on our bench?

• (1450)

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity for his advocacy.

Yesterday our government announced the historic appointment of the first indigenous judge to the B.C. Court of Appeal, Justice Leonard Marchand, and also filled all vacancies on the Newfoundland and Labrador Supreme Court. This shows our commitment to diversity on the bench. More than half of all judges appointed by our government are women, and appointments also reflect increased representation of visible minorities, indigenous people and LGBTQ2+ Canadians. Our courts must reflect the diversity that makes Canada great, not only because it is right but because it makes our justice system better.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all military members need to be able to report abuse of power and sexual misconduct, confident in the knowledge that they will not suffer further abuse or reprisal. The passing of Bill C-77 in 2019 ensured that the privacy and security of victims within the Canadian Armed Forces was protected in law. However, this key legislation has not been implemented or enforced. Those

who come forward still suffer. Why has the defence minister failed to implement the charter of victims in the armed forces?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we as a government are working to provide support for victims through the ombudsman for victims in our country. We have funded a number of different programs across this country specifically targeted to victims. I can cite, for example, the family liaison units that came about as a result of MMIWG.

We look at all aspects of Canadian society in order to ensure that victims are accompanied in their dealings with the criminal justice system, and we do our best to treat them and support them with the respect and dignity that they deserve.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians continue to learn that far too many military members who have experienced sexual assault and misconduct remain trapped in a culture where their voices go unheard. Bill C-77 protects in law the anonymity and security of victims and witnesses in these cases, but failure to implement this critical charter has allowed serious allegations to be ignored, investigations to be shut down and charges to be dropped.

Why has the defence minister, for two years, failed to ensure that the charter of victims in the armed forces is enforced?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my previous answer, we take victims' rights seriously across all aspects of Canadian society, and that includes the military. I will come back to the member with a specific answer to her question that focuses on the military.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recently learned from a senior government official that the Liberals were not pursuing a complete exemption from President Biden's buy American policies and are only looking at sector-specific exemptions. The Conservatives negotiated a full exemption back in 2009.

Did the Minister of International Trade push for a complete exemption for Canada from buy American during her call with the U.S. trade representative on March 22, or is the government's position now just settling for second best?

• (1455)

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, buy America was raised directly during the bilateral meeting with President Biden. As Ambassador Hillman confirmed under testimony before our committee, the issue of buy America is consistently raised in almost every meeting between almost every minister and their U.S. counterparts.

We will continue to engage actively with our business community here in Canada, the business community in the United States and all levels of government in order to get a successful outcome to this issue, just as we did in our concerted effort to successfully conclude the new NAFTA.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, strict buy American policies would be devastating to the Canadian economy and impact our integrated supply chains if the Liberals fail to get a full exemption. The government would be handpicking which sectors and perhaps which businesses will succeed or fail if it is seeking only a partial exemption.

If a full buy American exemption is not granted to Canada, what is the Liberals' plan to stop good-paying, middle-class Canadian manufacturing jobs from packing up and moving south of the border?

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite should know, Canada already benefits from a complete exemption from the buy American provisions that the United States put in place.

As I mentioned earlier, we continue to work at all levels in order to gain an exemption to buy America. This is just as much in the interest of the United States as it is in Canada's. We are all looking for a strong economic recovery in North America, and we will work with the Biden administration to get there.

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[Translation]

## HEALTH

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today the Auditor General confirmed that the management of our borders during the pandemic was a complete failure.

The federal government was unable to find out whether 66% of travellers coming to Canada were in fact complying with the quarantine rules. That means that two out of every three travellers who came to Canada slipped right through the cracks.

How is it possible to lose track of two out of three people when the health of the population and the lives of seniors are at risk?

## Oral Questions

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as of March 8, two million verification calls and over 70,000 in-person visits had been made to verify traveller compliance, and 1.2 million referrals had been made to law enforcement since April 1, 2020. There had been a 96% quarantine compliance rate since April 1, 2020, and a 98% quarantine compliance rate based on law enforcement activities. We have worked with partners across the country to make sure that people quarantine when they are required to do so by law.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Jonquière on a point of order.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

We did not see the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques the entire time he was asking his question. There was only the visual. I would like to know if he can start again.

**The Speaker:** We will allow the member to repeat his question.

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today the Auditor General confirmed that the management of our borders during the pandemic was a complete failure.

The federal government was unable to find out whether 66% of travellers coming to Canada were in fact complying with the quarantine rules. That means that two out of every three travellers who came to Canada slipped right through the cracks.

How is it possible to lose track of two out of three people when the health of the population and the lives of seniors are at risk?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois needs to make up its mind.

Millions of Quebeckers are in the red zone and cannot see their parents or grandparents, Quebec has a curfew, and we fear that a third wave is coming based on the variants, but the Bloc Québécois is telling us that it wants to eliminate the hotel quarantine for snowbirds returning home.

That would mean easing restrictions. Now it is saying the opposite. It needs to make up its mind. Does it want fewer restrictions or more restrictions?

We put in place one of the strongest systems in the world, and we will continue to do so.

• (1500)

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we can see that the government is confused. It just gave two different answers to the same question.

*Oral Questions*

Not only was the federal government unable to make sure two out of three travellers were actually quarantining, it was not even able to loop in the proper authorities to help.

The federal government gave law enforcement the names of only 40% of the people at risk of violating quarantine. Ottawa let the majority of the people who crossed the border go unmonitored, without even notifying Quebec. Now it wonders why the variants are spreading all over the place.

Does the government realize that it committed gross negligence?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has put in place one of the strictest systems in the world, with tests at departure and arrival, as well as a federally controlled hotel quarantine.

Meanwhile, the Bloc Québécois wants to eliminate the hotel quarantine for returning snowbirds.

The Bloc Québécois is telling us that it knows that Quebecers cannot leave their homes, that they are being asked to make sacrifices, that it is asking for a whole bunch of things, but that it wants to eliminate the criteria for certain people returning to Canada and lower expectations in spite of everything that is happening right now.

That is irresponsible.

**Mr. Mario Simard:** I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, during my colleague's question, someone activated their microphone, and we did not hear a good portion of his question.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on this point of order.

I like my colleague, but I think he is exaggerating a bit. I heard the question clearly, and I had no trouble seeing his colleague while he was asking it.

**The Speaker:** There may have been a slight delay during his response. If the hon. minister wants to give his response again, that would be fine.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on a point of order.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that this is a new situation and that there are technical difficulties.

For my part, however, I heard the minister's response just fine. There was a delay of a fraction of a second between the response and the video, but I think everyone understood what the minister said. They may not have understood what he meant, but they were certainly able to hear him.

**The Speaker:** If the House agrees, we will move on to the next question.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

[English]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for a year now we have been asking the Liberal government for its plan to bring international farm workers to help Canadian fruit and vegetable growers with their crops. These workers are vital to giving Canadians a secure and reliable supply of produce. However, growers are still uncertain they will have their workers in time to harvest the early crops and get the next crops planted, because of the new convoluted quarantine and testing requirements.

Why does the Minister of Agriculture and her Liberal friends care so little about Canadian agriculture and Canadian food sovereignty? Where is the plan?

**Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of temporary foreign workers to our producers and our food processors. We are working tirelessly to ensure that temporary foreign workers can arrive safely in Canada by supporting employers with the additional costs incurred to accommodate the isolation period. All federal departments involved in the temporary foreign worker program have worked together to simplify processes and facilitate as much as possible the safe entry of these workers.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, they need to do better because a farmer here in Haldimand—Norfolk is concerned about one of his international workers who has been alone in quarantine for over 25 days. Why? He is still waiting for a test kit from Switch Health. This wait is unacceptable and inhumane and, sadly, it is not an isolated case. We had real problems getting international farm workers here last year, and now the stumbling Liberal government just keeps creating new difficulties for farmers.

Why will they not help our farmers feed Canadians?

**Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, our government recognizes the importance of temporary foreign workers. All federal departments involved in the temporary foreign worker program have worked together to simplify processes and facilitate as much as possible the safe entry of workers. We recognize the integral role that our farmers and food processing employers play in ensuring that Canadians have access to food. We are here to support them.

The fall economic statement committed an additional \$34.4 million to continue the mandatory isolation support for temporary foreign workers. Between September and December 2020, around 2,053 temporary foreign workers arrived in Canada to support the 2021 season.



• (1505)

[*Translation*]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the three opposition parties, including the Conservatives, agreed that there was a need to extend EI benefits from 15 to 50 weeks in the case of serious illness.

We all agree on that. We will not accuse the government of overspending, because we realize that this is an extremely important social safety net for people who are fighting for their life. Is the Prime Minister committed to making this change to the EI program before the next election?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a flexible EI system that meets their needs, and they deserve it.

That is why we have spent the past five years modernizing it and making improvements for the benefit of Canadians. EI sickness benefits are an important support measure for Canadians who can no longer work. Right now, too many beneficiaries exhaust their benefits. That is why we are committed to extending the benefit period to 26 weeks.

\* \* \*

#### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Mrs. Lyne Bessette (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this past year has been difficult.

The citizens of Brome—Missisquoi contacted me many times to share their frustration at the absence of a reliable Internet connection. Many of us have had to work or study at home. The pandemic accelerated the need for this essential service.

Can the Minister of Rural Economic Development share with the House the measures our government is taking to make sure that Quebeckers have access to reliable high-speed Internet?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will keep our promises to Quebeckers.

This week, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry announced a \$420-million investment aimed at connecting every Quebecker to high-speed Internet within the next two years.

Clearly, our government is prepared to collaborate with all of its partners to defend the interests of all Canadians in rural and remote regions. I would like to thank the Liberal members of Parliament for their work in this area.

\* \* \*

#### COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on February 16, I asked the Minister of Finance a question. A business in my riding is having problems with the commercial rent assistance program because they are non-arm's-length ten-

#### Oral Questions

ants. The minister told me that she wanted to help all businesses who needed this support. Several businesses need this assistance in order to avoid declaring bankruptcy. A month and a half later, we still do not have anything for small and medium-sized businesses.

Will the minister fix the program and show some respect for our businesses on the brink?

[*English*]

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his advocacy on this important issue. As a result of our program rollout, we have learned that we need to make certain adjustments as we go, including what was originally the Canada emergency commercial rent assistance program, which was converted to the Canada emergency rent subsidy program. We made certain changes, and now have seen nearly 100,000 businesses receive a direct subsidy to contribute to the fixed costs of keeping their doors open.

We will continue to monitor these programs to adjust them as necessary to ensure that businesses are supported, so that they are still here on the back end of this pandemic to contribute to the recovery.

\* \* \*

#### HOUSING

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, home prices are skyrocketing. The CMHC and the banks confirm what we already know: the market is overheating. The Liberals' plan for first-time home buyers continues to miss the mark completely. We are over halfway through their program that was to help 100,000 Canadians, but it has reached just a tenth of that, despite the hot real estate market.

When will the government implement housing policies that make sense and secure the future for young Canadians priced out of the market?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government introduced Canada's first ever national housing strategy because we want every Canadian to find a safe and affordable place to call home. As part of the national housing strategy, we introduced the first-time home buyer incentive, which will help middle-class Canadians achieve their dream of owning a home by lowering their monthly mortgage payments without increasing the down payments.

In the fall economic statement, we committed to expand the program to be more reflective of the financial realities of first-time home buyers in Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria.

*Oral Questions*

• (1510)

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the Vancouver area the cost of an average home is already inflated by \$644,000 because of red tape from all levels of government. COVID is not the time for extra costs for home owners. At the finance committee, I asked the assistant deputy minister in charge of tax policy if there were plans for a new home equity tax. He told me that he would not comment on new taxes and that I should ask the finance minister.

Therefore, will the minister introduce a new home equity tax, yes or no?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is not thinking of or considering bringing in any home equity tax. Any suggestion of that is false. We have clarified that a number of times. I will keep saying it over and over again: We are neither considering nor implementing that.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today's landmark decision is an important one in the fight against climate change and the most efficient tool in this effort. The Supreme Court affirmed what the Conservative leader's party rejected just this past weekend: Climate change is real, and we have to act.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please update the House on today's decision and our plan to fight climate change?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. Today, the Supreme Court reaffirmed what Canadians have known along: Climate change is real, and putting a price on pollution is of concern to Canada as a whole. Only Conservative politicians are disputing the reality and urgency of climate change.

Today's historic decision is a win for the millions of Canadians who believe we must build a prosperous economy that fights climate change, many of whom participated in the court's hearing, such as doctors, economists, cities, labour, indigenous groups and young people. It is a win for the hard-working families who will continue to receive more money in their pockets through the climate action incentive.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, coastal British Columbians have been appealing to the government for months to declare a wild salmon emergency and to save Pacific wild salmon, but after two years of not having a federal budget, people are rightly concerned that the Liberals are not taking this seriously. Coastal first nations and British Columbians need a government that will make historic investments in the conservation, protection and restoration of wild salmon habitats.

Will the minister declare a wild salmon emergency today and make the necessary investments in the government's budget to protect Pacific wild salmon?

**Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his hard work and advocacy on the fisheries committee, where they are now doing a study on wild Pacific salmon.

This is a species that is in critical shape. We know that there are a lot of factors impacting our wild Pacific salmon, including climate change and human impacts, both from contaminants and from changes in land and water use. That is why our government has invested \$145 million in habitat restoration. We are going to continue to work with first nations communities, provinces and territories to find the best solutions possible because we know how iconic this species is to British Columbia.

There is more that needs to be done, and I look forward to working with the member opposite to—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Fredericton.

\* \* \*

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

**Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister admitted that there is systemic racism in all systems that govern this country. He recognized that systemic anti-Black racism exists in Canada, causes deep pain and has undermined the livelihoods of Black Canadians, and Canada's own public service is complicit. As a result of systemic racism and discrimination, the government has failed to achieve equality and correct the conditions that disadvantage Black civil servants.

Reparation is the act of making up for wrongdoing. Will the government fight in court the Black civil servants who courageously came forward to expose the wrongdoing they faced during their careers, or will it work toward reparation? Will the government commit today to review the Employment Equity Act and ensure it brings down the category of visible minorities, acknowledging the unique and systemic racism faced by Black employees?

• (1515)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for raising these important issues.

Our government is committed to building back even better, and being consciously more inclusive. This is work that we started when we took office in October 2015. We brought back an anti-racism strategy that was created by Canadians for Canadians, informed by indigenous people, Black Canadians, racialized Canadians, religious minorities and so forth.

We have an anti-racism secretariat. Yes, we are committed to reviewing the Employment Equity Act. Yes, we are committed to working with all partners who want to ensure that Canadians are not left on the sidelines. We recognize that COVID-19 has impacted the entire world, all Canadians and disproportionately certain segments. We are committed to ensuring that those—

**The Speaker:** I am afraid that is all the time we have for today.

The hon. member for Kanata—Carleton is rising on a point of order.

\* \* \*

### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions amongst the parties, and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That the House:

- (a) mourn the lives of the seven women who lost their lives to heinous acts of femicide in Quebec in the past few months;
- (b) mourn the lives of all women and gender-diverse people across Canada who have lost their lives to intimate partner violence and gender-based violence;
- (c) continue to support the survivors of gender-based violence;
- (d) acknowledge the incredibly alarming increase in gender-based violence across the country;
- (e) condemn gender-based violence in all its forms;
- (f) work with the government to accelerate investments in shelters and transition housing, and support the advancement of a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence;
- (g) call on all Canadians to do more to fight and raise awareness on gender-based violence; and
- (h) take-note of the alarming increase of gender-based violence in Canada;

and that a take-note debate on this topic be held later today, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, and that, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, members rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that they will be dividing their time with another member; no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion please say Nay.

[*Translation*]

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

Hearing no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

### Speaker's Ruling

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as tradition would have it, it is time for the Thursday question.

I would like my ministerial counterpart to tell us what is coming up in Parliament over the next few days. We know that the budget will be tabled on April 19. However, can he tell what is happening after the two weeks we are spending in our ridings?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for his question.

This afternoon, we will obviously continue the debate on the opposition motion. We will proceed to the supply votes a little later this evening.

Tomorrow morning, we will resume debate at second reading of Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, COVID-19 response, and then in the afternoon, we will study Bill C-11, an act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

[*English*]

I would also like to wish all hon. colleagues a productive and safe two weeks working in their constituencies.

[*Translation*]

Obviously, members have a lot of work to do in their ridings, but I hope they will take some time for themselves and spend some time with their families. That is important.

\* \* \*

● (1520)

#### POINTS OF ORDER

##### PARTY REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on March 22, 2021, by the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent concerning the presence of members of the government party in the House.

In his intervention, he mentioned that, at present, the maximum number of members who can safely be physically present during sittings is 86 and should reflect the proportions of the recognized parties. He thus argued that the number of members from the government party should not be limited to one or two, particularly since ministers participate by video conference from their office on Parliament Hill and take part in activities in the building where the House is sitting.

He also acknowledged several times that the virtual House is the extension of the physical House. The member feels that the under-representation of members of the government party and cabinet physically present in the House is unacceptable and should be corrected to guarantee the application of the principle of ministerial responsibility and accountability.

*Business of Supply*

The member for La Prairie supported the position expressed by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*English*]

The member for Kingston and the Islands responded that this was not a point of order because, according to the rules governing the hybrid House, there is no difference between participating in the debates in person or remotely. He added that the choice to limit physical presence was done out of respect for the health and safety of members and employees of the House administration.

The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent is essentially asking the Chair to decide on two questions: whether a minimum number of members from the government party must be present in the House, and whether ministers participating remotely impairs the principle of ministerial responsibility. On January 25, 2021, the House adopted an order that allows members to participate in deliberations by video conference until June 23, 2021. Since it is up to the House to establish its own rules, it occasionally decides to amend its practices on an ad hoc basis or for specified periods of time.

As a servant of the House, I am here not to judge the wisdom of its decisions, but to enforce the rules it establishes. A careful reading of the order that currently governs our work gives no indication that the role and functions of members who participate in deliberations by video conference differ from those who are physically present. In fact, there is a will to take the necessary measures to allow them to contribute fully by stipulating that those who participate remotely count for the purpose of quorum. Members can table documents and reports, present petitions and vote. I would add that there is no limit on their right to intervene under any heading of the Order of Business.

Thus, in the eyes of the Chair, there is no difference between a member who is participating in person and one who is participating by video conference with respect to attendance contributing to deliberations or quorum. For the same reason, there is no grounds to conclude that ministers participating by video conference impairs accountability or the principle of responsible government.

[*Translation*]

The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent mentioned that it was agreed to limit the number of members present in the House in order to follow public health guidelines and to allow members to participate in the deliberations of the House safely. However, at no point did the House specify in the order of January 25, 2021, a minimum number of members who must participate in person. In the absence of any indication to the contrary from the House, the choice of method of participation remains at the discretion of each member.

[*English*]

In closing, I want to remind the members to be judicious in their interventions and points of order to avoid mentioning the presence or absence of members or ministers in the House, which is contrary to the Standing Orders.

I thank hon. members for their attention.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1525)

[*English*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—INSTRUCTIONS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ETHICS AND TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has seven minutes remaining in his debate.

**Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are several problems I have with the motion on the floor. Some are problems of substance, and some are problems of process. Some relate to the fact that this motion is extraneous to the issues that really matter to Canadians, who are going through a once-in-a-lifetime public health and economic emergency that demands the full attention of the House of Commons.

I will begin with the problems of process.

The principle of ministerial responsibility is a golden thread that runs through Westminster parliamentary democracies around the world. The concept of confidence is something that our entire system is built upon. The House must maintain confidence in the government in order to have the government stand. Indeed, the government is made up of, in part, the executive, including cabinet ministers. Whether the opposition has confidence in the staff of those ministers is not relevant to who remains in government. Though it is essential that the House maintain confidence in itself.

I have certain, serious reservations about calling the individual political staff of cabinet ministers before committees in the present circumstances, in part because it is not truly their responsibility but that of their employer, which in this case is the minister.

However, some of my reservations are informed by experience. I am speaking about some of the matters that relate to the Canada student service grant having had an investigation. I have been on the finance committee. I know similar issues have been pursued before other committees, including the ethics committee.

I was supportive of the idea to undertake a study and call certain ministers before that committee, including the Prime Minister. However, what I saw during that experience was very little interest in truth-seeking and rather a great interest in creating a political circus, particularly when it came to the staff who did appear, including not just political staff, but non-partisan public servants as well.

*Business of Supply*

On one occasion, when the chief of staff of the Prime Minister attended, I saw behaviour that was unbecoming of a parliamentary committee. I saw not only questions about the development of programming, but also drive-by smears on her family members. It was reprehensible to watch that kind of attack, not just on those of us who put our name on the ballot and expect this sort of public scrutiny, or on staff, but on the family members of staff.

Moreover, I will point out that there has been no shortage of consideration of many of the issues that are being pursued. There was literally hundreds of hours before the ethics and finance committees. The Prime Minister himself testified at the finance committee. The chief of staff testified as well before the finance committee. The Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth testified before both the ethics and finance committees.

Both committees also had the benefit of the testimony of the Clerk of the Privy Council, who is the head of Canada's public service. A number of public servants attended, gave testimony and answered questions. There was a significant waiver of cabinet confidences, and to some degree solicitor and client privilege, in these instances. Thousands of pages were disclosed, giving all of the information that one could conceivably want to see regarding the development of that particular program.

I want to turn my attention not just to the problems of process, but to what I believe is the motivation for today's motion, which is that the official opposition seems bereft of ideas that actually matter to Canadians who are struggling to get through the COVID-19 pandemic. It looked at the jobs numbers that came out for the month of February, in which 259,000 Canadians obtained a job they did not have one month before, and there has not been a question about our job numbers in question period since. Now that the vaccine rollout has really hit its stride and we are seeing two million doses per week arriving within our borders, we are no longer seeing questions about vaccine administration.

The Conservative Party seems to be in a very difficult place. They try not to draw attention to the issues that matter around jobs and the economy. They try not to draw attention to the government's public health response when it seems to be going fairly well. They try desperately to avoid attention on some of the issues that are plaguing their internal politics. This includes the fact, which I might point out, given the Supreme Court of Canada's decision today affirming that climate change is real, which should not require any affirmation, 54% of their members recently voted at their partisan convention to deny a motion that included those very words.

● (1530)

The reality I see is, we are dealing with a party that desperately wants to avoid drawing attention to the government's record because we have had a world-class economic response to this pandemic, and its members want to create a political sideshow. They want to bring individual staff members of ministers before a committee to see if they can get that gotcha moment for their social media accounts.

I do not think that is appropriate in our system. Instead, it would be far better if all parties in this House would focus on the issues their constituents are actually calling them about, things like whether the government is actually advancing the kinds of econom-

ic supports that will keep food on their tables and a roof over their heads, or whether local businesses are receiving the kinds of supports that will help them keep their doors open. Instead, they want to call individual political staffers before certain committees.

Although some of the staff members did not sign up to have their name on the ballot and be scrutinized before parliamentary committees, some of the individual political staff I have worked with in the development of Canada's economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic are without doubt heroes. I think of the work they put in, staying up until one, two or three in the morning to email with MPs who had concerns or ideas to develop programs. That these programs are actually landing on the kitchen tables of families in my community today is nothing short of heroic. I want to take this opportunity to thank the political staff who have stepped up.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned the importance of ministerial accountability. I do hope he recognizes that when members of Parliament have concerns about the ethical conduct of people who are under the Prime Minister's employ, it says right there, the Prime Minister can come and speak on behalf of those people at committee.

That speaks to a greater concept, the concept of responsible government. This member pointed out that we have not heard questions about this or about that. When members of Parliament are elected, we are elected to decide whether we have confidence in the government. Quite honestly, we know there are clear issues in the armed forces, at the highest levels, and this is under the purview of the Prime Minister. We also know there is an issue about the involvement of his office and his staff with ethical breaches.

Does the member not agree there is clearly a point with ministerial accountability, where the Prime Minister can come on behalf of them? Second, does he not believe in the concept of responsible government, where each member can decide whether or not they have confidence in the government?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe in the principle of responsible government. I should give a plug to one of our provincial forefathers, Joseph Howe, who was responsible for advancing the notion of responsible government in Canada, right here in my home province of Nova Scotia.

One of the issues the member raised though, and I think maybe we will find common ground here, is that some of the members he spoke of are not staff of the Prime Minister's Office. They are staff of individual ministers. The concept of ministerial responsibility is an important one.

Former prime minister Stephen Harper said, "our precedents and practices are very clear. It is ministers and the ministry at large who are responsible to the House and to its committees, not their staff members. The staff members are responsible to the ministers and the members for whom they work."

I take exception to his suggestion that only the Prime Minister could alleviate the need for staff to testify. The relevant minister in each circumstance would do the trick just fine.

*Business of Supply*

• (1535)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, of course the issue before us is a serious one. We, as parliamentarians across all parties, need to make sure there is accountability, transparency and answers for all Canadians. That is really the crux of the issue here.

I fail to understand why the Liberals would not want to ensure there is clarity provided at committee. To that end, what is the justification from the member to say that the Prime Minister should not appear before the committee?

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member's parliamentary work, having watched her in action during the entirety of my time as an MP.

To be clear, I did not make the suggestion that it is inappropriate for the Prime Minister to appear before committees. In fact, I supported his appearance before the finance committee on some of the same issues for which they are seeking to have him come back. What I think is important, though, is that it is not necessarily the Prime Minister who is the appropriate person to testify before all committees in all circumstances. When I look at some of the individual staff members who the motion contemplates should actually be testifying, in many cases I think a different minister would actually be in a better position to do so than the Prime Minister.

I must say I am a bit jaded after my own experience, having been through one of these fishing expeditions at the finance committee. I literally sat through hundreds of hours, watched thousands of documents be produced and watched numerous ministers, including the Prime Minister himself, come to testify, only to see the opposition continue to try to drag the proceedings out, rather than getting on with the important work of government, including pre-budget consultations, and most recently, the consideration of Bill C-14.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, to the parliamentary secretary, and I look forward to seeing if he agrees, with respect to the information that is being asked for, I think it is eminently reasonable to have the due diligence report that was promised by the Clerk of the Privy Council to a committee; clarifications offered by witnesses, whose involvement has been contradicted between testimony by ministers and documents tabled by the government; and the testimony of the government's partners at the WE organization.

We are looking for clarification there. It was not that long ago that the member for Malpeque took part in dragging a Conservative political staffer before committee, and the Liberals had no issue with it then. What we are looking for is an answer for Canadians. That half billion dollars they wanted to give to their friends at WE—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Sean Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, with respect, I take exception to the allegation that I had anything to do with friends at WE. I have no friends who work for the organization.

In any event, I think the point he is trying to dig in on is whether the staff members he is calling to appear are the appropriate individuals to come testify and give evidence before committee. With sincere respect for the member opposite, I do not share his view.

I believe in the principle of ministerial responsibility. I believe that if there are concerns about the administration of a particular file, it is the responsibility of the minister who has charge of that file to come testify, either in the House of Commons during question period or as a witness before a particular committee. I think if we stick to our time-honoured tradition of ministerial responsibility, it would serve us well today and tomorrow.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope all my colleagues are doing well on this lovely spring day in the province of Ontario and in York region.

I will begin by going back to the heart of what brings us here again today. Why is that important? It is because I want to remind all my dear colleagues of the colossal effort, the incredible work, the collaborative work, as well as the sheer transparency that has already gone into the production of documents for the study of the government's decision to enter into a contribution agreement with the WE organization to administer the Canada student service grant.

Let us review everything the government has done to support the different committees studying this matter.

The ethics committee has held hundreds of hours in meetings on the subject of the Canada student services grant. The Prime Minister testified at the finance committee on this matter. I was there. The Prime Minister's chief of staff testified at the finance committee on this matter. Again, I was there. The Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth testified before the ethics committee as well as at the finance committee. The Clerk of the Privy Council testified before the ethics committee and before the finance committee. Even the Kielburgers testified multiple times at various committees. I believe the time allotted for the Kielburgers has reached almost 10 hours of testimony.

An unprecedented waiver of cabinet confidence was put into place to facilitate the disclosure of documents. Over 5,000 pages of documents were provided to various parliamentary committees. Despite opposition attempts to move privilege and contempt motions, the law clerk of the House of Commons verified that the government abided by the rule of law in providing these documents to the committees.

The Conservatives seem suddenly interested in supports for students, but it is surprising. Sadly, the Conservatives voted against Bill C-14 and the relief from federal interest on loans for students contained within that bill.

Let me make it clear. The heart of what we are doing as a government, and what I believe all of us as members of Parliament should be focused on during this most extraordinary period of time in the world's history, is getting through COVID-19 and ensuring our communities, businesses and our economy are back. We know Canadians have the potential, and we need to stand with them and beside them as our recovery continues.

The motion before us today calls on a number of ministerial staff to appear before committees. I would like to state categorically that ministers are directly accountable to Parliament on the administration and duties exercised within their departments and for the actions of the political staff in their political offices.

The concept is not a new one. Allow me to quote the former prime minister in 2006, who stated the following in a document called “Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers”.

Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the exercise of their responsibilities whether they are assigned by statute or otherwise.... Ministers are personally responsible for the conduct and operation of their office.

Ministerial staff, like public servants, are not accountable to Parliament for government policy decisions or operations. Public servants may be called to testify at committee on the implementation of policy decisions, but must defer to ministers to answer questions on policy and decisions. In the case of ministerial staffers, the scope of what information they have is more restricted than public servants since they are not involved in the operations of the department.

As a government, we had sent an exempt staff member to testify at committee, and we saw what happened. The staffer was badgered by the Conservatives, repeatedly interrupted, accused of a cover-up, accused of being untruthful and accused of something that was demonstrably false and easily verified with a simple Google search. It is evident that the Conservatives are grasping at straws, and I would say grasping at air.

All the questions about the issues in today's motion have been asked and answered and all the requested documents have been provided. Multiple ministers, including the Prime Minister, have appeared before committees on this issue. I can understand that the Conservatives are frustrated by the fact that the government has answered every question asked, but at this point, I think we can all see that this is just the Conservative ethics critic and the member for Carleton creating work for themselves.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

In fact, back in 2014, the member for Carleton said that the decision on what to reveal is made by non-partisan public servants for whom it has long been a tradition not to reveal cabinet confidences. That has been the case going back to all previous governments of all party stripes.

Our government co-operated and supported the committees in their important work. When documents were requested, they were provided. Public servants acted professionally to do that. When they did not disclose everything, the Conservatives attacked them for doing their job.

The opposition keeps complaining about how the federal government discloses documents, but they recognized one very simple fact when they were in power. I would like to quote Lawrence Cannon, former foreign affairs minister under Stephen Harper, who said, “officials will provide all legally available documents. Officials have done so in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Redactions are done by independent, non-partisan public servants whose only interest is the application of the law”.

### *Business of Supply*

By their actions, the Conservatives are showing us that they want to undermine public confidence in our institutions.

● (1545)

[*English*]

I would like to remind the House of the kind of behaviour the opposition has shown Canadians they can expect from it. The deputy leader of the Conservative Party posted the telephone number of a private company on social media and encouraged Canadians to call and demand that the company break Canada's privacy laws and release information. This led to harassment and personal threats that left employees fearing for their personal safety and required the police to get involved. The Conservative ethics critic sent a letter to a private company asking it to break the law. There have been numerous attempts at committee to compel the personal financial information of private citizens.

While the opposition may try to play political games and to create doubt in the public's mind with regard to the independence and the strength of our institutions, on this side of the House, we will stay laser focused on Canadians regardless of the Conservative Party's petty politics.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I actually have to commend the Minister of National Defence for his testimony on March 12 at the defence committee. When he was asked who was responsible and accountable for the failure of the allegations against the former chief of the defence staff to be investigated, the minister replied, “Yes, I'm absolutely responsible.”

If the parliamentary secretary agrees with the minister, what does he think are the appropriate steps, moving forward, to ensure that one of these investigations and the failure to properly investigate never happen again.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, so I thank him for his service.

I believe fully that ministers have lived up to their responsibilities to be accountable to Parliament during the period for the Canada student service grant. A number of ministers have made committee appearances. In reference to the Minister of National Defence, he also was a Canadian Armed Forces member and served the country in a number of instances. I commend him for his service to country.

This is how our system is supposed to work. Ministers are supposed to be accountable for the actions of their staff, and our government believes in that.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today's motion contains several elements expressing an intention to do some investigating and shine a light on any corners that are still dark, dubious and questionable from a parliamentary point of view. This motion and everything that is going on right now are concealing political trials and partisan intentions. That is obvious.

Nevertheless, allegations of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces have been known for a long time. Does my colleague think it would be appropriate for Parliament and its committees to address this issue once and for all? There have been a number of damning reports in recent years on the independence of courts martial and complaints processes in the Canadian Armed Forces relating to the military hierarchy. These military entities and institutions and the many shortcomings they reveal must be addressed.

Partisanship aside, we parliamentarians have an obligation to examine this issue and find solutions, rather than engaging in endless speculation. I would like to know if my colleague is interested in finding solutions to correct these shortcomings.

[English]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, no Canadian should go to work and be in an environment where he or she is having to deal with the issue of sexual harassment in any light. We must shine a light on that in any sector of the economy, in any organization and stamp it out fully. I completely agree with that.

I also completely agree with my hon. colleague's comment about this being a non-partisan issue and we must deal with the issue at hand, the sexual harassment, in the Canadian military or any organization in the country in which we are blessed to live.

• (1550)

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have serious concerns with one of the things the member mentioned in a response not too long ago, that the systems are working. It is very clear that the systems are, in fact, not working and they are especially not working for women in the military.

If Vance's appointment was an at-pleasure appointment, which allows for the appointee to be removed from office without cause, with cause or by any operation of law, why was General Vance not removed as chief of the defence staff when the minister was made aware of serious allegations? When is the government going to start picking women in the military over leadership?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, my reference to the systems working is as a member of the ethics committee, the public accounts committee and last summer, the finance committee. I participated and continue to participate in committees with a number of witnesses appearing and continue to attempt to work in a non-partisan manner with all opposition parties to ensure all documents are gathered and released, which the 5,000 documents have been.

My comment about the system working is that the Prime Minister appeared at committee at a certain point in time, the chief of staff came to committee and the Kielburgers gave almost 10 hours of testimony, I believe. We have gotten to the issues at hand. We

now know that the due diligence was done and nothing untoward was done.

We continue to stand by Canadians as we continue to work through COVID-19. We will have their backs and get through this.

**Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

We have heard the line that these are “unprecedented times” over and over again. While I do not disagree with that statement, it is beginning to sound like a broken record, in particular when the line is used to avoid accountability.

Over the past 12 months, we have witnessed behaviour by the government that is incredibly inappropriate and, I would even say, exploitive. We could say that the Prime Minister has acted in a way that is truly unprecedented. I would say that a pandemic is not an excuse for unethical behaviour. The Liberals are doing their very best to block witnesses from testifying on both the Prime Minister's WE scandal and the mishandling of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

Today, before the House is a motion by Conservative members. It calls for critical witnesses to be brought forward to testify on these issues. Having served as the chair of the ethics committee, I will focus the majority of my time on the Prime Minister's WE scandal. However, I do believe that it is of utmost importance to comment briefly on the second part of this motion.

We know that the Prime Minister and the defence minister were made aware of sexual misconduct allegations against the former chief of the defence staff three years ago, and yet did nothing. Nothing at all. As part of the motion before the House today, we are calling for crucial witnesses to come to the national defence committee to testify. Up to this point, Liberal members on the committee have continued to block the appearances of key staff members whose testimony would provide answers on the allegations of sexual misconduct against the chief of the defence staff, General Vance.

The Prime Minister claims to be a feminist, but he continually fails to protect women. Canadians have placed trust in the government—great trust, I would argue. The reality is that if they are going to place that trust in the government, then they do deserve to know the truth. I cannot imagine what it must be like for a victim of sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces watching the ping-pong game of their story being made light of. It is wrong.



*Business of Supply*

For someone who claims to be such a staunch feminist, it is astounding how hard the Prime Minister and his government are fighting to cover up this sexual misconduct and the way it was handled. It has become clear that the Prime Minister would rather protect his own reputation than the brave women who have signed up to serve with their lives. It is sad.

The second part of this motion calls for key witnesses to testify on the WE scandal. Last year, as part of the government's pandemic spending, the Prime Minister gave his friends at the WE Charity a sole-sourced agreement for half a billion dollars. That is half a billion of taxpayer dollars. This same organization gave the Prime Minister's family roughly \$500,000 in the time leading up to that agreement.

Something happened in June last year, which is that the Prime Minister got caught. As revelations began to surface about his involvement in this sole-sourced deal, Canadians were shocked and, as we can imagine, also frustrated and even outraged. Why was there no competitive bidding process put in place? Who was involved in making this deal happen? Why is it so hard to get to the bottom of this? What is preventing the Prime Minister and his government from being honest?

As the pressure from opposition parties the media and the public increased, we can only assume that the Prime Minister and his office saw that shutting down Parliament was the only answer to stop the truth from coming out. In the middle of a pandemic when billions of dollars were going out the door, when plans needed to be made for economic recovery and when Canadians needed to see leadership the most, the Prime Minister decided to shut down this place. The Prime Minister decided to prorogue Parliament.

As a result, all of the studies on the WE scandal went out the door, which was convenient, because the Prime Minister was then no longer forced to answer important questions and no longer to be held accountable for his actions. He could tuck himself away in his cottage and pretend for a while that everything was going to be okay, that his scandal-riddled past would not catch up to him. After all, he had already been convicted of two other ethical breaches and now this was his third. If he got away with the first two, then why would he not get away with this one?

• (1555)

The truth is that perhaps he still will get away with it, but it is incumbent upon those of us on this side of the House to hold the government to account, to ask the difficult questions and to request the information that Canadians deserve to have come to light. Canadians have placed great trust in the government, and it is incumbent on us to hold the Prime Minister accountable.

Since September when Parliament resumed, we have been working hard to try to get to the bottom of this scandal. The Liberals have fought relentlessly to defend their leader. They have filibustered for hours at committee. For a government that brags so much about openness and transparency, I do not remember seeing one prior that was so secretive, so unaccountable and acted so unethically. After all, we are talking about the only Prime Minister that has ever been convicted of an ethics scandal—in fact, not just one, but two, and now is being investigated for a third time.

The motion before the House is necessary to uncover what is taking place and have the truth made known to Canadians. It is a result of hearing contradictory testimony from the Prime Minister's Office. The Liberal ministers and the Kielburger brothers who founded WE Charity and are good friends with the Prime Minister and others high up in the PMO. Conservatives are calling for key witnesses to come forward and to be able to give testimony.

I should add that this is not a game. The Liberals would like to paint it as such. They like to accuse us of “playing petty politics”, but in what world is the pursuit of truth petty? Only in a Liberal world.

When the Kielburgers first appeared before the ethics committee, they testified that Ben Chin, a senior adviser in the Prime Minister's Office, had no role in setting up this program. However, documents that were released at the finance committee last summer show us otherwise.

On June 27, 2020, a LinkedIn message was sent from Craig Kielburger to Ben Chin, which said: “Hello Ben, Thank you for your kindness in helping shape our latest program with the go'vt. Warmly, Craig.” Two days later, Ben Chin responded to Craig Kielburger with a message saying, “Great to hear from you Craig. Let's get our young working!”

Given the contradictions at play, the fact that he-said, she-said does not line up, the ethics committee must hear from the Prime Minister's top advisers with regard to this scenario.

On the Prime Minister's website under the section entitled “Open and Accountable Government”, it says:

Our plan for an open and accountable government will allow us to modernize how the Canadian government works, so that it better reflects the values and expectations of Canadians. At its heart is a simple idea: open government is good government. For Canadians to trust our government we must trust Canadians, and we will only be successful in implementing our agenda to the extent that we earn and keep this trust.

Nothing could be more hypocritical of the government to state this and then try to shut down committees. Liberals are both evading and covering up the truth and keeping it from Canadians. They have filibustered at more than 20 ethics committee meetings, and the Prime Minister went so far as to shut down Parliament.

*Business of Supply*

When it comes to national defence, the Prime Minister has been asked numerous times if he was aware of the allegations against the former chief of the defence staff and has repeatedly denied it. Instead of being honest, the Prime Minister has decided to try to mislead Canadians about his involvement in the cover-up, and that is wrong, because, again, yes, an open government is a good government. That is why we stand here in this place today calling on the House, its members, who are duly elected to defend the truth and to promote democracy, openness, transparency and accountability, to support the motion.

• (1600)

With this motion we are giving the Prime Minister an opportunity to fulfill one of his advertised priorities: openness and accountability. It is time to end the cover-ups; it is time for the Prime Minister to tell the truth. Today is his opportunity.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member questions the openness and transparency of this government. The documents she referred that were turned over last summer are more than 5,000 in total. It was so much information that the Conservative Party put it on a website and tried to crowdsource going through the information. There was so much information that Conservative MPs could not deal with it on their own. They put it out to the public to get the public's assistance with it. That is how much information has been turned over. More importantly, the quote of Mr. Chin that she and the member for Carleton continually reference is information that was reported by CTV in June and CBC in August last year.

Why is the Conservative Party suddenly interested in this information now, when the member for Carleton himself even brought it up last summer when it was reported in the news? Is it just because the media happens to be interested in what they are saying now, whereas it is really not new information?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, my response is that I have two questions for the hon. member.

First, in those 5,000 pages, how many pages were blacked out? It was a great deal, in fact the vast majority of the text.

Second, with regard to the member's comment concerning June and August of last year and information known then, since when does the truth expire?

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment from my colleague from Lethbridge because the one essential thing we have in politics is our integrity, our ability to act based on the public interest, not special interests.

I fully agree with her about the WE scandal. However, another scandal that often gets overlooked is that of the political parties that applied for the wage subsidy during the election campaign.

Can my colleague tell me if the Conservative Party intends to pay back the wage subsidy? Is she offended, as I am, that my Liberal and NDP colleagues applied for the wage subsidy? This is a huge stain on the integrity of every member of this House.

• (1605)

[English]

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, we have already made it very clear to the public that we intend to pay that back. That process has begun.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a question based on her experience as former chair of the ethics committee. The Prime Minister lent his name to the for-profit wing of the WE organization, and I have not been able to get an answer on this.

ME to WE sold sponsorships worth hundreds of thousands of dollars for WE Day. Does my colleague think it is appropriate for a prime minister or any member of Parliament to use their office or position to forward the private interests of a for-profit organization such as WE, and why is it so important that we get the Prime Minister or his staff in front of the committee to answer these very, very troubling questions?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, as members of Parliament, of course we are held to a high standard for how we use taxpayer money to promote our efforts as members of Parliament, but we are also held accountable for how we use that money to promote other efforts within our community and beyond. As MPs we are not permitted to use our finances or the money that is allocated to our offices to advance our private interests. For the Prime Minister to do so is absolutely inappropriate.

It is important for us to bring the witnesses to this committee so that they can testify on what exactly happened behind closed doors and we can get to the bottom of it and the truth be exposed, so that Canadians can be well served.

**Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's intervention today. She has been very clear in her answers and straightforward, which I appreciate.

We have had some government members saying today, "There's nothing to see here. You guys aren't interested in anything important."

First, I can see that the rights of individual Canadian Armed Forces members, as a result of these allegations of sexual misconduct, may have been violated. Second, there have been ethical breaches at the highest office. We have already seen the former minister of finance, Bill Morneau, resign, and I think it had much to do with his time with the WE Charity scandal.

Would the member say these are important issues that Canadians are wanting us, as individual members, to hold the government accountable for?

*Business of Supply*

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, of course, and Canadians want to know that the government is acting ethically, that the government is being held accountable, that the government is transparent and open. Canadians have that expectation when we function within a democratic system like Canada. To get to the bottom of the WE charity scandal and to get to the bottom of what has taken place with regard to the treatment of women within the Canadian Armed Forces is so crucial.

Again, for the Liberals, for those across the aisle from me who accuse us of petty politics, just how much value do they place on Canadians? How much value do they really place on openness and transparency? How much value do they place on the lives of those women within the Canadian Armed Forces who were detrimentally impacted by the sins committed against them?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I address the substance of today's opposition motion, I am pleased to recognize the women and men who are doing the important job of keeping Canadians safe during the COVID-19 pandemic in spite of the incompetence of the Prime Minister and his ministers in protecting Canadians.

It is a proven fact that years of incompetence and mismanagement by the Liberal Party have left Canadians vulnerable today to health crises such as the current pandemic. It did not take another Auditor General's report, like the one issued today, to confirm just how unprepared the government was for any type of emergency. Canadians are tired of the lockdowns caused by this incompetence. Canadians are angry over the Prime Minister's refusal to stay focused on keeping Canadians safe. He would rather drag Parliament into the next scandal caused by another one of his government's ethical lapses.

I am the member of Parliament for the eastern Ontario riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, home to Garrison Petawawa, the largest army base in Canada, and the decision to participate in today's debate was made by my constituents. The women of Canada who chose to serve their country in uniform as members of the Canadian Armed Forces have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. No woman in today's age should be forced to work in an environment where sexual harassment is tolerated.

Today's motion would order Zita Astravas, the former chief of staff to the defence minister, to come before the Standing Committee on National Defence. That committee, of which I am the longest-serving member, was forced to take this action as a result of the contempt Ms. Astravas has demonstrated to our parliamentary committee by not responding to our polite requests to appear.

Zita Astravas has a connection to the Kielburger brothers of WE Charity scandal fame. The WE Charity boys published an article under their names, wherein they slandered the people of Thunder Bay, Ontario, by calling that city the "hate crime capital of Canada" for what the Kielburgers claim are the rates of racist vandalism, assaults and murders. The Kielburger article quotes extensively from sources that are funded by Zita's new department, where she is currently chief of staff. Ms. Astravas is the chief of staff to the Liberal minister of gun control. It is nasty business slandering an entire community, as the people of Quebec know.

It is obvious that the reason Zita Astravas is afraid to appear before the defence committee is that the truth will come out about how little respect the Prime Minister has for women in Canada, in this case the women who serve their country in uniform as members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

It is not as though Canadians have not seen the Prime Minister disrespect women before. The Prime Minister's groping incident, when he made unwanted advances by groping a female reporter while she was trying to do her job, should have been a red flag to the Liberal Party about how he treats women: the Kokanee grope.

The Prime Minister's decision to throw the only strong women in his party under the bus—women like the former justice minister during the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the former minister of health for standing up for her colleague, and former Ontario female MP Celina Caesar-Chavannes for showing a backbone—demonstrates a pattern of behaviour. Canada's self-called feminist Prime Minister talks a good game about supporting women, but when the chips are down, they are the first ones to take the blame for his own mistakes.

The toxicity on Parliament Hill for women, particularly women in his own party, stems from the Prime Minister himself. When the times comes, will Zita Astravas be thrown under the bus to take the fall for the Minister of National Defence and for the Prime Minister's failure to act on the information from the military ombudsman about General Vance? No wonder she is hiding. Her career could be over.

The taxpayers of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke recognize the importance of holding the government accountable. At the end of the day, there is only one taxpayer. That individual taxpayer is the one who gets stuck paying for all of the government's mistakes. Today's opposition motion is about upholding the principles of democracy. It is about the rights of all Canadians, through their elected representatives, to hold politicians accountable when they are busy spending their money.

● (1610)

Blocking the work of parliamentary committees and stalling until an unwanted election is called will not prevent Canadians from eventually finding out the truth, which is what the Liberals are afraid of: the truth. In just the same way, the Liberals are afraid that the public will find out how many tax dollars have been wasted while Canadians get sick from COVID-19.

The WE Charity scandal is without a doubt a Liberal Party scandal. For a very accurate summation of the WE scandal, I will quote the observations veteran journalist Rex Murphy addressed to the Kielburger brothers about the WE Charity scandal in the March 17 edition of the National Post. I encourage anyone watching this debate to read all the articles written by Rex Murphy about the WE Charity scandal.

He wrote:

### *Business of Supply*

Who solicited Mr. Trudeau as a huge draw and speaker for so many WE Day rallies, and who billboarded his presence? Who invited his mother, Margaret, and his brother, Alexandre, to your WE days? Who paid out fees and expenses of close to \$300,000 to them? Who drew Mr. Trudeau's wife, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, to act as one of your charity's ambassadors?

The point of all these questions, just to be clear, Marc and Craig, is to point out the fact that you invited, and most times paid, members of the prime minister of Canada's family, to boost your WE day pitches and add credibility to them. And it is as near to certainty as we can hope for in the vale of tears, that the frequent presence of Justin Trudeau, before and after he became prime minister, along with his family members, must have been a very strong asset in getting schools to go to WE Day, and corporations and media to support it.

He went on later in the article:

If there is a scandal here's a better description of its character: a Canadian-based, international charity/enterprise had deep and continuous association with the leader of the Liberal party, the prime minister of Canada, and his family to the mutual benefit of the Liberal party and the charity/enterprise.

WE received the highest, strongest endorsement Canada has to offer. The prime minister and his family were to all intents and purposes acting as WE patrons.

WE also received, prior to the singular contract to distribute vast millions to Canadian young people, grants from the federal government.

And when, out of the unclouded blue, the huge, sole-sourced (and mysterious) contract was made known, along with WE's "administrative" fee of \$43 million, many people — not just in the press or Parliament — looked at all this and asked: What is this? A private enterprise, with very heavy access to the party in power, very close association with its leadership, gets chosen over the civil service to hand out millions to Canadian citizens? A thing never heard of before.

He continued:

The interwoven and mutually beneficial connections between WE, Mr. Trudeau, and his family, more than justified a Commons committee to ask WE Charity necessary questions.

And therefore it was right and proper that a committee of our federal parliament mounted an open inquiry on whether WE business got special treatment because WE and the Trudeau family are so close, in compact and style.

The committee's unquestionable remit is to probe why one family, Kielburger Inc., and another family, that of the prime minister of Canada, were so webbed in a common enterprise. And why \$43 million — of Canadian taxpayers' money — was to go to Kielburger Inc. for "administering" a public program of the government of Canada.

The questions raised by Rex Murphy are all the questions being asked by Canadians who are concerned about propriety in government. Parliament is obligated to report the facts to Canadians. If the Prime Minister feels he is in too much of a conflict of interest to come before a parliamentary committee, then he is obligated to order his staff members Ben Chin, Rick Theis, and Amitpal Singh to appear before Parliament and answer all of our questions.

Knowing the close association between Ben Chin and Gerald Butts, probably Butts should be in the lineup also. We can save ordering the puppet master to appear before Parliament for another day.

If the Prime Minister and his party are not prepared to do the right thing, then Parliament can do the right thing. Once Parliament does the right thing and passes today's motion, I want the women in uniform to know that I have their back. Let us hope other Canadian parliamentarians have their back as well.

• (1615)

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows I want to ask a question about wild salmon, but this is a very important issue.

On March 3, the defence committee summoned Gary Walbourne, the former ombudsman, to testify. He testified to the details of the March 1, 2018, meeting between him and the minister. He reported that the minister refused to look at the evidence against General Vance. He also testified that there was a campaign to oust him as ombudsman after his 2017 governance report was issued and that the minister and department created a toxic workplace for him and his staff after that.

I have met Mr. Walbourne several times. He is an upstanding citizen as far as I ever could see. Do the Conservatives agree that the office of National Defence and Canadian Forces ombudsman should be made a fully independent office of Parliament so we do not have this evidence?

We know that on March 12, the Minister of National Defence returned to testify before committee and he confirmed that he forwarded the allegations to the PCO. Even later, the evening after he met with Mr. Walbourne, the Minister of National Defence issued a statement, saying he disagreed with the testimony of the former ombudsman.

• (1620)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, we have not heard what the disagreement was, but certainly it has not only been the recommendation of the former ombudsman for the military to have a separate and reportable-to-Parliament office with independent funding from the defence department. The Hon. Marie Deschamps had recommended similarly for the reporting of the sexual misconduct.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in my research I learned that brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger had been awarded the Order of Canada. In Marc Kielburger's case, that was in 2010, so under a Conservative government.

I would like to ask my Conservative colleague the following questions: How is the Conservative Party connected to the Kielburger brothers? Could a program like the one involving WE Charity have still come to be if the Conservatives had remained in power?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, the Kielburger WE Charity organization certainly flourished under the Liberals. In fact, it has even put together a web of studies supporting one another, funded by the current Government of Canada and particularly the public safety minister, to help in a side mission of casting aspersions upon all Conservatives. Once this comes to light, I think we will see how their involvement in politics is more straightforward with respect to favouring the radical Liberals now and in the future.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member completely avoided answering the question from the member from the Bloc, and rightly so; I understand why she would want to do that.

*Business of Supply*

A similar motion came forward back in 2013, on November 6, where there was a similar request for Prime Minister Harper to appear before committee on the scandal that involved Mike Duffy. The member voted against it. What is the difference? Why does it warrant it now, but it was okay to vote against it back in 2013?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, it is the Parliament today and the government of the day that is in question. It is the current Prime Minister who is directly involved in this scandal and the work against the women in the military who deserve to have the proper conduct of their superior officers and their co-workers. Deteriorating our national security is something that cannot be tolerated by the Canadian public.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did not ask her if it was the government of the day. I asked her about her vote. Why did she vote the way she did? She did not answer my question and she did not answer the question from the member from the Bloc, but I digress.

The government House leader made an excellent argument in his speech today. As has long been the case, political staff are accountable to their minister, who is in turn accountable to the House. I believe that is something everyone in the House should be able to agree with. I also think he was right when he said it tells a lot about our Conservative colleagues when they choose to play cheap partisan politics rather than debate important and pressing matters, such as climate change and the pandemic that currently grips this world.

Setting that aside, let the House also understand that the Conservative opposition has made an attempt to over-politicize issues that have been well covered and are now quite well understood. Thousands of pages of documents have been produced, a waiver was granted for cabinet confidentiality and hundreds of hours of testimony have been given at multiple committees.

I would like to turn my attention to focusing on the particular individuals who have been raised in this motion.

First, the Conservative opposition has been raising the name of Mr. Ben Chin in the House time after time and even now, nine months after the program in question was cancelled. Let us take a moment and examine why that may be. I believe they are raising this, because in response to a document production requested by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, the government provided 5,000 pages of documents last summer. This was more—

**Mr. Glen Motz:** All blacked out.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I appreciate the heckle, but it was not all blacked out, despite the fact that his former colleague said that. The only thing that was blacked out was telephone numbers, which the member for Carleton is obsessed with obtaining.

They are raising this because in response to the document production that they received last summer, this was more than the Conservative party could handle. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, they uploaded the documents to an online portal, asking the public to help digest and assess all the information that was provided. They actually crowdsourced the information. That is how much information was turned over to the opposition parties.

In all 5,000 pages, only one document referenced Mr. Chin. That document was provided and disclosed by the Prime Minister's Office, not some hacked-up conspiracy by the member for Carleton, suggesting that he discovered it under a rock somewhere. It was provided by the Prime Minister's Office almost a year ago.

In all of the 5,000 pages, there is only that one single exchange, and I would add that it was after the contribution agreement had been publicly announced. It was an exchange on LinkedIn, read several times in the House, and I will repeat it. However, members will note that when I do repeat it, I am not using the same sinister tone that other members have to imply some kind of massive cover-up.

On June 27, Craig Kielburger messaged Mr. Chin, "Hello Ben, Thank you for your kindness in helping shape our latest program with the gov't. Warmly, Craig." On June 29, two days later, Mr. Chin responded, "Great to hear from you Craig. Let's get our young working!" The party opposite keeps raising this one single exchange as a massive new development, when in reality this was uncovered last year. I will reference one of those times.

On August 19, 2020, eight months ago, CTV wrote, "A few months down the line, when the program was approved, Craig Kielburger sent a LinkedIn message to one of [the PM's] top advisers, Ben Chin, thanking him for his 'kindness' for helping to shape" the program. The member for Carleton parades around here as though he just uncovered this damning new evidence. It has been around and publicly reported since August 19, 2020.

On another instance, seven months ago, on August 19, 2020, CBC wrote, based on a news conference by the member for Carleton himself, "As one example [the member for Carleton] pointed to a June 27 message from WE Charity co-founder Craig Kielburger to senior PMO staffer Ben Chin thanking him for his help on the the program." Mr. Poilievre—I apologize, I did what I accuse so many people of—the member for Carleton back on August 19 was referencing this quote. He has been using that quote since August. I feel sorry for the members of the opposition—

• (1625)

**Mr. Glen Motz:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know the member quickly apologized, but it is rather poetic that in a speech from one of my colleagues earlier today, he raised a point of order when she used a member's name in the House. It is appropriate that he too be reminded not to use members' names in the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There have been some instances of this happening this afternoon from time to time. Usually by the time members utter the error, they catch it. However, it is always appreciated when members weigh in and remind us of the rules.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that great intervention. I appreciate him taking the time to do that. If any other member in this House utters half of the same name I did, as that side has uttered the Prime Minister's last name at least two dozen times today, then his argument might stand some ground. In the meantime, it quite frankly does not, but I do really appreciate that. To his point, we should all be doing the best we can to adhere to the rules in the House, and that is why I immediately brought my error to the Speaker's attention.

Going back to what the member for Carleton knew in June, we know this exchange happened, but we had the response from Mr. Chin saying "Let's get our young working!" As well, a PMO official said that Mr. Chin was not involved in the WE decision and that the LinkedIn message was the only interaction on the file. He simply responded two days later out of courtesy. That was all, just for context, within that August 19 CBC article.

It is pretty clear to me this was an interaction out of courtesy. It is clear Mr. Chin had nothing to do with the program. Out of the 5,000 pages disclosed, this was the only interaction with Mr. Chin. When asked what Mr. Chin's role in the program was, the Kielburgers said he had no role. Mr. Kielburger then went on further to clarify when he said, "that was the only correspondence I had in the course of two years with him, a three-line LinkedIn request to join."

When the Prime Minister's chief of staff appeared at the Standing Committee on Finance last July, Ms. Telford was asked the following:

After March 1, how many times did the PMO communicate with the Kielburgers or any of their intermediaries?

She replied:

...There were a handful of interactions with the Prime Minister's Office and the WE organization around the Canada summer student grant between then and the launch of the program. There was only one prior to the launch of the program. It was in early May, when one of the policy staff did what is very normal in their jobs, which is to speak to stakeholder organizations.

Ms. Telford further said:

It's public information who all the staff in the Prime Minister's Office are, and I am here to represent all of those staff, as the senior-most member of the Prime Minister's Office. If you have questions about any of them, or for any of them, I am happy to take them today.

When the Minister of International Trade was asked at committee on March 1 if she or her staff had ever had any communications about WE with Mr. Chin, she replied, "No, I did not."

This demonstrates why opposition members are trying, almost one year later, to drag hard-working members of our staff through the mud. There is nothing they are trying to gain except scoring cheap political points. They already know exactly what happened here and they have it because the government disclosed information to them in the form of 5,000 pages of documents. They have it because this has been the topic of countless hearings for nine months and the testimony of several ministers, the Clerk of the Privy Council and the chief of staff of the Prime Minister. Further, many of the public servants who were directly involved in, and responsible for, crafting this program have also testified.

This is clearly a chapter opposition members are unwilling to close, solely for cheap, partisan political games. It is behaviour unbecoming of the House: behaviour that undermines everyone's trust in our parliamentary institutions.

Second, let us briefly visit another matter that has been fully reported on and studied by the Standing Committee on National Defence as well as by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We can all agree in the House that harassment and abuse of anyone in Canada is unacceptable, and that the women and men of our armed forces deserve to be able to serve their country without the fear or threat of said harassment.

That is why the Standing Committee on National Defence unanimously adopted a motion to study addressing sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Armed Forces, and similarly, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women unanimously adopted a motion to study sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

Regarding the former chief of staff to the defence minister, Ms. Zita Astravas, her former minister has now made three committee appearances on the topic, spanning hundreds of hours, in the last month.

● (1630)

Let me read to the House what the minister said when he was asked about his former chief of staff:

...as you know, after the ombudsman spoke to me, I informed my chief of staff so that she could follow up with the appropriate individuals within the Privy Council, as she did. She also informed Elder Marques at the Prime Minister's Office. I'm here today to provide you with my testimony on this, but also on behalf of my staff involved....

Not only has the minister himself testified three times on this matter, numerous documents have been produced in keeping with the request from the Standing Committee on National Defence. Documents have also been published by the media and reported on by Global News.

We know exactly what Ms. Astravas did. She did exactly what she should have done and exactly what the minister instructed her to do, which is the same thing the leader of the official opposition instructed his chief of staff to do upon learning of similar circumstances. We know Ms. Astravas raised this with the appropriate authorities, because it has been studied at committee. The only reason the opposition wants to invite her to this committee is to once again score cheap political points. There is nothing more to be learned here.

I would like to touch on the Prime Minister's director of policy and cabinet affairs, Mr. Rick Theis. As I have already made quite clear to the House, 5,000 pages of documents were turned over to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and subsequently released in August of last year. In fact, the government—

*Business of Supply*

• (1635)

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member likely was not trying to mislead the House on purpose, but he mentioned earlier in his speech that the Conservative Party had mentioned the Prime Minister's last name at least two dozen times in the House today. We just checked the blues and it was mentioned once.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not know whether we want to get into debate on the various points that were made on points of order. We will leave it that. As I mentioned in the two shifts I have done, there have been occurrences. That is where we will leave it. It does happen. We do not want to make too much of it. I appreciate hon. members weighing in in this respect, but this can become an exchange in and of itself.

We will stay on the subject and go back to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, you should check Hansard because the member before the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said it twice herself, and I did not call it out that time.

As I have already made quite clear, 5,000 pages of documents were turned over to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance and subsequently released in August of that year. In fact, for the government to provide those documents, the Clerk of the Privy Council even waived cabinet confidentiality to allow for the utmost transparency.

Regarding Mr. Theis, as the documents show, he had one interaction with WE Charity. In fact, this was disclosed by the Prime Minister's Office itself. I will read exactly what it provided in August:

According to Mr. Theis, the call lasted for approximately 25 minutes. WE Charity raised their ongoing work with Employment and Social Development Canada on the Canada student summer grant, as outlined in the attached document, and a proposal for social entrepreneurship. Mr. Theis asked WE how what they were proposing for the CSSG would ensure diversity of placements. The Kielburgers expressed concern that this type of program would need to get off the ground soon. At no point were expenses discussed, nor any commitment, assurances or advice given by Mr. Theis to WE on any subject, other than to contact ESDC.

Further, the Prime Minister's chief of staff testified about the interaction during her committee testimony on June 30. She stated:

It was in early May when one of the policy staff did what is very normal in their jobs, which is to speak to stakeholder organizations. It was a very general discussion. They actually redirected the stakeholder, the WE organization, to ESDC officials. ESDC was a more appropriate place to get answers for the questions they were asking.

She further indicated that she was appearing on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office, stating:

I'm here on behalf of my staff and I'm happy to answer any questions you might have for them.

All this to say that, not only has the committee already heard from Ms. Telford on her staff's behalf, but the committee has received thousands of documents including detailed accounting of the interactions between Mr. Theis and WE Charity. There is nothing new for the committee to learn that has not been covered in the hours and hours of committee testimony and thousands of documents already made public. Again, this is clearly just the opposition trying to drag more staff into an issue that has already been thor-

oughly examined on a project that was cancelled over nine months ago.

Finally, with regard to Mr. Amitpal Singh of the finance minister's office, he too would have nothing further to add. Former minister Morneau has already appeared at the finance committee and provided testimony as well as requested documentation. To that end, as requested by the committee, WE Charity has also provided a detailed accounting of its interactions with all government staff including Mr. Singh.

Further, not only has the former finance minister appeared at finance committee, but Michelle Kovacevic, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance, has spoken directly to her interactions with the minister's office during this time period. Specifically regarding Mr. Singh, she stated:

The next day, April 20, my minister's office connected with WE Charity to discuss their ability to deliver volunteer opportunities. The records of this call from my minister's office note that WE Charity will rework their 10-week summer program proposal to fully meet the policy objective of national service, and increase their current placements of 8,000 to double.

This is wholly consistent with the testimony of Ms. Sofia Marquez, the Kielburgers and the thousands of pages of documents that have been released. To put it concisely, this opposition day motion is nothing more than a partisan political attack: something that I have become used to seeing over my six years in the House from the opposition toward this government, in particular the personal attacks on members of cabinet.

More than that, the opposition members are trying to use their rights and privileges as MPs to come after staff members who they know do not benefit from the same rights and privileges. It is irresponsible for members to turn their protections into weapons against those who are not covered by the same protections.

• (1640)

If that were not enough, the motion goes on to order staff to appear at committee before even receiving an invitation. Like the government House leader stated, this is an abuse of their rights and privileges as MPs.

The opposition continue to try to drag hard-working political staff into committee, when, in reality, they have already heard hundreds of hours of testimony, had multiple committee studies, reviewed thousands of pages of documents and asked hundreds of questions.

In fact, what is important to remember here is that our government has undertaken a colossal effort, shown an incredible amount of collaboration and dedication to transparency in providing the opposition with documentation and testimony over the course of nine months. There is nothing more for the House to gain through these political attacks, and instead we should be able to focus on the ongoing pandemic that all of our staff are working tirelessly to help Canadians through.

*Business of Supply*

I do hope we can get past this absurd motion so that we can steer Parliament back to what actually matters, protecting the health and safety of Canadians, growing our economy, creating jobs, and getting through this pandemic stronger and more resilient.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just have one quick comment in reference to my colleague's speech.

He referred to staff being ordered to testify before they are even invited, but I know that at the defence committee, Ms. Zita As-travas has been invited, but we are having trouble getting hold of her. That concerns me because she is currently employed as the chief of staff to the Minister of Public Safety, a vital position, I think we can all agree. When she will not answer that invitation, I think it maybe does drive this forward.

My question actually goes back to the WE Charity. It is a question I have not been able to get an answer to from anybody. I still do not understand why the WE Charity pulled out of the program in the first place. If everything it was doing was legitimate and above-board, then I do not understand why it pulled out. Was it the government that stopped the program, or was it the WE Charity that pulled out of it on its own? If so, was the only reason they had to stop the program that the Prime Minister and the former minister of finance, Bill Morneau, failed to recuse themselves?

• (1645)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, the opposition is willing to cook up a conspiracy and make all these wild accusations because the member, and perhaps other members on that side, have a question they have not received an answer to. I cannot understand how that would be justified. It does not make any sense.

To go back to the member's first point about calling staff before committee, I come from municipal politics and rule number one at city hall was that staff were not dragged into political debates. The politicians are allowed to have the debates on policy, as they relate to the politics, and the staff are allowed to do the work that supports them. As mayor in Kingston, I had no problem, even when an employee made a mistake, standing up and saying, "I take responsibility for that, because they are my employee. You ask the questions of me."

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his presentation. However, first I will actually commend the work of my colleagues from Riviere-du-Nord and Laurentides—Labelle, who have done an outstanding job on the ethics committee and the WE Charity file.

The member for Kingston and the Islands spoke of a document. Just this morning, in his speech, the member for Riviere-du-Nord said that the document had been redacted in a manner that did not comply with instructions.

The member for Kingston and the Islands is also wondering where the fabled due diligence report could be. My colleague from Riviere-du-Nord had requested it this summer and both my colleagues are still waiting for it.

The Liberals tell me that everything is on the table and that there is no problem, all the information is there. I do not think we have everything on the table.

The member for Kingston and the Islands speaks of a political attack, of undermining trust. Why then did the Liberals prorogue Parliament? They are the ones who dishonoured democracy, who stopped Parliament from working to help people in the middle of a pandemic.

Finally, why did they vote against striking a committee on the WE Charity matter that would have finally gotten to the bottom of the whole affair? If they have nothing to hide, why did they not go for it?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure this member knows that sometimes when an email is sent, a few subjects might be covered in that email.

When something has to be redacted, and there is an ATIP, it is asking for specific information. If an email happens to cover other information than in the ATIP request, it is completely logical that only the information that was requested in the ATIP will be provided. That makes complete sense.

In other instances, some of the text that was blacked out were phone numbers. I know that the Bloc Qu eb cois, the Conservative Party and the NDP see themselves as having something to gain if there is something here.

No doubt, if there were something sinister here, they likely would. However, the reality is that at some point, they are just going to have to come to the conclusion and say, "Maybe there's nothing here and we need to move on."

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with interest because I am not all that happy to be debating this motion today, but the government has left us, as members of Parliament, no choice.

Here is the situation at National Defence. For three years, after serious allegations of sexual misconduct were made against General Vance, he stayed as the chief of the defence staff. There was no investigation and no effective action. When we asked the Minister of National Defence to be the minister responsible, he said it was not his job. He said we had better talk to the Privy Council Office. When we asked him what the Prime Minister knew about this, he said he had asked his staff to do that.

Therefore, we are placed in the unenviable position of having to call his chief of staff to find out what the Prime Minister's Office was told and to have to call Privy Council officials to find out why there was no investigation. How do we avoid this situation if the Minister of National Defence will not take personal responsibility for his failure to act and remove General Vance?



*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I have a ton of respect for the member. We both sat on the defence committee together. We had the opportunity to visit our troops together and look into very important issues that relate to our women and men in uniform on an ongoing basis.

I will say that I have noticed today that New Democrats have been very careful in discussing the actual issue. I know that they do not want to put themselves in a position where they are contributing to attacking staff, which is what we are seeing from the official opposition. It makes perfect sense, but what this is going to come down to is whether they are going to vote in favour of this motion. I know they do not want to go after staff because they know it is not right. Everything they are talking about today is not about the actual motion. They are skating around it and trying to pick up on points, very important subjects, I might add, that I wish we were discussing as the opposition day motion instead of this.

• (1650)

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke and I would like to see our debating something else, but the sexual assault scandal in the military has brought forward stories in my riding from women who have dealt with sexual assault in the military. A woman who was in the forces for 20 years lost her career because she made a complaint, and her son was assaulted on the base because she had made that complaint. She asked how women who are sexually assaulted in the military can bring forward complaints when we see that the complaints against General Vance have not been taken seriously. She wants to know who women are supposed to report to and if these complaints will be taken seriously, because her complaint was not taken seriously by the RCMP or by the military and she was reprimanded.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Then, Mr. Speaker, let us have a discussion about these important issues. I agree with the member that we should be doing as much as we possibly can. The RMC, which is in my riding, did not allow women to attend 40 years ago. It was just starting to do that in the 1980s. I sat on city council with one of the first females who became a cadet at RMC. I heard stories.

Let us work on this stuff. However, the member needs to explain to me why a motion to drag the staff of a minister before a committee so that the opposition can score political points somehow contributes to that. If the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, the official opposition critic on this, spent half the time fighting for these victims as he has tried over the last six years to personally attack the Minister of National Defence, imagine where we would be if he spent that kind of quality time fixing problems.

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands. I am on the ethics committee, where we would like to get the study over and done with. Much information has come out in the last few months, but I want to focus on the comments by my NDP colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. The government has given us no other choice.

The member held himself up as a mayor of Kingston and said that when somebody made a mistake, he would take responsibility for that. This motion would allow the Prime Minister, instead of staff, to take responsibility and speak for the government on these

very important issues. Will the member hold his current boss to the same standard he held himself, or is he going to continue to cover up for the government's ethical breaches?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, all this motion does, in-between its first the fourth clauses, is to hijack the staff, and they knew it when they wrote it. It does nothing more than that. They put the four staff people in there and then later said that if the Prime Minister wants to come, he can come instead of them. They are literally hijacking the staff at the expense of the Prime Minister when they know full well that the people who would best answer these questions are people like the defence minister, who has already been to the committee on this subject three times.

The issue is that they have not been getting a political win out of this, so they keep looking for new angles, and this is their newest angle: let us go after the staff. They say they will give us out by stating that the Prime Minister can come instead. If that does not work, they will take another angle.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

I do appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the motion put forward by my hon. colleague, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. The purpose of the motion is to support the authority of committees in their important inquiries of public interest with instructions to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics regarding questions of conflict of interest in relation to pandemic spending, and to the Standing Committee on National Defence addressing sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The member has been stalwart and unwavering in his pursuit of accountability and truth, despite the constant attempts from Liberal members to impede his efforts. When all is said and done, I am hopeful that my colleague will be able to count on support from every party in this House, especially the governing party, given that the Liberals have said many times that they are committed to being transparent. What better way to be transparent than to allow committees to do their work in calling on witnesses to appear and answer questions on the important matters before them?

We have repeatedly heard the government claim it is committed to transparency, yet trying to get to the bottom of what has happened with the WE scandal has been like trying to see through a glass of mud.

*Business of Supply*

Over this past year, Canadians have dealt with loss and faced much uncertainty as our country locked down in an effort to stop the spread of COVID. Their lives have been upended, as they have struggled to comply with public health orders in order to do their part. In return, they have gotten a government that has grown exceedingly comfortable with being evasive and unaccountable when it comes to its actions and decision-making during this time. From border closures to PPE procurement, and from vaccine procurement to government support programs, Canadians have paid a high price for the government's failures. Every time the government introduced a program, it was obvious it was thrown together haphazardly, resulting in Parliament being recalled several times to address the shortcomings.

On this point, I want to be clear. Conservatives have always understood that financial aid had to be provided if businesses were being shuttered and Canadians were being told to stay home. However, even during a pandemic, parliamentarians have a job to do. We on this side of the House always sought ways to improve the various support programs that were being proposed in order to ensure they were effective and targeted, and that they enabled people to get back to work when it was safe to do so.

When opposition members raise the concerns of Canadians regarding issues with legislation or the process, our insistence on due process and parliamentary oversight is characterized as playing politics and using delay tactics to slow down legislation. However, I ask members, who is playing politics and using delay tactics? Take, for example, the government's proroguing Parliament at the end of last summer. Why did they prorogue during a summer recess to a date already set for the fall session to resume? Quite clearly, it was an attempt to either end or delay the inquiries being made and cover up the WE scandal.

Another example is when Parliament resumed last fall and we were put on a time crunch to extend benefits such as CERB. When issues were raised about the system the Liberals had implemented, Conservatives were accused of holding up vital legislation. It is no secret that throughout this pandemic there has been continuous mismanagement by the government. Now, we need to get to the bottom of this serious breach of trust.

While Canadians are struggling to make ends meet, Liberals have been struggling to shovel hundreds of millions of dollars into their friends' pockets. While, thankfully, they were not ultimately successful, this is not something that can just be swept under the rug and forgotten about.

• (1655)

Canadians want answers. Canadians deserve answers. As I noted earlier, they have been hit hard by the pandemic, and this has been exacerbated not only by the ineptitude but also the unethical behaviour of the Liberal government. While the government has allowed the deficit to balloon during this pandemic, large deficits and unethical behaviour are not a product of it. The Liberals were running deficits prior to the pandemic. Their financial mismanagement has simply reached new heights.

While increased spending during the global pandemic is one thing, refusing to be transparent about how much they were spending, how they are spending it and why they are spending it in cer-

tain ways is quite another. Now, when the government is being confronted on a very clear conflict of interest that involves hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, it is conducting a coordinated cover-up campaign to block witnesses from testifying at all costs.

As I stated earlier, it should be no surprise that we are here today discussing another possible ethics violation from the government. This is not a product of the pandemic, but rather an area where the government has some consistency. If colleagues recall prior to the pandemic, there was the whole debacle with SNC-Lavalin. Even further back was the Christmas vacation in the Bahamas that the Prime Minister took to the Aga Khan's private island.

It would seem the government thought a global pandemic would provide great cover to continue with its financial management, clear disdain for Parliament and lack of respect for the use of Canadian tax dollars, which has now led to these scandals and our attempts to get at the truth.

We are here today because the Liberals have made repeated attempts to block critical witnesses from testifying at both the ethics and defence committees. It is obvious to anyone watching that these are the actions of a government that has something to hide, or maybe they simply believe they do not have to abide by the same rules as everyone else. The Prime Minister and his government must be reminded that Canadians' hard-earned dollars are collected to benefit Canadians, not the Liberals, Liberal insiders or their friends.

It is unacceptable that a government would so flippantly grant a contract worth hundreds of millions of dollars to an organization that had paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Prime Minister and his family. We can add to that the government's efforts to cover-up the sexual misconduct allegations against the former chief of the defence staff, which they found out about in 2018.

Conservatives must not and will not allow this unethical behaviour to go unchecked. That is why this motion from my hon. colleague is so important. It requires the testimony from multiple witnesses at the appropriate committees so that we may get to the bottom of these scandals and offer answers to Canadians.

The contempt the government has for Parliament, its procedures and, by extension, Canadians, is on clear display. It would prefer to do everything behind closed doors, while proclaiming its transparency and, when questions are asked, to accuse the questioner of playing politics and not caring for Canadians. Conservatives will not allow the truth to remain hidden.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I really liked my colleague's speech.

*Business of Supply*

I cannot ask her to answer for the Liberal Party. However, since she spoke about transparency and ethical breaches, I can ask her to answer for her political party.

During the pandemic, the Conservative Party, the NDP and the Liberal Party applied for the wage subsidy. Just now, I asked her colleague from Lethbridge if the Conservative Party intended to pay back the wage subsidy it received, but I did not get an answer. I am asking her the same question.

Does she believe that it was ethical for her party to apply for the wage subsidy? Does she believe that her party should pay it back?

• (1705)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, I believe my colleague who was asked this question earlier actually did answer it. I know that our leader did indicate during the leadership race that it was something that we, as Conservatives, would commit to doing, and we have undertaken to begin the process of giving back the wage subsidy.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, of course, the motion also deals with the sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I know that the former Conservative government appointed General Vance as chief of the defence staff and that the then prime minister, Prime Minister Harper, and the former minister of national defence Jason Kenney, who is now the premier of Alberta, were aware of the allegations and investigations being conducted in 2015. They asked General Vance to lead the program to stamp out sexual misconduct in the military, Operation Honour.

Do the Conservatives believe that it was an error to appoint an individual under investigation for sexual misconduct to be put in charge of the military's response to address this very behaviour?

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, Canada's charter makes it very clear that every individual is equal before and under the law, and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

My colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound put out an excellent article on this issue. It said:

Our country and all Canadians need an effective and well-led military to face ever-evolving and complex global conflicts. We cannot be strong at home when leaders fail the women and men under their command, nor can we be engaged in the world without leveraging every competent, willing, and capable Canadian who enrolls into the military.

When we have phenomenal leaders such as Lieutenant-Colonel Eleanor Taylor retiring in disgust, we understand that issues with the military need to be fixed and need to be fixed now.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is in regard to committees and the valuable work they could potentially be doing in regard to the coronavirus. The Prime Minister has been very clear that it is the first priority of this government. There are many other options that standing committees could be looking into, and many have been cited. Even some of my New Democratic

friends have made reference to some of the work the standing committees could be doing.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts on what degree standing committees could be doing more for Canadians by looking at a spectrum of different issues related to the different programs we have to support Canadians.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, I believe I was very clear in my remarks earlier today that I believe it is important for committees to be able to do the work that is in front of them. It is my understanding that the members on the committees mentioned in this motion are seized with these issues. They have the authority, and they should be given the opportunity to continue to follow up on these very important issues to get answers for Canadians.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very important motion before the House today, one that should make Canadians very concerned. It is a motion that should never have had to come before this House. The fact that we, as opposition members, have been left with no other choice but to bring it forward is as important as the motion itself.

The motion is to direct the government to provide the support committees require to carry out their important work, essentially to instruct the government to provide documents and political staff witnesses for the conflict of interest in lobbying in relation to the pandemic spending study and to instruct Zita Astravas, the former chief of staff to the Minister of National Defence and director of issues management for the Prime Minister, and the current chief of staff to the Minister of Public Safety, to appear at the national defence committee for its study on addressing sexual misconduct issues in the Canadian Forces.

Canadians could be forgiven if, after hearing this, they said, "That seems incredibly reasonable. Two House of Commons committees need to hear from critical parliamentary staff to do their work. That makes sense. Why wouldn't they...? Hang on; what is really going on?"

That is why this is such an important motion: It is because this motion is not a root cause but a symptom of something much bigger, something that speaks to some of our fundamental assumptions around the system of government and the values we hold dear.

The defence committee is conducting a study on addressing sexual misconduct issues in our Canadian Armed Forces, including the serious allegations against General Vance, the highest-ranking member in the Canadian Armed Forces, the chief of the defence staff. At the heart of the matter is that it appears that the defence minister, his staff—then Zita Astravas—officials in the Privy Council Office, officials in the Prime Minister's Office and possibly the Prime Minister himself knew of these serious allegations in March of 2018 and took no action for three years.

*Business of Supply*

No investigation was carried out. General Vance was not suspended. Worse still, in May 2019 the Prime Minister signed an order in council to give General Vance a salary raise to \$306,000 a year. General Vance retired as CDS in January of this year, and these allegations have yet to be resolved. A replacement CDS was appointed, and he is now facing allegations of sexual misconduct and has stepped aside from his position during the investigation.

Further, Canadians have learned through numerous media reports that allegations of sexual assault and misconduct in the military have been ignored, investigations have been shut down, critical testimony and evidence have been lost, and charges have been dropped.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Tragically, these are not isolated incidents but a reflection of a much more damaging systematic problem.

A similar report from Justice Deschamps on the misogynistic and toxic culture within the Canadian Armed Forces was published in 2015.

Operation Honour, a military campaign designed to end sexual violence, harassment and misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, was created. General Vance, who led this operation, was responsible for eliminating the very acts that he himself is now accused of.

The Minister of National Defence was aware of this in 2018 but did nothing. That is the reason for today's motion, and it is why it is so important to hear from Zita Astravas, the former chief of staff for the Minister of National Defence. We need to know what she knew, when she knew it and what she did about it.

We will not be able to make any long-lasting changes to the military's culture if we cannot understand the full scope of the problem and if we do not know where, exactly, things went wrong.

[*English*]

A military stands to defend the values of the nation, but it must also embody them. If the defence minister does not hold the military accountable to those values, including the ability for all members to serve equally with honour, free from sexual assault and discrimination, then who will? If the House of Commons committees cannot do the work to hold cabinet ministers accountable, who else can?

While this motion is about mandating that committees can hear from critical witnesses, it is about much more than that. It is about the fundamental values and foundations of our society. When it comes to ensuring conduct of the highest level in the Canadian Armed Forces, the defence minister says it is not up to him, and the Prime Minister has said that it is not up to him. If it is not up to them, then who is responsible? If they will not act in the best interests of Canadians, who will?

The ends cannot justify the means. Every act at every step must be honourable and carried out with integrity, or the end itself is compromised. Democracy is fragile and is only as strong as the

trust and confidence that Canadians place in all of us, their elected officials. That trust is hard won and easily lost.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues in the House to honour the trust that Canadians have placed in them by voting in favour of this motion to ensure that committees can hold the government to account, and in doing so deliver a better Canada for all.

• (1715)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:15 p.m., and this being the final supply day in the period ending March 26, 2021, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. As we customarily do, if a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request either a recorded division or that the amendment be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair at this time.

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 79*)

## YEAS

## Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu
Chong	Collins
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duvall	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladau

*Business of Supply*

Gourde  
Green  
Harder  
Hoback  
Jansen  
Johns  
Kelly  
Kitchen  
Kram  
Kusie  
Lake  
Lawrence  
Lemire  
Liepert  
Lobb  
MacGregor  
Maguire  
Marcil  
Masse  
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
McLean  
McPherson  
Michaud  
Morantz  
Motz  
Normandin  
Patzner  
Pauzé  
Plamondon  
Qaqqaq  
Redekopp  
Rempel Garner  
Rood  
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)  
Saroya  
Scheer  
Seeback  
Shin  
Simard  
Sloan  
Stanton  
Ste-Marie  
Stubbs  
Thériault  
Tochor  
Uppal  
Vecchio  
Viersen  
Vis  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Wilson-Raybould  
Yurdiga

Gray  
Hallan  
Harris  
Hughes  
Jeneroux  
Julian  
Kent  
Kmiec  
Kurek  
Kwan  
Larouche  
Lehoux  
Lewis (Essex)  
Lloyd  
Lukiwski  
MacKenzie  
Manly  
Martel  
Mathysen  
Mazier  
McColeman  
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
Melillo  
Moore  
Morrison  
Nater  
O'Toole  
Paul-Hus  
Perron  
Poilievre  
Rayes  
Reid  
Richards  
Ruff  
Sangha  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schmale  
Shields  
Shiple  
Singh  
Soroka  
Steinley  
Strahl  
Sweet  
Therrien  
Trudel  
Van Popta  
Vidal  
Vignola  
Wagantall  
Waugh  
Williamson  
Wong  
Zimmer—180

**NAYS**

Members

Alghabra  
Anand  
Arseneault  
Badawey  
Bains  
Battiste  
Bendayan  
Bessette  
Bittle  
Blois  
Brière  
Casey  
Champagne  
Cormier  
Damoff

Amos  
Anandasangaree  
Arya  
Bagnell  
Baker  
Beech  
Bennett  
Bibeau  
Blair  
Bratina  
Carr  
Chagger  
Chen  
Dabrusin  
Dhaliwal

Dhillon  
Drouin  
Duclos  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Easter  
El-Khoury  
Erskine-Smith  
Fillmore  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fraser  
Fry  
Gerretsen  
Guilbeault  
Hardie  
Housefather  
Hutchings  
Ien  
Joly  
Jordan  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kusmierczyk  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
Maloney  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald  
McKay  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
Mendès  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Ng  
Oliphant  
Petipas Taylor  
Qualtrough  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Sahota (Brampton North)  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Scarpaleggia  
Schulte  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sorbara  
Tabbara  
Trudeau  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Vaughan  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zahid  
Zuberi—153

Dong  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Dzerowicz  
Ehsassi  
Ellis  
Fergus  
Finnigan  
Fonseca  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Garneau  
Gould  
Hajdu  
Holland  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Jaczek  
Jones  
Jowhari  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Lalonde  
Lametti  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lefebvre  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Martinez Ferrada  
McCrimmon  
McGuinty  
McKenna  
McLeod (Northwest Territories)  
Mendicino  
Monsef  
Murray  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Powlowski  
Regan  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Saini  
Saks  
Sara  
Schieffe  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simms  
Spengemann  
Tassi  
Turnbull  
van Koevreden  
Vandenbeld  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
Young  
Zann

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment carried.

The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

[English]

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

*Business of Supply*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

● (1805)

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

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

● (1815)

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

(*Division No. 80*)

## YEAS

## Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu
Chong	Collins
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duval	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Harder
Harris	Hoback
Hughes	Jansen
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire

Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Manly	Marcil
Martel	Masse
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McPherson
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Nater	Normandin
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Qaqqaq
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Rood
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Sangha	Saroya
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Simard
Singh	Sloan
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Therrien	Tochor
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vignola	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 181	

## NAYS

## Members

Amos
Anandasangaree
Arya
Bagnell
Baker
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blair
Bratina
Carr
Chagger
Chen
Dabrusin
Dhaliwal
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Garneau

*Business of Supply*

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

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 81*)

**YEAS**

Members

- |                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Alghabra                           | Amos                     |
| Anand                              | Anandasangaree           |
| Arseneault                         | Arya                     |
| Ashton                             | Atwin                    |
| Bachrach                           | Badaway                  |
| Bagnell                            | Bains                    |
| Baker                              | Barsalou-Duval           |
| Battiste                           | Beaulieu                 |
| Beech                              | Bendayan                 |
| Bennett                            | Bergeron                 |
| Bérubé                             | Besette                  |
| Bibeau                             | Bittle                   |
| Blaikie                            | Blair                    |
| Blanchet                           | Blanchette-Joncas        |
| Blaney (North Island—Powell River) | Blois                    |
| Boudrias                           | Boulerice                |
| Bratina                            | Brière                   |
| Brunelle-Duceppe                   | Cannings                 |
| Carr                               | Casey                    |
| Chabot                             | Chagger                  |
| Champagne                          | Champoux                 |
| Charbonneau                        | Chen                     |
| Collins                            | Cornier                  |
| Dabrusin                           | Damoff                   |
| Davies                             | DeBellefeuille           |
| Desbiens                           | Desilets                 |
| Dhaliwal                           | Dhillon                  |
| Dong                               | Drouin                   |
| Dubourg                            | Duclos                   |
| Duguid                             | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Duvall                             | Dzerowicz                |
| Easter                             | Ehsassi                  |
| El-Khoury                          | Ellis                    |
| Erskine-Smith                      | Fergus                   |
| Fillmore                           | Finnigan                 |
| Fisher                             | Fonseca                  |
| Fortier                            | Fortin                   |
| Fragiskatos                        | Fraser                   |
| Freeland                           | Fry                      |
| Garneau                            | Garrison                 |
| Gaudreau                           | Gazan                    |
| Gerretsen                          | Gill                     |
| Gould                              | Green                    |
| Guilbeault                         | Hajdu                    |
| Hardie                             | Harris                   |
| Holland                            | Housefather              |
| Hughes                             | Hussen                   |
| Hutchings                          | Iacono                   |
| Ien                                | Jaczek                   |
| Johns                              | Joly                     |
| Jones                              | Jordan                   |
| Jowhari                            | Julian                   |
| Kelloway                           | Khalid                   |
| Khera                              | Koutrakis                |

- |                                     |                                |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Gerretsen                           | Gould                          |
| Guilbeault                          | Hajdu                          |
| Hardie                              | Holland                        |
| Housefather                         | Hussen                         |
| Hutchings                           | Iacono                         |
| Ien                                 | Jaczek                         |
| Joly                                | Jones                          |
| Jordan                              | Jowhari                        |
| Kelloway                            | Khalid                         |
| Khera                               | Koutrakis                      |
| Kusmierczyk                         | Lalonde                        |
| Lambropoulos                        | Lametti                        |
| Lamoureux                           | Lattanzio                      |
| Lauzon                              | LeBlanc                        |
| Lebouthillier                       | Lefebvre                       |
| Lightbound                          | Long                           |
| Longfield                           | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)    |
| MacAulay (Cardigan)                 | MacKinnon (Gatineau)           |
| Maloney                             | Martinez Ferrada               |
| May (Cambridge)                     | McCrimmon                      |
| McDonald                            | McGuinty                       |
| McKay                               | McKenna                        |
| McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod (Northwest Territories) |
| Mendès                              | Medicino                       |
| Miller                              | Monsef                         |
| Morrissey                           | Murray                         |
| Ng                                  | O'Connell                      |
| Oliphant                            | O'Regan                        |
| Petipas Taylor                      | Powlowski                      |
| Qualtrough                          | Regan                          |
| Robillard                           | Rodriguez                      |
| Rogers                              | Romanado                       |
| Sahota (Brampton North)             | Saini                          |
| Sajjan                              | Saks                           |
| Samson                              | Sarai                          |
| Scarpaleggia                        | Schieffe                       |
| Schulte                             | Serré                          |
| Sgro                                | Shanahan                       |
| Sheehan                             | Sidhu (Brampton East)          |
| Sidhu (Brampton South)              | Simms                          |
| Sorbara                             | Spengemann                     |
| Tabbara                             | Tassi                          |
| Trudeau                             | Turnbull                       |
| Van Bynen                           | van Koeverden                  |
| Vandal                              | Vandenbeld                     |
| Vaughan                             | Virani                         |
| Weiler                              | Wilkinson                      |
| Yip                                 | Young                          |
| Zahid                               | Zann                           |
| Zuberi — 153                        |                                |

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

I want to remind hon. members in the chamber that even though they are sitting in another seat, when they are voting they must remain in that seat. If they move after voting but before the results are given, it could cause them to lose their vote, and I would not want that to happen to members in the chamber.

\* \* \*

● (1820)

**SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 2020-21**

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.)** moved:

That the Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, be concurred in.

*Business of Supply*

Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Lametti	Lamoureux	Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Larouche	Lattanzio	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gallant
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Généreux	Genuis
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre	Gladu	Godin
Lemire	Lightbound	Gourde	Gray
Long	Longfield	Hallan	Harder
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Hoback	Jansen
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Jeneroux	Kelly
Maloney	Manly	Kent	Kitchen
Marcil	Martinez Ferrada	Kmiec	Kram
Masse	Mathysen	Kurek	Kusie
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Lake	Lawrence
McCrimmon	McDonald	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
McGuinty	McKay	Liepert	Lloyd
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Lobb	Lukiwski
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson	MacKenzie	Maguire
Mendès	Mendicino	Martel	Mazier
Michaud	Miller	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
Monsef	Morrissey	McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Murray	Ng	Melillo	Moore
Normandin	O'Connell	Morantz	Morrison
Oliphant	O'Regan	Motz	Nater
Pauzé	Perron	O'Toole	Patzner
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon	Paul-Hus	Poillievre
Powlowski	Qaqqaq	Rayes	Redekopp
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Reid	Rempel Garner
Regan	Robillard	Richards	Rood
Rodriguez	Rogers	Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)	Saroya	Scheer
Saini	Sajjan	Schmale	Seeback
Saks	Samson	Shields	Shin
Sangha	Sarai	Shiple	Sloan
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia	Soroka	Stanton
Schiefke	Schulte	Steinley	Strahl
Serré	Sgro	Stubbs	Sweet
Shanahan	Sheehan	Tochor	Uppal
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Van Popta	Vecchio
Simard	Simms	Vidal	Viersen
Singh	Sorbara	Vis	Wagantall
Spengemann	Ste-Marie	Warkentin	Waugh
Tabbara	Tassi	Webber	Williamson
Thériault	Therrien	Wong	Yurdiga
Trudeau	Trudel	Zimmer — 121	
Turnbull	Van Bynen		
van Koeverden	Vandal		
Vandenbeld	Vaughan		
Vignola	Virani		
Weiler	Wilkinson		
Wilson-Raybould	Yip		
Young	Zahid		
Zann	Zuberi — 214		

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1835)

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-26, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, be read the first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

[English]

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

**NAYS**

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen



**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, after these votes we have a very important take-note debate on the issue of violence against women, in light of the terrible tragedies that have occurred in recent weeks in Quebec. I think it is in everyone's interest to dispose of these votes as quickly as possible so the House can get to that very important debate.

With that in mind, I think you will find an appetite to apply the result of the previous vote to the current one, with the Conservatives voting no.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that is not the case. I request a recorded division. However, we would be more than interested in entertaining a second debate on the very important topic we will be discussing this evening.

• (1845)

*Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:*

**Mr. Marwan Tabbara:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to change my vote to yea.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Kitchener South—Hespeler have the unanimous consent of the House to change his vote?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

• (1850)

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

*(Division No. 82)*

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan

Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemire	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Manly
Marcil	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson
Mendès	Medicino
Michaud	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Pauzé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Simms
Singh	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Tabbara	Tassi
Thériault	Therrien
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Vignola	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Yip
Young	Zahid
Zann	Zuberi— 214

*Business of Supply*

*Business of Supply*

## NAYS

## Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Harder
Hoback	Jansen
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Rood
Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Sloan
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tochor	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williamson
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 121	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare this motion carried.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mrs. Carol Hughes in the chair)

(On Clause 2)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to say that I am very pleased to see that the President of the Treasury Board is back and in fine form. I hope he remains that way. I would like to ask him whether the bill is in as fine a form as he is.

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I am very pleased to find my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable in fine form and in good spirits.

I am also very happy to reassure him by saying that I am in particularly fine form tonight. I can also reassure him that the form of this bill is the same as that passed in the previous supply period.

[English]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 2 carry?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 3 carry?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 4 carry?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

[Translation]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 5 carry?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 6 carry?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1 carry?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1 agreed to)

[English]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 2 carry?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Business of Supply*

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 2 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 1 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the preamble carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the title carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Title agreed to)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall I rise and report the bill?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Bill reported)

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** moved that Bill C-26, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021, be concurred in.

[*English*]

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

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** I would request a recorded division.

• (1905)

*Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:*

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify my vote. Unfortunately, my app did not work and it says I cannot start by video.

• (1910)

**The Speaker:** I will check with the table officers. Apparently someone did see the hon. member.

How is the member voting?

**Ms. Rachael Harder:** I vote nay.

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

(*Division No. 83*)

YEAS

Members

Alhabra  
Anand  
Arseneault  
Ashton

Amos  
Anandasangaree  
Arya  
Atwin

Bachrach  
Bagnell  
Baker  
Battiste  
Beech  
Bennett  
Bérubé  
Bibeau  
Blaikie  
Blanchet  
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)  
Boudrias  
Bratina  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Carr  
Chabot  
Champagne  
Charbonneau  
Collins  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Desbiens  
Dhaliwal  
Dong  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Duvall  
Easter  
El-Khoury  
Erskine-Smith  
Fillmore  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Garneau  
Gaudreau  
Gerretsen  
Gould  
Guilbeault  
Hardie  
Holland  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Jaczek  
Joly  
Jordan  
Julian  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lefebvre  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Manly  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McDonald  
McKay  
McKenna  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Mendicino  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Ng  
O'Connell

Badawey  
Bains  
Barsalou-Duval  
Beaulieu  
Bendayan  
Bergeron  
Bessette  
Bittle  
Blair  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Cannings  
Casey  
Chagger  
Champoux  
Chen  
Cormier  
Damoff  
DeBellefeuille  
Desilets  
Dhillon  
Drouin  
Duclos  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dzerowicz  
Ehsassi  
Ellis  
Fergus  
Finnigan  
Fonseca  
Fortin  
Fraser  
Fry  
Garrison  
Gazan  
Gill  
Green  
Hajdu  
Harris  
Housefather  
Hutchings  
Ien  
Johns  
Jones  
Jowhari  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lametti  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lemire  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacGregor  
Maloney  
Marcil  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McCrimmon  
McGuinty  
McKenna  
McLeod (Northwest Territories)  
Mendès  
Michaud  
Monsef  
Murray  
Normandin  
Oliphant

*Business of Supply*

O'Regan  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Qaqqaq  
Ratansi  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Sahota (Brampton North)  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Sarai  
Scarpaleggia  
Schulte  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Simms  
Sorbara  
Ste-Marie  
Tassi  
Therrien  
Trudel  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Vaughan  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
Yip  
Zahid  
Zuberi— 213

Pauzé  
Petitpas Taylor  
Powlowski  
Qualtrough  
Regan  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Saini  
Saks  
Sangha  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schiefke  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Singh  
Spengemann  
Tabbara  
Thériault  
Trudeau  
Turnbull  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Vignola  
Weiler  
Wilson-Raybould  
Young  
Zann

Motz  
O'Toole  
Paul-Hus  
Rayes  
Reid  
Richards  
Ruff  
Saroya  
Schmale  
Shields  
Shipley  
Soroka  
Steinley  
Stubbs  
Tochor  
Van Popta  
Vidal  
Vis  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Wong  
Zimmer— 121

Nater  
Patzner  
Poilievre  
Redekopp  
Rempel Garner  
Rood  
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)  
Scheer  
Seeback  
Shin  
Sloan  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Sweet  
Uppal  
Vecchio  
Viersen  
Wagantall  
Waugh  
Williamson  
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

**The Speaker:** When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

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

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

• (1920)

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

(Division No. 84)

YEAS

Members

**NAYS**  
Members

Aboultaif  
Albas  
Allison  
Baldinelli  
Barrett  
Bergen  
Bezan  
Block  
Brassard  
Carrie  
Chong  
Cumming  
Danco  
Deltell  
Diotte  
Dowdall  
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)  
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Généreux  
Gladu  
Gourde  
Hallan  
Hoback  
Jeneroux  
Kent  
Kmiec  
Kurek  
Lake  
Lehoux  
Liepert  
Lobb  
MacKenzie  
Martel  
McCauley (Edmonton West)  
McLean  
Melillo  
Morantz

Aitchison  
Alleslev  
Arnold  
Barlow  
Benzen  
Berthold  
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)  
Bragdon  
Calkins  
Chiu  
Cooper  
Dalton  
Davidson  
d'Entremont  
Doherty  
Dreeshen  
Epp  
Falk (Provencher)  
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)  
Gallant  
Genius  
Godin  
Gray  
Harder  
Jansen  
Kelly  
Kitchen  
Kram  
Kusie  
Lawrence  
Lewis (Essex)  
Lloyd  
Lukiwski  
Maguire  
Mazier  
McColeman  
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
Moore  
Morrison

Alghabra  
Anand  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Bachrach  
Bagnell  
Baker  
Battiste  
Beech  
Bennett  
Bérubé  
Bibeau  
Blaikie  
Blanchet  
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)  
Boudrias  
Bratina  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Carr  
Chabot

Amos  
Anandasangaree  
Arya  
Atwin  
Badawey  
Bains  
Barsalou-Duval  
Beaulieu  
Bendayan  
Bergeron  
Bessette  
Bittle  
Blair  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Cannings  
Casey  
Chagger

*Business of Supply*

Champagne	Champoux	Simms	Singh
Charbonneau	Chen	Sorbara	Spengemann
Collins	Cormier	Ste-Marie	Tabbara
Dabrusin	Damoff	Tassi	Thériault
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Therrien	Trudeau
Desbiens	Desilets	Trudel	Turnbull
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Dong	Drouin	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Dubourg	Duclos	Vaughan	Vignola
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Virani	Weiler
Duval	Dzerowicz	Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Easter	Ehsassi	Yip	Young
El-Khoury	Ellis	Zahid	Zann
Erskine-Smith	Fergus	Zuberi — 213	
Fillmore	Finnigan		
Fisher	Fonseca		
Fortier	Fortin		
Fragiskatos	Fraser		
Freeland	Fry	Aboultaif	Aitchison
Garneau	Garrison	Albas	Alleslev
Gaudreau	Gazan	Allison	Arnold
Gerretsen	Gill	Baldinelli	Barlow
Gould	Green	Barrett	Benzen
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Bergen	Berthold
Hardie	Harris	Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Holland	Housefather	Block	Bragdon
Hughes	Hussen	Brassard	Calkins
Hutchings	Iacono	Carrie	Chiu
Ien	Jaczek	Chong	Cooper
Johns	Joly	Cumming	Dalton
Jones	Jordan	Dancho	Davidson
Jowhari	Julian	Deltell	d'Entremont
Kelloway	Khalid	Diotte	Doherty
Khera	Koutrakis	Dowdall	Dreeshen
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Lametti	Lamoureux	Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Larouche	Lattanzio	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gallant
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Généreux	Genuis
Lebouthillier	Lemire	Gladu	Godin
Lightbound	Long	Gourde	Gray
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Hallan	Harder
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor	Hoback	Jansen
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Jeneroux	Kelly
Manly	Marcil	Kent	Kitchen
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Kmiec	Kram
Mathyszen	May (Cambridge)	Kurek	Kusie
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon	Lake	Lawrence
McDonald	McGuinty	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
McKay	McKenna	Liepert	Lloyd
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Lobb	Lukowski
McPherson	Mendès	MacKenzie	Maguire
Mendicino	Michaud	Martel	Mazier
Miller	Monsef	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
Morrissey	Murray	McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Ng	Normandin	Melillo	Moore
O'Connell	Oliphant	Morantz	Morrison
O'Regan	Pauzé	Motz	Nater
Perron	Petitpas Taylor	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Plamondon	Powlowski	Poilievre	Rayes
Qaqqaq	Qualtrough	Redekopp	Reid
Ratansi	Regan	Rempel Garner	Richards
Robillard	Rodriguez	Rood	Ruff
Rogers	Romanado	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini	Scheer	Schmale
Sajjan	Saks	Seeback	Shields
Samson	Sangha	Shin	Shipley
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay	Sloan	Soroka
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe	Stanton	Steinley
Schulte	Serré	Strahl	Stubbs
Sgro	Shanahan	Sweet	Tochor
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Uppal	Van Popta
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard	Vecchio	Vidal

**NAYS**

Members

*Business of Supply*

Viersen	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 120

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

**INTERIM SUPPLY**

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.)** moved:

That the House do concur in interim supply as follows:

That a sum not exceeding \$59,304,837,417 being composed of the following amounts, each item rounded up to the next dollar:

(1) three twelfths (\$18,679,234,304) of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the Proposed Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, except for those items below;

(2) twelve twelfths of the total of the amounts of Department of Finance Vote 5, and Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Votes 20 and L25, of the said estimates, \$3;

(3) eleven twelfths of the total of the amounts of Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization Vote 5, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Vote 1, Department of Health Votes 1 and 10, Department of Indigenous Services Vote 5, Leaders' Debates Commission Vote 1, Public Health Agency of Canada Votes 1, 5 and 10, and Treasury Board Secretariat Vote 5, of the said estimates, \$13,526,117,614;

(4) nine twelfths of the total of the amounts of Department of Canadian Heritage Vote 5, Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Vote 10, Department of Indigenous Services Vote 10, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police Vote 10, of the said estimates, \$11,857,264,249;

(5) eight twelfths of the total of the amounts of Department of Employment and Social Development Vote 5, and Department of Justice Vote 1, of the said estimates, \$2,250,429,186;

(6) seven twelfths of the total of the amounts of Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Vote 1, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission Vote 1, and Statistics Canada Vote 1, of the said estimates, \$448,144,442;

(7) six twelfths of the total of the amounts of Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada Vote 1, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Vote 1, Department for Women and Gender Equality Vote 5, Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario Vote 5, Office of Infrastructure of Canada Vote 1, and Shared Services Canada Votes 1 and 5, of the said estimates, \$2,795,109,015;

(8) five twelfths of the total of the amounts of Canada Council for the Arts Vote 1, Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Vote 1, Canadian High Arctic Research Station Vote 1, Canadian Space Agency Vote 10, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Vote 10, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Vote 10, Department of Veterans Affairs Vote 5, National Security and Intelligence Review Agency Secretariat Vote 1, Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer Vote 1, and The Federal Bridge Corporation Limited Vote 1, of the said estimates, \$3,716,073,356;

(9) four twelfths of the total of the amounts of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Vote 1, Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Vote 10, Department of Employment and Social Development Vote 1, Department of Finance Vote 1, Department of Indigenous Services Vote 1, Department of Industry Votes 1, 5 and 10, Department of Public Works and Government Services Vote 1, Department of Transport Vote 1, Library of Parliament Vote 1, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Vote 5, Privy Council Office Vote 1, Public Service Commission Vote 1, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Vote 1, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Vote 5, Treasury Board Secretariat Votes 1 and 10, and VIA Rail Canada Inc. Vote 1, of the said estimates, \$6,032,465,248;

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022.

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

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

● (1935)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 85)

**YEAS**

## Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Besette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cornier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duval	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis

*Business of Supply*

Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lametti  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lemire  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacGregor  
Maloney  
Marcil  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McCrimmon  
McGuinty  
McKenna  
McLeod (Northwest Territories)  
Mendès  
Michaud  
Monsef  
Murray  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
Pauzé  
Petitpas Taylor  
Powlowski  
Qualtrough  
Regan  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Saini  
Saks  
Sangha  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schiefke  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Singh  
Spengemann  
Tabbara  
Thériault  
Trudeau  
Turnbull  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Vignola  
Weiler  
Wilson-Raybould  
Young  
Zann

Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lamoureux  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lefebvre  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Manly  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)  
McDonald  
McKay  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Mendicino  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Ng  
O’Connell  
O’Regan  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Qaqqaq  
Ratansi  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Sahota (Brampton North)  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Sarai  
Scarpaleggia  
Schulte  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Simms  
Sorbara  
Ste-Marie  
Tassi  
Therrien  
Trudel  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Vaughan  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
Yip  
Zahid  
Zuberi — 214

Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) Epp  
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) Falk (Provencher)  
Fast Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) Gallant  
Généreux Genuis  
Gladu Godin  
Gourde Gray  
Hallan Harder  
Hoback Jansen  
Jeneroux Kelly  
Kent Kitchen  
Kmiec Kram  
Kurek Kusie  
Lake Lawrence  
Lehoux Lewis (Essex)  
Liepert Lloyd  
Lobb Lukiwski  
MacKenzie Maguire  
Martel Mazier  
McCauley (Edmonton West) McColeman  
McLean McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
Melillo Moore  
Morantz Morrison  
Motz Nater  
Patzner Paul-Hus  
Poilievre Rayes  
Redekopp Reid  
Rempel Garner Richards  
Rood Ruff  
Sahota (Calgary Skyview) Saroya  
Scheer Schmale  
Seeback Shields  
Shin Shipley  
Sloan Soroka  
Stanton Steinley  
Strahl Stubbs  
Sweet Tochor  
Uppal Van Popta  
Vecchio Vidal  
Viersen Vis  
Wagantall Warkentin  
Waugh Webber  
Williamson Wong  
Yurdiga Zimmer — 120

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** moved that Bill C-27, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, be read the first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

[English]

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

**Mr. Alex Ruff:** Mr. Speaker, considering we have been getting the same results the last few votes, I think if you seek it, you would find the appetite to apply the result of the previous vote to the current one, with the Conservatives voting no.

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif  
Albas  
Allison  
Baldinelli  
Barrett  
Bergen  
Bezan  
Block  
Brassard  
Carrie  
Chong  
Cumming  
Dancho  
Deltell  
Diotte  
Dowdall

Aitchison  
Alleslev  
Arnold  
Barlow  
Benzen  
Berthold  
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)  
Bragdon  
Calkins  
Chiu  
Cooper  
Dalton  
Davidson  
d’Entremont  
Doherty  
Dreeshen

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not give unanimous consent, and I request a recorded division.

• (1950)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 86*)

## YEAS

## Members

Alhabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bessette	Bibeau
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gill	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemire	Lightbound

Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Manly
Marcil	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Michaud	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Paupé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qaqqaq
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Simms	Singh
Sorbara	Spengemann
Ste-Marie	Tabbara
Tassi	Thériault
Therrien	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Vignola
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Yip	Young
Zahid	Zann
Zuberi— 209	

## NAYS

## Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Gray



Hallan	Harder
Hoback	Jansen
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmicc	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shin	Shipley
Sloan	Soroka
Stanton	Steinley
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tochor
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 120

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

[English]

**The Speaker:** Accordingly, the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole. I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mrs. Carol Hughes in the chair)

(On clause 2)

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, since most of us are spread out across our big, beautiful country, could the President of the Treasury Board confirm that both the physical and the digital versions of the bill are presented in their usual form?

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos:** Madam Chair, I thank the member for Mégantic—L'Érable for his kindness, his insight and his usual curiosity.

I assure him that the presentation of this bill is identical to that used in the previous supply period.

[English]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 2 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Business of Supply*

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 3 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 4 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

[Translation]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 5 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.1 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1.1 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.2 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1.2 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.3 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1.3 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.4 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1.4 agreed to)

[English]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.5 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1.5 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.6 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

*Business of Supply*

(Schedule 1.6 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.7 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1.7 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 1.8 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 1.8 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall schedule 2 carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Schedule 2 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall clause 1, the short title, carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the preamble carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Preamble agreed to)

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the title carry?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Title agreed to)

[*English*]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall I rise and report the bill?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Bill reported)

• (1955)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** moved that Bill C-27, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, be concurred in at report stage.

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

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (2005)

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

(*Division No. 87*)

## YEAS

## Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Besette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemire
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney

*Business of Supply*

Manly  
 Martinez Ferrada  
 Mathysen  
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
 McDonald  
 McKay  
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
 McPherson  
 Mendicino  
 Miller  
 Morrissey  
 Ng  
 O'Connell  
 O'Regan  
 Perron  
 Plamondon  
 Qualtrough  
 Regan  
 Rodriguez  
 Romanado  
 Saini  
 Saks  
 Sangha  
 Savard-Tremblay  
 Schulte  
 Sgro  
 Sheehan  
 Sidhu (Brampton South)  
 Simms  
 Sorbara  
 Ste-Marie  
 Tassi  
 Therrien  
 Trudel  
 Van Bynen  
 Vandal  
 Vaughan  
 Virani  
 Wilkinson  
 Yip  
 Zahid  
 Zuberi — 211

Marcil  
 Masse  
 May (Cambridge)  
 McCrimmon  
 McGuinty  
 McKenna  
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)  
 Mendès  
 Michaud  
 Monsef  
 Murray  
 Normandin  
 Oliphant  
 Paupé  
 Petitpas Taylor  
 Powlowski  
 Ratansi  
 Robillard  
 Rogers  
 Sahota (Brampton North)  
 Sajjan  
 Samson  
 Sarai  
 Scarpaleggia  
 Serré  
 Shanahan  
 Sidhu (Brampton East)  
 Simard  
 Singh  
 Spengemann  
 Tabbara  
 Thériault  
 Trudeau  
 Turnbull  
 van Koeverden  
 Vandenbeld  
 Vignola  
 Weiler  
 Wilson-Raybould  
 Young  
 Zann

Kmiec  
 Kurek  
 Lake  
 Lehoux  
 Liepert  
 Lobb  
 MacKenzie  
 Martel  
 McCauley (Edmonton West)  
 McLean  
 Melillo  
 Morantz  
 Motz  
 Patzer  
 Poilievre  
 Redekopp  
 Rempel Garner  
 Rood  
 Sahota (Calgary Skyview)  
 Scheer  
 Seeback  
 Shin  
 Sloan  
 Stanton  
 Strahl  
 Sweet  
 Uppal  
 Vecchio  
 Viersen  
 Warkentin  
 Webber  
 Wong  
 Zimmer — 119

Kram  
 Kusie  
 Lawrence  
 Lewis (Essex)  
 Lloyd  
 Lukiwski  
 Maguire  
 Mazier  
 McColeman  
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)  
 Moore  
 Morrison  
 Nater  
 Paul-Hus  
 Rayes  
 Reid  
 Richards  
 Ruff  
 Saroya  
 Schmale  
 Shields  
 Shipley  
 Soroka  
 Steinley  
 Stubbs  
 Tochor  
 Van Popta  
 Vidal  
 Vis  
 Waugh  
 Williamson  
 Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

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

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

● (2020)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 88*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra  
 Anand  
 Arseneault  
 Ashton  
 Bachrach  
 Bagnell  
 Baker  
 Battiste

Amos  
 Anandasangaree  
 Arya  
 Atwin  
 Badawey  
 Bains  
 Barsalou-Duval  
 Beaulieu

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif  
 Albas  
 Allison  
 Baldinelli  
 Barrett  
 Bergen  
 Bezan  
 Block  
 Brassard  
 Carrie  
 Chong  
 Cumming  
 Dancho  
 Deltell  
 Diotte  
 Dowdall  
 Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)  
 Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)  
 Fast  
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
 Généreux  
 Gladu  
 Gourde  
 Hallan  
 Hoback  
 Jeneroux  
 Kent

Aitchison  
 Alleslev  
 Arnold  
 Barlow  
 Benzen  
 Berthold  
 Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)  
 Bragdon  
 Calkins  
 Chiu  
 Cooper  
 Dalton  
 Davidson  
 d'Entremont  
 Doherty  
 Dreeshen  
 Epp  
 Falk (Provencher)  
 Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)  
 Gallant  
 Genuis  
 Godin  
 Gray  
 Harder  
 Jansen  
 Kelly  
 Kitchen

*Business of Supply*

Beech	Bendayan	Ratansi	Regan
Bennett	Bergeron	Robillard	Rodriguez
Bérubé	Bessette	Rogers	Romanado
Bibeau	Bittle	Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Blaikie	Blair	Sajjan	Saks
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas	Samson	Sangha
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Boudrias	Boulerice	Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Bratina	Brière	Schulte	Serré
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings	Sgro	Shanahan
Carr	Casey	Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Chabot	Chagger	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Champagne	Champoux	Simms	Singh
Charbonneau	Chen	Sorbara	Spengemann
Collins	Cormier	Ste-Marie	Tabbara
Dabrusin	Damoff	Tassi	Thériault
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Therrien	Trudeau
Desbiens	Desilets	Trudel	Turnbull
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Dong	Drouin	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Dubourg	Duclos	Vaughan	Vignola
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Virani	Weiler
Duvall	Dzerowicz	Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Easter	Ehsassi	Yip	Young
El-Khoury	Ellis	Zahid	Zann
Erskine-Smith	Fergus	Zuberi — 213	
Fillmore	Finnigan		
Fisher	Fonseca		
Fortier	Fortin		
Fragiskatos	Fraser		
Freeland	Fry	Aboultaif	Aitchison
Garneau	Garrison	Albas	Alleslev
Gaudreau	Gazan	Allison	Arnold
Gerretsen	Gill	Baldinelli	Barlow
Gould	Green	Barrett	Benzen
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Bergen	Berthold
Hardie	Harris	Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Holland	Housefather	Block	Bragdon
Hughes	Hussen	Brassard	Calkins
Hutchings	Iacono	Carrie	Chiu
Ien	Jaczek	Chong	Cooper
Johns	Joly	Cumming	Dalton
Jones	Jordan	Dancho	Davidson
Jowhari	Julian	Deltell	d'Entremont
Kelloway	Khalid	Diotte	Doherty
Khera	Koutrakis	Dowdall	Dreeshen
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Lamoureux	Larouche	Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Gallant
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Généreux	Genuis
Lefebvre	Lemire	Gladu	Godin
Lightbound	Long	Gourde	Gray
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Hallan	Harder
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor	Hoback	Jansen
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Jeneroux	Kelly
Manly	Marcil	Kent	Kitchen
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Kmiec	Kram
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Kurek	Kusie
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon	Lake	Lawrence
McDonald	McGuinty	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
McKay	McKenna	Liepert	Lobb
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Lukiwski	MacKenzie
McPherson	Mendès	Maguire	Martel
Mendicino	Michaud	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Miller	Monsef	McColeman	McLean
Morrissey	Murray	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Ng	Normandin	Moore	Morantz
O'Connell	Oliphant	Morrison	Motz
O'Regan	Pauzé	Nater	O'Toole
Perron	Petitpas Taylor	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Plamondon	Powlowski	Poilievre	Rayes
Qaqqaq	Qualtrough	Redekopp	Reid

## NAYS

## Members

Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shin	Shipley
Sloan	Soroka
Steinley	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tochor	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vis	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williamson	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 118

PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[English]

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that because of the delay there will be no Private Members' Business hour today.

[Translation]

The order is therefore deferred to a future sitting.

Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 4 under government business.

[English]

The House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole.

\* \* \*

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 4, Mr. Anthony Rota in the chair)

**The Speaker:** Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members how the proceedings will unfold.

[Translation]

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments. The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak.

Pursuant to the order adopted earlier today, members may divide their time with another member and the Chair will not receive any dilatory motions, quorum calls or requests for unanimous consent.

[English]

We will now begin tonight's take-note debate.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.)** moved:

That the House take note of the alarming increase of gender-based violence in Canada.

[Translation]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Chair,

Government Orders

[Minister spoke in Ojibwe, Anishinabe and Arabic as follows:]

*boozhoo, aaniin, as-salaam alaikum.*

[English]

I join from my home in Peterborough—Kawartha, where Curve Lake First Nation and our entire community are grieving the loss of Cileana Taylor, who lost her life due to an act of violence perpetrated against her by a man she knew.

I would like to thank my hon. colleagues for agreeing to this important discussion. I am not sure when the last time, or if there was a first time, the House of Commons had a take-note debate on gender-based violence. My team and I have been looking for that, but this is historic. I want to thank the Liberal women's caucus for sounding the alarm, our House leader for listening to us and for taking us seriously, and every single party in the House for agreeing to have this important conversation at this very important time in our history and for women.

These conversations are important and our government will continue to create spaces for them. However, this cannot just be about words, but has to be followed by action. When I see my Conservative colleagues vote against transferring essential funds to support women and children escaping violence and abuse in Quebec tonight, I have to question their sincerity. I hope my Conservative colleagues will account for why they voted the way they did in the time they have tonight.

I would like to talk about the women we lost, our government's response during the pandemic, the illness that causes the violence against women in the first place and how parliamentarians can lead the cultural shift necessary to put an end to this shadow pandemic.

Let me say the names of the seven women we lost in Quebec in just seven weeks. Elisapee Angma, 44 years old, was the loving mother of four children. Marly Edouard, 32 years old, was a Haitian Canadian well known in the Haitian music scene and a former manager, producer and radio host. Myriam Dallaire, 28, was the young mother of a precious one-year-old child. Sylvie Bisson, 60 years old, was Myriam Dallaire's mother. Nadège Jolicoeur, 40 years old, was the mother of five children. Rebekah Harry, 29 years old, was the mother of a nine-year-old son and was described as a good friend and family member who lived life strongly. Nancy Roy, 44 years old, was loved and cherished by those around her. These women were loved and they will be missed.

To Quebeckers and to Canadians grieving, we grieve with them.

*Government Orders*

• (2025)

[*Translation*]

One life lost is too many. We grieve with them. We will continue to put survivors and the loved ones we lost at the centre of what we do.

[*English*]

We lost more than 160 women to femicide last year, and one life lost is too many. We grieve with them and we will continue to keep survivors and families at the centre of our work.

When the pandemic was first declared, we reached out to leaders across the country, and they all said the same thing: They warned us the rates of violence would go up. We asked what the Government of Canada should do and they said we should get funds as quickly as we could into the bank accounts of organizations that would be the last stop for women and children fleeing violence and abuse, and we did that. Through an innovative model that had never been done before, we were able, with our partners, provinces and territories, the women's Shelters Canada team, the Canadian Women's Foundation and a separate agreement with the Government of Quebec, to get got money into bank accounts.

Over a thousand organizations in this country have been able to keep their staff paid, their doors open and to get the PPE, cleaning supplies and the laptops necessary to provide this critical care. I thank these organizations for their care. Because of them, we managed to prevent many, many more tragedies. Close to a million women, children and non-binary Canadians have been able to find care and refuge through these organizations during the pandemic. On behalf of the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada, I would like to thank these leaders. They are in every single one of our ridings, and we could not do this work without them.

The issue of gender-based violence is not new. For decades, feminists, survivors and their families have been advocating for change. The pandemic has magnified and intensified the reasons for the violence, and people are under pressure, but violence against women is unacceptable. It is a violation of their dignity and human rights, and it costs all of us.

Our government is working with provinces and territories to move forward on a national action plan on gender-based violence. Our partners at the YWCA, led by Maya Roy, and our partners with the Blueprint coalition, led by Women's Shelters Canada's Lise Martin, have been out there ensuring that the voices of survivors are fed into our national action plan.

Provinces and territories have agreed to move forward. We have spoken with over 1,500 stakeholders across the country, and over the past five years we have increased funding to frontline women's organizations more than any other government, and five times more than the previous government. We have opened up regional offices and have lifted the gag order that prevented too many feminist organizations from advocating for their clients and those they serve.

Every step of the way, including with the economic development measures that our government is working on, we will continue to rely on strong feminists across this country. They know the way. They have brought us to this moment in time when parliamentari-

ans are having this courageous conversation, and every step of the way we will continue to work with them until every woman and child in this country is safe and free to achieve her dreams and reach her full potential.

I see that Madam Speaker has taken the Chair. I appreciate your leadership and advocacy in this chamber and in the women's caucus. You are a rock, and your feminism and advocacy strengthen the rest of us.

We have not always been brave enough to call the reason for this violence what it is. We have not always been brave enough to name it, but toxic masculinity is creating less safety for women, and it is robbing men of their dignity too. There are 238 honourable men in the House, and I am calling on all men to join us to help fight this preventable crime from happening in the first place. We need them. For too long, women have carried the burdens of violence against them, their families and their bodies, but more and more we are seeing guys step up as allies, like my former parliamentary secretary, who has been incredible in his advocacy, and like the Prime Minister of Canada, who shares power and space with other women and encourages us to lead and be strong in our advocacy for those who do not have a voice at the table.

There is a reckoning happening, and this reckoning requires us as parliamentarians to ensure that we seize the moment that has been offered to us, unpleasantly so because of the pandemic, to put an end to this violence once and for all.

Not too many days ago on a schoolyard not too far from where I live, an 11-year-old girl was kicked in the hips really hard by a boy because she had outperformed him on the sports field. He told her that she was fat and ugly and that she had no friends. Her friends laughed, and she left that place crying.

In another place, in another school not too far from here, a 14-year-old boy, when cornered in a difficult conversation, told another 14-year-old girl that she was too ugly to be raped and asked her why she was even debating with him the safety of women.

• (2030)

Within a matter of minutes, the entire school was calling him out. The girls had circled the wagons around this 14-year-old girl and they were calling out the toxic masculinity. Our teenagers are seeing this and they are calling it out. We have to be courageous enough to do just that. They are—

• (2035)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I apologize to the hon. minister, but we have to go to questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Western Economic Diversification Canada) and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change (Canada Water Agency), Lib.):** Madam Chair, I want to thank the minister for her powerful words and call to action. I had the privilege of working with and standing with the minister when she introduced Canada's first strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence. An important part of that work was to engage men and boys in advancing gender equality, to address the issue of gender-based violence and promote positive masculinity.

We heard from women's shelters, women's organizations, those working with young men and those from iconic sports organizations, such as the CFL, on why we need to engage men and boys, women and girls, and people of all genders and gender identities in the fight against the scourge of intimate partner and other gender-based violence. Can the minister share with the House some of what we learned?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, the Prime Minister asked us to go out there and talk to Canadians about how to engage men and boys in the war to address and prevent gender-based violence and to achieve gender equality. In that work, my colleague and I connected with hundreds of good men and allies who are actively working on being better men every day and supporting their brothers, sons and fathers in that work. We heard that these groups had never been brought together before, so the simple act of convening was a success.

We also recognize that the toxic masculinity we speak of is in the highest levels of authority in Canada, as well. Canadians need to know that the institutions they rely on to keep them safe from harm will also provide safety for their mothers, sisters, daughters and sons, and we are going to do just that.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank the hon. minister for her intervention.

I am especially touched that we are having this debate this evening because, as we know, it is a problem, particularly in Quebec, but also across Canada.

I would like to hear from the minister regarding the action plan on gender-based violence.

Last summer, during the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's study on the effects of the pandemic on women, we asked the minister for a tabling date and concrete measures. We did not just want individual measures, we asked that a comprehensive plan be tabled.

Do we have a tabling date for the plan?

[*English*]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, I appreciate my colleague's question and her advocacy. In January, we came to an agreement with all 14 ministers responsible for the status of women to move forward on a national action plan. This is the second phase of our government's commitment to addressing and preventing gender-based violence.

As we speak, the YWCA and the blueprint coalition group are out there getting information from survivors and putting it into a report. I have asked women's organizations and feminists to provide us with the kinds of accountability measures they want to see in that plan and the milestones they would like to achieve. Ultimately, it will be up to them to tell us if we got it right. We will be receiving that report sometime in mid-April, and I look forward to including all members of the House in the development and implementation of the national action plan. Our provincial and territorial colleagues will need to be part of it. They have the majority of the levers, as do national indigenous leaders and representatives.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the hon. minister for her impassioned speech. The supports she is talking about and the actions from these organizations that we are relying upon, were hard struck before. They were trying to make ends meet, and unfortunately they have consistently had to deal with simply project-based funding. They have called repeatedly for core operational funding so they can manage.

To ensure that they can move forward on a gender-based violence action plan, when will the Liberal government allot that operational funding?

• (2040)

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, I appreciate my colleague and her work. The organizations she speaks of, I used to work with and continue to appreciate the opportunity to support. Our government is the first in a long time to provide them with predictable, sustainable, capacity-building funds.

Today, the feminist response and recovery fund, the \$100-million envelope, closed for accepting applications. We put in \$100 million for capacity building. The gender-based violence strategy has \$200 million attached to it. We put in place \$100 million in GBV emergency COVID funds just this year. We recognize there is more to do to stabilize the sector, and we are working very closely with colleagues and partners to find the best way.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Madam Chair, at least one in three women and girls in Canada will face some sort of gender-based violence in their lifetime. That is—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I have to ask the hon. member to use her headset, please.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Madam Chair, I am at home. I do not have a headset. I am sorry about that.

*Government Orders*

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I am sorry, but interpretation cannot work without the headset. Interpretation will not be able to capture the sound. We will get back to the member.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Chair, I really want to ask the hon. member more about the experiences that she spoke about in describing these incidents that have happened, and the results of these being somewhat related to COVID and what has happened in the last year here in Canada, and how much we can look forward to coming out of this at the end of the day and hopefully getting past this.

How do we deal with it in the meantime? How do we deal with it, going forward, after that point in time?

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, conversations like this are important. What we are doing right now in this chamber is sending a message to all Canadians that in the Government of Canada, in the House and in people's houses, we condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and gender-based violence. That is an important step, but actions speak loudly too.

I appreciate my colleague's concern, but I have to wonder why he voted against funding for the very same Quebec women's organizations that provide support to the kinds of women we are mourning here tonight. There is so much work to be done. This work is deeply rooted in cultural norms and societal expectations that are out of date and harmful. We need everybody working together, but more than words, we need—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Chair, first I congratulate you for your commitment, which the minister mentioned in her speech. I also commend the minister for her commitment.

I am moved to rise in the House as a man to take part in a debate like this one, because it sheds light on all the psychological distress that men may be experiencing, particularly during this pandemic.

I feel we also need to emphasize the importance of investing in resources for assistance and support, because pleas are being made.

Can the minister commit to working with the provinces, which are in touch with community organizations, to increase funding and ensure that we can act quickly to help those in need before they commit an irreversible act?

[*English*]

**Hon. Maryam Monsef:** Madam Chair, gender-based violence is entirely preventable. If folks who are at risk of harming are under a lot of pressure, they can go for a walk, call a friend, talk to a spiritual leader they trust or reach out to a counsellor before they do something they might regret. This violence is preventable. Bystanders, neighbours or people who know that a friend is in trouble can do something about it. They can call the individual who they are afraid is at risk and ask if she needs help.

The Canadian Women's Foundation has come up with a signal for help. It is to address the lack of informal support systems in place. If anybody is experiencing danger and makes this signal on social media, on a FaceTime or Zoom call, we can call for help. Call the individual and ask closed-ended questions like, "Are you okay? Do you need me to call somebody? Do you need me to call the police?", and check in on them regularly.

We have invested in frontline organizations. We will continue to be there for them. We all have to step up our efforts with greater funding, but we also need to address the cultural norms. The violence that women experience is a reflection of what we as a society are willing to tolerate—

• (2045)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** Resuming debate, the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Madam Chair, during the pandemic, we saw a shadow pandemic, a significant increase in domestic violence. Over the past few weeks, the tragedies that occurred in Quebec have reminded us of the sad reality that many women face. Over the past seven weeks, we have lost seven women to family violence in Quebec. Last year, we lost one woman or girl to violence every two and a half days. There is a crisis in our country.

This evening we remember them and we undertake to do better for the women and girls of this country. Experts warned us that there would be an increase in violence. Their reasoning was very simple. After a natural catastrophe, the rate of domestic violence increases. Economic recessions also lead to an increase in domestic violence.

A pandemic is an economic recession during a natural catastrophe. The situation is therefore very serious. Those who deal with victims of domestic violence warned us of the risks to women who are locked down with their aggressors.

[*English*]

Those who deal with victims of domestic violence warned of the risks for women who would be locked down with their aggressors and abusers. At the start of the pandemic the Canadian Women's Foundation developed a sign for help: a hand gesture that could be quietly used on Zoom or on FaceTime to indicate that a woman was in an abusive situation. Raising her hand with her palm to the camera, a woman traps her thumb in her palm under her four fingers. If people know anyone who may be in an abusive situation, they should make sure to reach out to see if they can help.



We have all heard the “seven times” statistic by now, but it is worth repeating. It can take survivors on average seven attempts to successfully leave an abusive relationship and when they do, recent evidence suggests that violence against former domestic partners is also increasing significantly during the pandemic.

[*Translation*]

We have all heard about the seven times statistic, but it bears repeating. On average, survivors will try to leave an abusive relationship seven times before they manage to leave for good. Unfortunately, statistics show that, when they succeed in leaving, the violence against them by their former partner increases.

[*English*]

The recession is going to be a terrifying legacy of the pandemic. We know from all available statistics that it has disproportionately affected women and especially women in part-time and service sector jobs. In other words, these are women whose financial situations are already precarious. Financial instability is one of the reasons most frequently given for staying with an abusive partner. That should cause all of us to realize that even when the pandemic is over and Canadians are safely vaccinated, the silent pandemic of domestic violence will have worsened and will continue.

[*Translation*]

Financial problems are often given as a reason for staying with a violent partner. Even when the pandemic is over and Canadians are vaccinated, the shadow pandemic of family violence will still remain. We all need to be aware of that.

• (2050)

[*English*]

The motion as it is currently worded makes reference to the national action plan on gender-based violence. It is a pledge that the government has made since being elected, and it is an important pledge, but it is one that has been continually put off.

The government has never presented its policy in response to the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report, in spite of the fact that many provinces have begun to take action. As an example, last year many provinces announced the end to the practice of birth alerts, a practice that disproportionately impacts indigenous women. However, the Liberal government has failed to act.

[*Translation*]

This week, the Conservatives asked the Liberals to table a specific plan to gradually and safely lift the COVID-19-related restrictions. These restrictions have had a serious impact on the mental health of Canadians. They have also led to an increase in domestic violence across the country. Unfortunately, the government denied our request.

[*English*]

As I have said many times, the mental health crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has been a pandemic of tears for so many families. That is why the Conservative opposition will introduce a Canada mental health action plan and boost funding partnerships with provinces for mental health care. We will provide incentives for employers to provide better mental wellness coverage for

### *Government Orders*

employees. It is important that we, as this House voted, create a nationwide three-digit suicide prevention hotline.

We will also introduce a plan to restore the million jobs lost in this pandemic in one year, and not stop there. Let us remember that so many of those jobs were held by women, who now find themselves unemployed, and as I noted earlier, it is much harder for a woman to flee domestic violence if she does not have a reliable income.

[*Translation*]

Killings and acts of violence all have something in common, as nearly all of them start with domestic violence.

[*English*]

At this point in my speech, I would like to thank people who have mentored me to be an advocate on this issue from the time of 2006 and 2007: the late Hon. Jim Flaherty and my father, John O'Toole, member of the provincial Parliament for Durham, who in 2007 introduced the Lori Dupont Act in memory of a nurse who was killed in the Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor by a former partner. She was unable to secure a peace bond from someone who was a known aggressor.

I was proud to work with my father, as a lawyer at the time, on Bill 10, to provide an intervention order to avoid situations like the one Ms. Dupont found herself in, asking for help from the state, knowing there was a risk, and the workplace and the province were not able to act. As a parliamentarian today, I am proud to continue that tradition that was begun by my father.

[*Translation*]

This evening, I want to remember the seven women in Quebec who recently lost their lives as a result of a femicide.

[*English*]

We also mourn the lives of the 160 women lost to femicide this last year alone: 160 daughters, sisters, mothers, friends. Their lives had purpose and value, and we will cherish their memory. They were taken by people they had trusted or loved, snuffed out, and we cannot forget them.

As we mourn, let us recommit as Canadians to ending violence towards women and to watching for the signs of violence around us, whether online or in our workplaces. We all must recommit to do more. Important debates like this, after seven weeks of tragedy in Quebec, are one small step.

[*Translation*]

This pandemic has led to an increase in domestic violence in Canada. At a time when lockdown measures continue to be in effect and the unemployment rate is rising, we need to increase Canadians' awareness of domestic violence and do everything we can to prevent it.

*Government Orders*

• (2055)

[*English*]

We all must do more.

**Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition talking about this issue in the House. We were all concerned when we did not see the words “gender” or “equality” mentioned once in his leadership platform.

I would like to know why the Leader of the Opposition instructed his caucus to vote tonight against the funds we are trying to provide as support for Quebec women's organizations so that they can address and prevent gender-based violence. I would appreciate an answer to that, as would all Quebec women.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Madam Chair, I would appreciate it if the minister would stop politicizing the issue, hoping that Canadians think she is being sincere. A vote on supplements is not a vote by anyone in this chamber against providing support for people at risk. Votes in budgets, votes in parliamentary debate, are being stage-managed by the government.

She herself attacked my friend, the member for Calgary Centre, by saying we need action, not words, but there has been no action from that minister on women with respect to the MMIWG recommendation that I talked about in my speech, no action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings. This government and that minister in particular are very good at the photo ops and feigned compassion, but very poor at follow-ups.

As I said in my remarks, I have been advocating this since 2007. I will make sure that there is action—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I am sorry, but we will have to move on to other questions.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, as a member of Parliament and not a member of the minister's party, I wonder if the Speaker finds the words “feigned compassion” as offensive as I do. It suggests that the minister is lying about the extent of her concern.

I think all of us in this place should presume, as I do, that the hon. member, who is the leader of the official opposition, spoke truthfully of the depth of his concern for women who have experienced violence. However, I find it offensive to suggest that the minister is feigning compassion.

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** The member is asking for my own personal opinion, and I would be hard put at this moment to make a judgment on it.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his speech.

Everyone here tonight recognizes that it is important to reduce the degree of politicization in a debate as emotional as the one we are having on violence against women.

If there is one issue that should not be politicized right now, but rather should be pushed ahead in the interest of women's safety, it is more effective gun control.

I would like the opposition leader to tell us how far his party is willing to go to ensure more effective gun control in order to better protect women.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Madam Chair, I thank the member for Shefford for her question.

We are here for the well-being of all Canadians, including women. We need programs to help women in crisis. Especially in the midst of a pandemic, we need to have programs for women at risk. That is what we are here for.

I will support programs to help women, like the seven women in Quebec, during this crisis. I will support some policies that will help Canadians. This is no time for political bickering, because we are here for the well-being of Quebec and Canadian women. As I said, there is a shadow pandemic to this pandemic.

I am here, as Leader of the Opposition, because this is an important concern for me personally as a leader, as a member of Parliament, but also as a father.

I will work with all parties if there is a serious bill to help women at risk. We need to work together.

• (2100)

[*English*]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Chair, I would like to ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition whether or not he believes that, with so many challenges women have now, one of the things that needs to be emphasized is the fact that they have a choice and that they have the right to control what happens to their body.

I would like to know whether he supports that choice, but I would also like to know why, when he has said that he does, he continues to allow members in his party to introduce private members' bills that actually seek to undermine a woman's right to choose.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Madam Chair, I am disappointed that the member for London—Fanshawe did not use this as an opportunity to work together on something.

The member knows that I am pro-choice. It seems like the minister and other people in this debate do not want to actually put some tangible ideas forward. They want to use this debate for political attacks, and that is not going to help women.

[*Translation*]

We need to work together and I have a clear track record on that.

*Government Orders*

[*English*]

In fact, I was reading my father's speech on the Lori Dupont bill, which I would invite the member for London—Fanshawe to read, because Andrea Horwath, the provincial NDP member, spoke after my father, and she gave a wonderful speech. They were all working together, instead of putting little politics at play.

Before being an MP, I fundraised for Nellie's shelter. My family helped support the creation of the Bethesda House shelter in our region. We care about these issues.

It is disappointing to see potshots, particularly as the leader of a party. I am not sure if there will be other leaders after me tonight. Let us work together. This is important. Let us work for Canadian women.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, the hon. leader of the official opposition has spoken to the lack of an official response to the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry, and I wonder if he would be prepared to commit to one of the core recommendations of that inquiry, which is to have a guaranteed livable income to ensure that among us people are not, in an intersectional sense, made far more vulnerable through their poverty.

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Madam Chair, a former leader of a party is a part of the debate tonight, and I appreciate the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

As she would know from her province of British Columbia, the NDP government just did a remarkably detailed report on a guaranteed basic income that will not help people in the ways intended. I refer her to the Gary Mason article covering it in *The Globe and Mail* from a few months ago.

We do want to help people who are left behind. That is why I talked particularly about the biggest factor for some women trying to flee violence, which studies have shown is financial instability. If that member or anyone has some policies to help with that, Nellie's shelter in Toronto and the Bethesda House in the Durham region are doing that. They are providing that support, that security and certainty, so that women can get out of the relationship.

I talked about the statistic of “seven times”. Seven times they will try to leave. I will work with anyone on that. Recommendations from the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, many TRC recommendations, and in fact many reports going back generations now need to be acted on.

As people get to know my style, they will find that I will work with anyone who wants to make progress for indigenous Canadian women and make Canada live up to that opportunity.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Chair, this has been an interesting debate to watch. I am a proud woman. I am a proud pro-choice woman who is proud to be a Conservative member of Parliament, regardless of all the hands flaring in the air right now.

I look at what you have just announced, and one of the most incredible things that we must do is address the mental health challenges in our communities. I know that as the Conservative leader, you have talked about some of these mental health challenges that

we have had. Mental health, addictions, violence: all of these horrific things do go hand in hand in many cases.

Can you share with us some of your plans with regard to mental health, and also with regard to getting women back to work, if you have time for that as well?

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I would love to share those plans, but I think the question is for the leader of the opposition.

● (2105)

**Hon. Erin O'Toole:** Madam Chair, I want to thank my colleague for her passion and compassion. I see it every day, as she is part of my leadership team. I am very proud to leverage that passion, compassion and sense of humour.

The member knows that mental health is an area that I have tried to work on since I left the military. As I saw the impact of help for veterans and first responders, that has expanded my work in Durham to working with anyone on wellness and programming, including for victims of sexual trauma in the Canadian Armed Forces. There are a great number of women advocates in a group called “It's Just 700” who are fighting to highlight that. It has been disappointing to see the government not rooting out a culture of cover-ups and harassment in the forces. We need to do better.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, it is an honour to have a woman presiding this evening.

I rise with a lump in my throat to speak to this deeply tragic and heartbreaking issue: rising rates of femicide.

I will read part of the motion, which, unfortunately, reflects just how sad this situation is: That the House: (a) mourn the lives of the seven women who lost their lives to heinous acts of femicide in Quebec in the past few months; (b) mourn the lives of all women and gender-diverse people across Canada and Quebec who have lost their lives to intimate partner violence and gender-based violence, including over 160 women lost to femicide in the last year alone; (c) continue to support the survivors of gender-based violence; (d) acknowledge the incredibly alarming increase in gender-based violence across the country; (e) condemn gender-based violence in all its forms; (f) work with governments to accelerate investments in shelters and transition housing, and support the advancement of a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence; (g) call on all Canadians and Quebecers to do more to combat and raise awareness of all forms of gender-based violence.

### *Government Orders*

As I mentioned in my speech on March 8, the pandemic has given women and girls quite a few slaps to the face. I am not just talking figuratively, with the increased mental burden, invisible work and frontline work in our health care system. I am especially referring to the literal sense of the word, because far too many women have been killed as a result of the marked increase in domestic violence cases. During the pandemic, 10% of women lived in fear of domestic violence. That number is three times higher among indigenous women.

This evening, I want to let the facts speak for themselves. Sadly, one in three women is a victim of domestic violence. Fully 90% of women who are victims of domestic violence will experience lasting effects ranging from psychological trauma to head trauma caused by hits to the head and concussions.

In a recent interview, Jean-François Landry, a former member of the impulse control support group, described a violent man as follows:

He could be the nicest partner, but then out of the blue, he would fly into a violent rage, shouting and throwing things. That kind of behaviour was normal; that's how he was raised. He never hit anyone, but he vented his anger on the walls, for example. He was also pretty explosive with the kids. He never got mad at work, so he took all his anger out on his family at home. Ironically, the people who knew him just as an acquaintance or a friend would never have guessed he was violent at home.

The point I am trying to make with this example is that it is important to include men in this conversation, in this debate.

Geneviève Guilbault, the Deputy Premier of Quebec and minister of public security stated the following in an interview:

What has been happening this week is tragic. This is extremely upsetting, shocking and entirely unacceptable. We have a responsibility as a government and as a society to stop violence against women. This must be done through prevention and enforcement, but first and foremost through accountability. We must encourage men to seek help when they are violent or at risk of being violent, and obviously, of course, remind women that they can and must ask for help.

It is unacceptable that weeks will go by before men will get any help to prevent domestic violence. The government also needs to make sure that it provides funding to prevention organizations, because the budget, at first administrative, will probably be adapted to include funding to address and prevent violence against women. We must condemn the problem, yes, but that will not solve everything. Society needs to repeat the message and continue to hammer the point home in order to change mindsets.

In addition to those seven femicides over six weeks in Quebec, last year alone, over 300 women were the victims of attempted murder, a chilling statistic. We need to continue to put pressure on the government, but we also must not forget that society as a whole needs to work together to resolve the problem of domestic violence. We need to acknowledge what is happening.

I want to recognize the exercise that was recently carried out in Quebec, where a committee of experts studied violence against women. Beyond the roadmap, the federal government also needs to collaborate by quickly transferring substantial funding to the organizations. As a society, we also need to find the will and continue to put pressure on the government because, in addition to the budget that was tabled today, the Government of Quebec has the will to invest to combat violence against women.

I hope that what some people are describing as a social crisis will help us to understand that the domestic violence issue goes beyond battered women; it is about society's behaviours as a whole. We therefore need to be proactive and understand that psychological violence and coercive control can have consequences and can be precursors of violence. In that regard, I want to point out the work of Myrabelle Poulin, who shares powerful testimonials on this issue on her blog, "Les mots de Myra", or Myra's words. We also need to help women break the cycle of poverty because, all too often, that is what keeps them vulnerable.

Anouk St-Onge, who is in charge of domestic violence cases at the Montreal police, the SPVM, recently noted that there has been a 12% increase in reported cases of domestic violence in Montreal. She lamented that more than 1,500 cases of domestic violence were reported in 2020 alone, an increase over 2019.

We know that the pandemic has cut victims off from their social support system and isolated them, aggravating the situations of domestic violence. Being trapped 24 hours a day with your attacker is an aggravating factor. At certain times during the pandemic, the drop in the number of complaints was not good news.

A much broader discussion is needed on the fact that domestic violence is more than the battering of women. As I was saying, it also encompasses verbal and psychological abuse, such as snooping through a partner's text messages. Signs of domestic violence are on the rise, but we have seen during the pandemic that there is a shortage of shelters in Quebec.

Of course, the opposition parties at the Quebec National Assembly are calling for new funding to meet the growing needs in addressing domestic violence. For Quebec to effectively combat domestic violence by reinvesting in underfunded domestic violence prevention organizations, such as shelters, there needs to be an increase in transfers, the money must not be held back and the agreements must be reached more quickly.

● (2110)

As recently indicated when considering the estimates at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, Quebec received its allocated amounts more than five months after the other provinces received theirs. This evening it may also be pertinent to ask if federal health initiatives are aligned with Quebec's priorities, yes or no.

If the past is any indication of the future, there is cause for concern. In 2014, a panel of experts on federal initiatives in the health and social services sectors from 2002 to 2013 presented a very interesting report to the Government of Quebec. I will only mention a few of the report's findings.

The federal government's initiatives in health and social services stem mainly from what is known as the "spending power" [and, in certain cases, I would even call it, unfortunately, the power to withhold spending]. These initiatives may address in part the focus, objectives and priorities of Quebec...however, most of the time, they propose and even impose targets and approaches that are different than the ones already adopted by Quebec authorities.

In general, the federal government is pursuing its own objectives, no doubt influenced by an analysis of the needs of all Canadians and the state of the provincial [including Quebec's] and territorial systems. In some cases, there can be a rather large gap between federal policies, priorities and approaches and Quebec's. A number of the people consulted indicated that, if they could manage the money spent by the federal government themselves, they would not use it in the same way. They would have different priorities and strategies.

Quebec knows its own agencies. "The federal government's funding for health care and social services is woefully inequitable for Quebec", especially "since the federal funding does not take into account any money a province or territory may have already spent on the same item."

This is important for programs that are tailored to the different regions in Quebec and Canada. In my speech at the Standing Committee on Status of Women last summer, I spoke about the CALACS I had heard from back home. In Quebec, in the middle of a pandemic, just three out of seven of these sexual assault centres had qualified for a program that directly helped survivors. That is unacceptable.

Organizations need predictability, which is lacking in federal programs. There is no long-term assistance.

One last thing: We need to be careful. If this government is truly a feminist government, it must no longer tolerate violence against indigenous women and it must implement the findings in the report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The government also needs to take action, after failing to respond to allegations of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces for over three years. It must no longer perpetuate this culture of silence. It needs to work to improve the gun control bill. The government should not wait until after the crisis to take action. It needs to do something now.

However, we need to be careful not to politicize this issue because that is not what is needed. To protect the women and girls of Quebec and the provinces and territories, we need to go beyond grim statistics and ensure that those numbers do not increase, because every death is one too many. Let us take action.

• (2115)

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for raising the issue of brain injuries. During the pandemic, I have held a number of meetings and round tables with women's organizations and transition houses. One of those organizations is The Cridge Centre for the Family. It runs an intimate partner violence and brain injury initiative and supports women who have experienced brain injuries at the hands of intimate partners, and the needs of the centre are greater than the resources it has. In addition, the brain injury portion of the program is currently funded just by donors and has no secure federal government funding.

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In Canada, 200,000 women each year experience violence at the hands of intimate partners and studies show that at least 90% of those will suffer a brain injury through blows to the head, face, neck and/or strangulation. Can the member speak about the need for stable government funding for these programs?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Victoria for her question.

Obviously, when we talk about help for health in serious cases, such as those involving brain injuries, for example, we need to increase funding for the entire health care system so that it can deal with the increased number of cases of domestic violence and better help victims.

The reason why organizations have difficulty funding their activities may be because they are trying to address gaps in the health care system. For that reason, it is more important than ever to immediately increase health transfers so that the health care systems of Quebec and the provinces and territories can better support these women.

[English]

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for her contribution to the all-party women's caucus and her great advocacy. What are the member's views on toxic masculinity and the culture of intimate partner violence and violence against women, and what would she propose we do to address this issue and take concrete action in combatting this?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her question.

My God, that is a huge issue.

One thing I can say for sure about toxic masculinity and violence is that men need to be part of the conversation. Education is also part of it. We have to be able to talk to our boys and our men and encourage them to seek help. That might have to be part of our education programs, but that comes under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and territories. I will leave the education component up to them, but there is definitely work to be done there.

We also need resources to support men. Again, these groups are asking for help. They need financial support. That is why we need higher transfers to enhance support not only for the health care system that helps men in distress with mental health issues, but organizations as well. My answer is yes because that is how we can help them. I know of some excellent resources for men in my riding and elsewhere in Quebec, as well as in Canada.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC):** Madam Chair, the member for Shefford and I sit on the status of women committee. We have heard from organizations over the past year and due to either the lack of funding or the funding not having been renewed even though we have this pandemic, they have had to turn women away—

• (2120)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I am sorry, I do not think we can get interpretation.

Could the hon. member speak another sentence or two, please.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Madam Chair, I have a new headset, so it should be working. I apologize for that.

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** It is not the House provided headset; therefore, I am really sorry, but we cannot proceed.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Chair, I am sorry that the hon. member will not be able to finish that great question.

I, too, served on that great committee, the status of women, with the member for Shefford. I have had the opportunity to work with many women. Right now, as we continue to look at this crisis, we know there has been a huge increase. I was really proud to work with the member. The NDP, Bloc, Conservatives and the Green Party all came together asking for MAPI funding, the measures to address prostitution initiative.

Does the member think the government has put enough money into the resources for men, women and girls.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Chair, the amounts transferred during the crisis to Quebec, the provinces and the territories obviously could have been increased. I thank my colleague for her question. I would like to commend her work as former chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This summer, the committee examined the impact of the pandemic on women and girls. We heard from some organizations that said that some of the programs could have indeed been improved. Organizations also talked about the lack of predictability, the fact that programs are far too short term, which means they cannot plan for the long term. They talked about the importance of transferring more money.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Shefford for her speech and, as I mentioned earlier, for her dedication to women's rights.

Like the Liberal member who asked a question before me, I would like her thoughts on toxic masculinity. Where does it come from, and how can women, men and fathers like me address it? How can we prevent toxic masculinity, not only among women's partners, but also among ex-partners and in workplaces across the country, including Parliament Hill? I would like to hear her thoughts on that.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question. I would like to thank him once again for acknowledging my work, and I want to acknowledge his as well.

Toxic masculinity, as I mentioned earlier, is such a huge problem. I have talked to groups like Afeas, which advocates for women's rights in Quebec. One thing we should focus on is equality, and one way to work toward gender equality is sharing housework. Another is recognizing the importance of implementing measures and rules to prevent workplace harassment. That is crucial.

We have heard too many stories about toxic workplaces. The Canadian Armed Forces might be an example of that, but it is just one of many. That is why it is important to have training programs to prevent workplace harassment and assault. Getting more organizations to adopt such plans is crucial.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for Shefford.

It is clear that the rise in domestic violence caused by the pandemic has reached crisis levels. My question is simple, and it is about the federal and provincial governments. They must provide funding for shelters for women in abusive relationships who are at risk of violence.

It seems clear to me that we do not have enough resources to meet the needs.

• (2125)

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague very much for her question and for fighting for the feminist cause. We are members of the Canadian Association of Feminist Parliamentarians.

As I mentioned in my speech, during the pandemic, some shelters said that they had not received enough funding. Organizations such as the CALACS, the sexual assault help centres that work with survivors, did not have access to some of the funds because the programs had not been adjusted. Not every CALACS managed to qualify for the programs.

This absolutely needs to be reviewed, especially since Quebec is calling for it and, as I said in my speech, there are delays in the agreements. The fact that Quebec received money five months later than other provinces is unacceptable. These delays are far too long. Let us speed up the process and ensure that we create agreements across Canada. We certainly must not forget the agreements with Quebec.

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ):** Madam Chair, it warms my heart to see you here with us this evening.

I congratulate my colleague from Shefford not only on giving an excellent speech, but also on sharing her heartfelt and urgent concerns.

I have a question for her. In my experience, because I like to make connections to real life, I have observed that women in violent situations hesitate to go to shelters, to file a complaint with the police or to report what is happening, for fear of abuse.

What kind of funding and resources could the government give these homes to help women truly feel safe?

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I think it is more crucial for women to regain a sense of safety and security. To do that, there must be adequate funding so that shelters have enough space and better measures to ensure the safety of women. We also need laws like the one we passed last fall to ensure the elimination of prejudice and better training for judges for cases of sexual assault, and that victims report their aggressors. We must eliminate the prejudices still held by certain judges.

[English]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I appreciate the debate we are having tonight to highlight this pandemic within a pandemic and to highlight the seven Quebec women whose lives were taken in the past few months and, of course, the 160 women whose lives were taken this past year.

Across Canada, frontline women's agencies and police report increases of intimate partner violence at 30% to 70%. We cannot continue to stand by as women's lives are ended, and their deaths cannot go without action. Often those women who are killed have suffered many violence acts prior, and a woman who is trapped without resources, financial or otherwise, to flee has too often been a victim of many different types of abuse, not only from her partner but from a broken system and those in power unwilling to do what is truly necessary to change it.

The New Democrats have and will continue to push to change that system and to act. That is why I am so proud to support the private member's bill from my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, Bill C-247, which would make coercive and controlling behaviour a criminal offence.

We know that intimate partner violence has been and continues to plague our society and that the pandemic has made this problem even more acute, as the numbers from Quebec show. Patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour are also forms of violence, but these patterns are often a precursor to overt physical violence. This behaviour being seen as a criminal offence would allow earlier intervention by police, courts and service organizations without having to wait for that actual violent incident to take place.

We know that our families, communities and country are stronger when women thrive. In Canada today, it is still all too common for women to experience discrimination and gender-based violence, particularly if they are members of marginalized communities.

In Canada, there are only a patchwork of plans, programs and supports. There is no comprehensive system in place. Shelters across Canada have been asked to do more with less year after year. Some shelters in Canada have reported not receiving funding in-

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creases in nearly a decade, but they took action. They made up the difference through their own fundraising efforts. They showed the leadership that women, children and non-binary people in their neighbourhoods needed.

On the front lines, time, resources and money are limited, but incredible community leaders and volunteers take on that fight daily, and I am so grateful for them. During the pandemic, numerous women's organizations emphasized the need for core operational-based funding. It is necessary for any organization to be able to shift during an emergency to provide the community-based programming they know is needed.

During the Harper government, a great deal of that funding to institutions was cut and any funding provided was made available only under specific project-based funding. Under subsequent Liberal governments, some funding has been returned, but not to the levels required and still through that same project-based funding model.

Women's organizations must have long-term, stable, core funding so women can access the supports and advocacy they need when they need it.

For five years, the government has touted a national action plan to end gender-based violence. Whether in committee or in the House, since being elected, I have taken every opportunity to ask the government when a plan will be formalized and brought forward. Sadly, women are still waiting.

We also need action and the implementation of the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We must implement all 231 calls for justice. This cannot be another inquiry that sits on a shelf and collects dust. Women do not need another report only to refer to when a government has been caught ignoring the problems women face, a report like the 2015 Deschamps report on sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces. The Deschamps report has 10 recommendations, yet only two have been implemented in six years.

Gender-based violence impacts all women of all different ages, racial backgrounds and cultural groups. Everyone is at risk and everyone is a potential victim. Those at high risk, something we have heard repeatedly during this pandemic, are people who are already vulnerable. Women living in poverty, women with a disability, immigrant women, and indigenous women and children are disproportionately affected by this form of abuse and violence.

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I must conclude with this. The problem is clear and the solutions can be clearer. These disturbing numbers of the murders of women from Quebec and across Canada underline the necessity of ensuring that the House and the government take action that is both effective and urgent. That is what I will continue to fight for. That is what New Democrats will continue to fight for.

● (2130)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for her advocacy.

How does she feel about the leader of the Conservative Party not answering her question about a woman's autonomy over her own body or the Minister for Women and Gender Equality's question about why he voted against funding the Quebec organizations that would help the very women he says that he cares about?

● (2135)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Madam Chair, I want to recognize that there are women within the Conservative Party who are pro-choice. The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London came forward as one, and I work very well with her. However, the leader has to be clear, and I did not appreciate the fact that my extremely valid question was called a potshot and was seen as political. This is about decisions, allowances and the double standards within a party. It is about saying one thing but allowing another. Those are clear choices. By not allowing a woman the right to choose and by allowing for the undermining of this core fundamental value, I do not see him as genuine. I do not see his responses as genuine.

We talk about toxic masculinity. A lot of people have talked about it. To be perfectly honest, it exists in this institution. It is something that we, together, must fight, and I hope the member opposite will fight with me against that—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Chair, I enjoy working with the member for London—Fanshawe, as I did with her mother during our time together.

In 2016, a report was done regarding pay equity, and the government indicated that it was an important thing. However, we know that it does not come into effect for quite some time. It seems to me there was a lot of talk, but absolutely no action. It seems like we can talk and we can pretend to be funding things. We can do all sorts of different things.

What are the member's thoughts on pay equity and what the government has not done so far?

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Madam Chair, the member is such an incredible ally, even across party lines. I really do appreciate that. It is so valuable to me and I cherish it, as my mother did.

Pay equity is a huge issue. It is about the assurance that women are paid the same for the same value of work and that we are truly seen on an equal level. Again, that feeds into toxic masculinity. Unfortunately, the government has, for three years, delayed putting regulations into place to implement pay equity rules that would govern federally regulated workplaces.

We have seen this in other federal institutions, such as Crown corporations like Canada Post, where women did not receive pay equity. This was challenged in the courts, but some women have actually died. The money that is being awarded to them now is being paid to their estates because they never received it.

This has longer-term implications for pensions and benefits. This is about the poverty that women face and live in. The government has the responsibility to act immediately. It has had over three years and this is its own legislation—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** We have time for one last question.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague, with whom I have the honour of serving on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

She just raised the issue of pay equity and I would like her to speak more about this. It is a major concern and symbolic when it comes to increasing women's salaries. In the end, a woman who remains below the poverty level runs the risk of being trapped in a cycle of violence. However, if she takes back her economic power, she can break that cycle.

[*English*]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Madam Chair, I think the member and I do incredible work across party lines on the status of women committee, and I am so grateful for her contributions.

The government introduced pay equity legislation over three years ago. This was its own legislation. It has been moving slowly, even on regulations. They were supposed to happen in January, but they still have not come forward. In addition to that, the government is allowing three to five years, and even up to eight additional years, for some federally regulated workplaces and businesses to implement the same level of pay for the same work. We—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** We have to resume debate.

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Chair, honourable colleagues, I wish I could say that I am pleased to take part in tonight's debate, but I hate the fact that we need to have this debate at all.

The truth is, we should all be panicking. We should all be terrified that we need to have a debate because there have been so many cases of femicide in Quebec and Canada. It is absolutely terrible. These are not just tragedies involving a family, an individual or a couple. We are talking about a bloodbath, something huge that should make us all shudder right now.



The fact that seven women in Quebec have been murdered by their spouses in the last seven weeks is unbelievable. Last year, 160 women were killed in Canada because they were women. That is one woman murdered every two and a half days.

How did we as a society, as a community, get to the point where femicide is in the news three times a week in Canada?

In Quebec, seven women have been killed in the last seven weeks. I want to take a moment to remember them by name.

Her name was Elisapee Angma, and she was killed on February 5 in Kuujuaq. Her name was Marly Edouard, and she was killed on February 21 in Laval. Her name was Nancy Roy, and she was killed on February 23 in Saint-Hyacinthe. Her name was Sylvie Bisson, and she was killed on March 1 in Sainte-Sophie. Her name was Myriam Dallaire, and she was also killed on March 1 in Sainte-Sophie. Her name was Nadège Jolicoeur, and she was killed on March 19 in Saint-Léonard. Her name was Rebekah Harry, and she was killed on March 23 in Montreal.

These women were not killed in a car accident or because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. They were simply in the wrong place. Where was that place? It was at home.

For many women and girls in Quebec and Canada, home is the most dangerous place they can be. That speaks volumes about the problems they face.

Normally, in our individual or collective psyche, home is a refuge. It is the place where we are loved, reassured and comforted. It is the place we go to when we have problems in the outside world. For many people, however, home is the worst place in the world, and they must seek refuge elsewhere.

However, when these women seek refuge elsewhere, they learn that there are not enough shelters. The Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes, an organization that represents several dozen shelters for women fleeing abuse, has an office in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I spoke with officials from this organization a few years ago, and they told me that they had to turn away around 10,000 women a year. More than 10,000 requests a year are being turned down because there is no room, no space, no refuge for these women in need knocking at the door.

What happens then? These women have two choices. One, they can return home, where they will have to deal with a dangerous or violent husband or partner and continue to suffer until a space opens up. Two, they can move out, but since there is no shelter space available, they end up on the street.

If they decide to bring their children with them, they end up in a catch-22. If they refuse to go home for their own safety and that of their children, they are accused of endangering their children. Our police, public and legal services have not kept up with the times.

We want to prevent these situations. The Government of Quebec and the provincial governments bear much of the blame for the chronic underfunding of shelters for abused women. The federal government should and could do more as well. It goes both ways.

As a result of the pandemic, these women, who were already in sensitive and difficult situations, have unfortunately become

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trapped in their own homes with violent partners and toxic masculinity. We have seen an explosion of cases, and we all need to reflect on this together, as a community.

My time is up, but I could elaborate in my answers.

• (2140)

[*English*]

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for his allyship on this very important cause.

I would ask the member to highlight for us the work he has done specifically in his constituency to support women who are fleeing from violence, raise awareness and build more allies within the male space to become champions of combatting intimate partner violence. What can we do collectively? I would ask the member to outline some of these items for us.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her question, which is very much appreciated.

I have been working closely with women's organizations in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and throughout Montreal for nearly 10 years now. I take part in campaigns and initiatives to create safe spaces and healthy environments in both the public and private spheres, and to establish a dialogue.

I promote the work of activists like Will Prosper, who started a movement called “Parle à ton boy”, or talk to your boy, to get men involved in the discussion about toxic masculinity and violence against women. Changing mindsets must be done together, by women and men working together. Otherwise, this problem will never be solved.

I have been actively involved in this dialogue for many years, and I contribute to some of the campaigns. I would like to acknowledge the recent work of Will Prosper.

• (2145)

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his speech and his work.

He named the seven victims, but I would like to take a moment to do something that has not been done. I would like to offer my condolences to the friends and relatives of these seven victims and of the 160 victims who died last year in Canada, Quebec and the territories. It is important to remember these people, who are still dealing with deep trauma.

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Speaking of trauma, I would like to talk about the impact of social media and how it exacerbates violence, which has worsened during the pandemic. Initiatives have been launched in Quebec, groups of parliamentarians in the National Assembly have studied this issue, and elected municipal officials are campaigning to stop online violence and end threats against female elected representatives.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Shefford.

She is quite right to point out that our thoughts are also with the families and loved ones of the women who were the victims of brutal murders, of femicide, because they were women. I think we need to say that and to use that word, as the leader of the NDP did today.

I want to come back to violence against women on social media. We know that social media sites have become toxic discussion forums that are not very respectful, not very democratic and not very respectful of human rights. That is especially true when the abusive person has a male superiority complex. These men attack female elected representatives in a very petty and cowardly way, and things are even worse for women who are MPs, mayors or municipal councillors. The level of violence they experience is completely unacceptable.

I look forward to seeing the federal government's bill on online hate, which should be coming soon. I hope that we can all work together to find solutions.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for his strong stand against gender-based violence and for talking about what happens when home is no longer a safe place.

Many organizations in my riding of Victoria have raised the issue that a lack of affordable, safe housing traps women in unsafe situations. While this has always been a reality, skyrocketing rents and COVID have made the situation worse.

Right now, the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness are undergoing a project to look at the landscape of housing supports for women at the highest risk of violence. They told me that 100% of indigenous women in Victoria who are experiencing chronic homelessness cited intimate partner violence as the key reason for their housing loss. This project relates directly to article 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and also to the need for a national indigenous-led indigenous housing strategy—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I am sorry, but I have to give the hon. member a chance to comment on the hon. member's comment.

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Madam Chair, I think that, without social housing, without space in women's shelters and without financial independence, it is extremely difficult for women to escape. Unfortunately, I do not have time to go into more detail, but those are the important points to consider.

[*English*]

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, over the last seven weeks, seven women in Quebec tragically lost their lives to heinous acts of domestic violence. This is incredibly alarming and, unfortunately, is reflected in provinces all across the country. I am reflecting tonight. A death because of intimate partner violence does not just happen all of a sudden. There is a lead-up to it.

Therefore, I will invite members to reflect with me this evening on what it is like to be in a home where one's every move could trigger an argument and any word that comes out of one's mouth could lead to a sharp slap across the face. I ask members to imagine their child watching and listening as their partner hurls profanities at them, and having to find their child later, hiding because they are too afraid from watching the abuse take place. I ask members to imagine the embarrassment, the shame and the helplessness.

I ask members to imagine not having anywhere to go for escape, or living miles away from their closest neighbour, or not speaking the language that others around them understand, or not having a penny to their name to seek out support to get out. Where would they go? Who would they count on?

Let me be clear. Intimate partner violence is prevalent in all cultures, ethnicities and socio-economic situations. In 2019, I had an event through my women's council in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills on raising awareness for intimate partner violence. I remember there were about 100 women who had come to this event to learn more about the supports that are out there.

At the end of the event, there was a very young woman who approached me. She said how afraid she was for herself. I asked her what could we do. She said, "I'm a police officer, and I still feel like this in my home." The helplessness in her eyes that day will haunt me forever.

On average, 69 women are killed by intimate partner violence every year. To put that in a different context, a report by the Canadian Women's Foundation states that a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner approximately every six days. Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience intimate partner violence. Women with disabilities are two times more likely. Research also shows that approximately 28% of domestic homicides in Canada between 2010 and 2018 involved rural and remote communities. Intimate partner violence accounted for a third of all violent crime in 2018.

In 2018 alone, about 100,000 people reported intimate partner violence to police, and 79% of them were women. This is based on data that is reported to the police. According to the police, the majority of incidents go unreported. The real number would be much, much higher. On any given night, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters because it is not safe at home, and 300 women and children are turned away because shelters are full.

Over the last year, more people are staying in their homes instead of going out, obviously because of the pandemic. In this environment, where there are many struggling with their mental health, victims of intimate partner violence are living full time with their abuser.

● (2150)

A report by the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability found that in 2020 alone, 160 women were killed by acts of violence. This is one woman killed every two and a half days in our country. The Peel region, which is where my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills is, sees officers responding to over 1,000 calls for family violence and intimate partner violence each month. That is 33 calls a day. Over the last two years, about 40% of all homicides in the Peel region were the product of family violence.

According to Statistics Canada analysis, calls related to domestic disturbances rose by approximately 12% between March and June 2020, according to data from 17 police forces across Canada, compared to the same period in 2019.

Women's shelters and help lines in regions across the country have experienced a major surge in calls. From March to July 2020, calls to the Vancouver Battered Women's Support Services tripled, while in Alberta, calls to specialized crisis lines for intimate partner violence increased by up to 50%. Across Canada, 54% of victim services programs saw an increase in domestic violence victims during that same period.

From September to December alone, Canada's Assaulted Women's Helpline saw a 60% increase in calls compared to the previous year. In April to June, they saw double the number of calls from 2019.

I have spoken to shelters and police services in my riding, and they are very worried that these numbers do not reflect the whole picture. When victims are trapped with their abuser, unable to see family or friends, it limits their ability to call for help before the situation escalates. It limits the ability for services to go out and proactively reach these individuals who are need of that support.

Worse still, domestic violence is not only becoming more common, it is becoming more severe. Last year, the Ending Violence Association of Canada and Anova conducted a survey of staff and volunteers working at women's shelters, and 82% reported that violence had become more frequent. Abusers' violent tactics have changed, and control over their victims has increased. They use access to technology, or the outside world, even information about the coronavirus, as a weapon. In these cases of isolation with an abuser, the scale of violence has also escalated, with one worker describing many more cases of strangulation and serious physical assaults leading to a higher risk of lethality.

We see the same trends echoed in our partner nations across the world. UN Women and women's organizations around the world have called this the shadow pandemic, which has grown amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and threatens to impact our communities long after this health crisis has passed. The data tells us that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified.

### *Government Orders*

More needs to be done to prioritize addressing this crisis. It is vital that we continue to take action.

Since 2015, our government has taken firm action on this issue of intimate partner violence and gender-based violence. In 2017, we launched the first-ever federal strategy to prevent and address gender-based violence to fill important gaps and support women and girls, indigenous peoples, and LGBTQ2+ members and gender non-conforming people in communities across Canada.

We launched the gender-based violence knowledge centre to coordinate federal actions under its three pillars. We announced \$15.6 million in funding for projects to end violence against women and girls. We are investing more than \$50 million in nearly 60 projects to support survivors of gender-based violence and their families in communities across Canada—

● (2155)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** Unfortunately the hon. member will have to provide more information during questions and comments.

We will go to the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Chair, I am looking at my screen, and knowing people who are in the House of Commons, I can say I do not believe one single person in here wants to see violence against women. I just know that in the bottom of my heart.

I have listened to her words, and I understand, but members should imagine they are members of the Canadian Armed Forces. They should imagine knowing that Operation Honour is the person at the very top, the top brass. We all talk about the retaliation and the fear of going to the police or that upper person and what is going to happen with retaliation. Members can imagine being a woman in the Canadian Armed Forces and having nobody there to protect them.

I would like to know what this member thinks should be done to help our women in the Canadian Armed Forces, and who should be responsible for this, when we know that the top brass is being charged with these types of allegations, which are absolutely disgusting.

● (2200)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Madam Chair, I thank the member for her ongoing advocacy. It was a pleasure to work with her in the all-party women's caucus in the last parliament, and I find her advocacy to be very sincere and very compelling.

*Government Orders*

With the Canadian Armed Forces, I have to say that it is not the responsibility of the survivors and women who have experienced that atrocity to be the ones who are leading that charge. In my opinion, I think there are three levels of things we can do. The first is that as members of Parliament, we have our own advocacy. We could be reaching out proactively to members of the Canadian Armed Forces who live in our constituencies to ensure they are doing okay.

Second, we could ensure that at the organizational institutional level, gender-based analysis is being provided on all of the actions undertaken within the Canadian Armed Forces. On a strategic, whole-of-country policy and level, we can ensure that we are really looking into, very surgically and very strategically, providing that support for those women, and I think—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** We have to go to other questions.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She talked a lot about what is happening internationally. In my speech, I mentioned that 10% of women lived in fear of intimate partner violence during the pandemic. I said that number was three times higher for indigenous women. According to the UN, internationally, that 10% is tripled, which means that 30% of women are living in fear of intimate partner violence during the pandemic.

Even Secretary-General Ant nio Guterres lamented that the status of women has been set back 25 years. That might be in terms of finances as well as violence. That 25-year setback is alarming.

We will have to keep those facts in mind when we set up support measures for victims as we emerge from the crisis and embark on economic recovery.

How can we create gender-specific measures, as my colleague said, that include gender-based analysis plus? GBA+ is a federal strategy that must be part of all the measures that the government takes during the recovery.

[*English*]

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Madam Chair, if I understood the question correctly, we are talking about gender-based violence on an international stage and I have to say that Canada, being the human rights leader that it is, really has a role to play. We have been playing that role in empowering other countries around the world to take into account what gender equality means for citizenry across the world. Whether it is through funding human rights aid across the world or through empowering women parliamentarians across the world to advocate for gender-based analysis of all laws in their own nations, or through multilateral agreements and organizations providing that support, I think there is no one measure that our country can take. This has to be a thorough, holistic approach as to how we combat the culture of toxic masculinity, the culture of violence against women, the culture of using violence against women as a measure—

• (2205)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Chair, in my speech I talked about support for my colleague from Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke's private member's bill, Bill C-247, which would make coercive and controlling behaviour a criminal offence. Does the member support the bill, and could she tell us why?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Madam Chair, the bill the member refers to has been top of mind to me and members of the justice committee as we have endeavoured over the past number of weeks to study the issue of coercive and controlling behaviours as leading up to potentially lethal violence against women. I wholeheartedly support measures that we can take as Parliament to address what coercive and controlling behaviour is. We heard from many police forces across our country that changes to our Criminal Code to include a criminal offence for coercive and controlling behaviour is something they are looking forward to. I also believe that in all of our Criminal Code provisions that deal directly or indirectly with gender-based violence, we need to have a gender-based analysis conducted of them so that we can fill in the gaps as—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

**Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Madam Chair, as someone who has also experienced violence and spoken to many other women who have experienced the same thing, we say that it is like putting a frog in a pot of water on the stove and then turning the heat up very slowly until the frog stays there and boils. That is why violence and abuse is not something that we can just put our finger on. The behaviour is gradual, which is what I believe the member was talking about.

When it comes to toxic masculinity and violence against women, how would she suggest that we deal with the warning signs to teach women and men the signs of early abuse that could lead to violence?

**Ms. Iqra Khalid:** Madam Chair, that question ties in very much with the one by the previous member about coercive and controlling behaviour.

I think we are dealing with a culture within our country that accepts and condones violence against women. Until and unless we are able to really teach boys and men and really teach girls and women what consent is, what autonomy over one's own body is, what economic empowerment is, and what the ability to be considered equal on one's merit regardless of gender is, then we really cannot move past intimate-partner violence.

I look forward to continuing to work with all members in the House to ensure that we are putting forward policies and adjusting our laws and regulations so that we can do this from the top down. I also encourage, from the bottom up, our community leaders and all levels of government to ensure that we are working to address this very serious issue within each and every corner of our country.

● (2210)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Chair, certainly one of the most profound things we do in the House sometimes is to speak in these take-note debates. Tonight, of course, is no different in terms of the incredible speeches and passion that we are hearing.

Certainly we all have a shared responsibility to protect our mothers, daughters and sisters across this country. Women, girls and members of the LGBTQ+ community continue to face violence or harassment in their homes, schools, workplaces, online and in the streets. Of course, that is just unacceptable.

I grew up in a household where I always say my dad was a feminist before his time. He had four daughters. I was very fortunate and perhaps naive. It was only when I headed into the nursing profession that I started to realize the scope and challenges of the problem of violence against women and domestic violence. As a young nurse working in rural and indigenous communities, my first time with a rape victim was when she had been found unconscious, lying nude in a ball diamond down the street. Then there was the first time someone came in who had been stabbed by a partner in the evening, and the first time I saw bruises on a person I knew from the community. She was wearing a turtleneck to cover-up the bruises from the abuse, in the middle of summer, and too ashamed to talk about it. I started to realize the profound scope of the issue we are facing. Certainly it continues.

I was looking at statistics before this debate. It is a little bit hard to say whether the situation is actually getting any better or worse. Going through the statistics, it is really hard to compare apples with apples, but we do know that COVID is really making things more challenging.

I believe I mentioned this at the start, but I am splitting my time with the member for Yorkton—Melville.

Marylène Levesque died in 2020 right before COVID struck. In this case, someone out on probation was told to take care of his needs and murdered her as part of doing that. How can we have someone going out on probation with that sort of opportunity and those sorts of instructions?

We do know that this problem is not new, but we also know that with COVID, we certainly have a new crisis and a new sense of urgency. Maybe what we need to do is to have a special focus right now. It is a global problem, but we really need to talk about having a special something happening right now for those with intimate partners who are trapped in their homes with their abusers. The abusers are using COVID to further control and isolate people from friends and families. Again, the statistics are all very different, but one in three women will experience physical or sexual harassment and violence in their lifetime, so we have a problem in Canada. I

### *Government Orders*

heard one of our colleagues earlier talk about 2.5 women are killed every week by intimate partners.

I think we have talked about the negatives, and so I do want to spend a bit of time talking about some of the things that it has been my privilege to be a part of. Who has not been part of a take back the night march and had the opportunity to see incredible power? Who has not put on a white ribbon as we look at that campaign for women? Moose Hide is a really important campaign.

● (2215)

One campaign that people might not have heard of is the Angel Street campaign, which started in Iqaluit. It was a project to name streets after women. I had the honour to be part of a march in one of the indigenous communities in my area. *Lesós* is the Secwepemc word for “angel”. We marched and renamed the street. What was most powerful about the march was—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I am sorry to interrupt, but the hon. member has reached the end of her time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I want to thank everybody participating tonight in a historic and vitally important debate. It is the first time the House of Commons is having a take-note debate on the issue of gender-based violence.

I know there has been a lot of mention of control, but we also know there is economic abuse. When women are being controlled financially, that can happen with or without violence, but it is absolutely a contributing factor to domestic violence. I wonder if my colleague could talk a bit about the intersection of financial abuse, economic abuse and domestic violence.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Chair, as we know, abuse takes so many forms. The member is right that economic abuse is part of control, but it is also part of control with diminished options for women in terms of escape. It is tough enough for a woman to escape a very abusive domestic violence situation, but when she has economic challenges, and does not know if she will be able to put food on the table or what will happen with her children, it becomes a compounding issue, absolutely.

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**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, for women who are newcomers, abusers can control immigration documents and passports. Women can struggle to access the information they need to get much-needed services, and organizations in my riding have told me that sponsorship breakdown is very difficult to report to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Also, some women arrive in Canada and are shocked to learn they do not have status. Their husbands promise to sponsor them, then their visas expire or something limits their ability to separate from their husbands. This is just one of the many reasons for status for all.

What does the member think needs to be done to support newcomer women and those without status to ensure they are safe and supported?

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Chair, the part of my speech I did not get to was what we as parliamentarians need to do. I had it broken into a number of different categories. One of them is our laws, expectations and policies and we are directly responsible for ensuring women newcomers to Canada are safe. It has gotten better, but we need to be continually vigilant in monitoring it.

Something else on my list is that we need take care of our own House. I have never been in a Parliament yet where there have not been issues in our own House. We know that the current situation with our military is absolutely appalling and we need to take care of our own House, but there are so many other areas, as privileged parliamentarians, that we can focus on in terms of improving the situation, and it should be our commitment to do so.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Chair, we have heard some really horrific statistics during this debate. My friends who work for Haven Society, an organization that deals with gender-based violence, said that during the pandemic there was an eerie silence in our community. The fact that the phones were not ringing told them there was a serious problem.

This is not a women's issue. This is a men's issue. Toxic masculinity is a men's issue and is something that needs to be addressed with peer-to-peer work and the bystander approach of not standing by but ensuring that men speak up, talk to young men and boys, and talk to each other.

Could the hon. member comment on that and the kind of programs that need to be implemented and funded to ensure that this toxic masculinity ends?

• (2220)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Chair, I started to talk about the Angel Street campaign. What was really poignant for me when I participated was that a husband and wife led the initiative. The husband talked frankly to all the school children and people who were at the ceremony to rename the street about his pattern and history of domestic violence. What was most uplifting was that he made changes through support, programs and services and was now a mentor. He was very willing to talk to the young students about how wrong and ashamed he was for what he had done and how he had made those changes. Those things that support—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** We have to resume debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity this evening, even if it is just a very few minutes, to express my heartfelt sympathies and concern for the families of those who have lost their lives in these past months, specifically as they relate to this conversation and this take-note debate tonight.

These are heinous crimes and deserve the full weight of the law applied to them. We truly do mourn every woman who was lost. Over 160 women have been lost in the last year alone to femicide in Canada. It is very disturbing to consider that this is happening in our country, of all places, yet we cannot help but ask ourselves what the underlying cause is of this type of behaviour.

We heard tonight of different circumstances where I think we are not really doing what is best in our society to develop our young boys into men, who then become husbands and fathers. We hear about the after-effects a lot of times of the lives of people facing circumstances when maybe they were not taught properly about the values they needed.

When I went to the YWCA in Saskatoon to talk with the people there about their programs, they talked about how a lot of the young boys who come into their facility are very rough around the edges. We ask ourselves what is causing this. We want to just set that aside when really one of the things, as we talked about that day, is having easy access to pornography at a very young age.

On the Hill, we had an opportunity to see a film done about a wholesome family. The children were home-schooled, sitting at the table doing their homework, and this little boy, at a young age, clicked on a button that said he had to be 18 years old to click on the button but did not stop him from clicking on it. Over time, this young boy began to really act out and treat his mother and sister with an incredible level of disrespect. This was happening very quickly, in the midst of doing homework at the kitchen table while his mom was preparing a meal.

These are things in our society that are impacting the quality of our young men as they are growing up. In fairness, it is not just young men. We have to look at the deeper-rooted issues around violence in games. We hear all the time that we cannot deal with that, but these are things impacting future husbands and fathers, and it all starts at that level within a family.

I also want to make the point that we want to be developing solid relationships among people. We spend an incredible amount of time on our careers, or on getting Ph.D.s, or on things such as maybe developing a very strong ability to ski, but how much time do we spend developing ourselves into the people we would want other people to enjoy being with, and choosing to be the kinds of people other people would choose to marry?

I said once when I was giving a talk that, as a young woman, I had my picture of what I would want in a man. Yes, it was strong masculinity, but not toxic masculinity. It was someone who appreciated and valued me as an individual. There are all of these types of things we want to see in those we are looking for, but we have to remember those people are also looking for that in the person they are looking to have long-term relationships with as well.

This level of violence in relationships, where a partner is killed or controlled, does not happen in the later times. It happens over the time of preparing an individual to have character in life. Churches, gurdwaras and all of our religious institutions play a significant role in building into young people what those relationships should look like and what kind of people they want to be, as well as having character and values, choosing to tell the truth and being caring and compassionate.

• (2225)

These are all character traits that people need to have in their lives, so where—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I am sorry, but we have to go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Malpeque.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Madam Chair, there have been some very remarkable, heartfelt remarks tonight. I have a staffer who volunteers at a women's shelter in Charlottetown. There is no question that during the pandemic, the domestic intimate partner violence has gone up.

We know the problem, and the last speaker hit on a really important point. What is the underlying cause for this behaviour and this violence? Some of us are lucky that we were born into the families we were. Many situations are not like that.

My key question is for the last speaker, and really for anyone. What do we need to be focusing on? We can all outline the problems, and they are serious. Is it education? Is it training? Is it funding? Is it family relationships and working on that? Where we do have to go? We need to be targeting the solution here.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Chair, that question resonates a great deal with me. Being a pastor's wife, we deal a great deal with a lot of the hurts that people experience in their lives, and life is full of those. I do not know if this is a government responsibility actually. I am on the veterans affairs committee, and VAC has its role, but veterans helping veterans is where it is at.

We need to be investing in relationships at a young age. Building community is so key. Of course, with the COVID scenario we are in, isolation is absolutely a horrific scenario. One of the individuals who talked to me about Bill C-7 is a psychiatrist and he works at the University of Toronto and with the hospital. He is in favour of the bill, but even he said the number of seniors—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I have to give other members opportunities.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

### *Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I have noticed that unfortunately, when the Conservatives talk about certain social issues, they often focus on enforcement measures, such as increased penalties.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts this evening on some positive measures that could be implemented to support women, to boost their self-confidence and to promote the idea that they are more than just objects. I would also like to hear her talk about how women can become empowered and embrace bodily autonomy.

• (2230)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Chair, I feel very free in my own body. I am very proud of who I am as a woman. Part of being in that state requires people to come the realization that they have incredible inherent value regardless of other people and that they choose to make themselves the best self that they can be.

I am very proud of my relationship with my husband. I married my best friend. I would encourage young people who happen to be political junkies and are listening to any of this, although it is a good topic, to realize that to be the kind of people someone else wants them to be is not as important as ensuring they have that sense of value within themselves. That is not something other people can give them. That is something they need to develop on their own.

I have a lot of memories of my husband and I trying to assist people who have gone through very difficult circumstances. Life is hard, but everybody has value. The United Nations Commission on Status of Women is about that. I was there tonight. It is the inherent value of every human being. The fact that we are all different and that we have different perspectives is the icing on the cake.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.):** Madam Chair, I would first like to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle.

They were rays of sunshine, daughters, sisters, fantastic mothers. They were women. COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women. During the pandemic, twice as many women as men lost their jobs. It is primarily women who work in essential services. They are working on the front lines and are exhausted.

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The problem has become much more serious. Organizations on the ground have told us that the pandemic has deepened the isolation of women who are experiencing abusive and violent behaviour, that it has made it harder for women to leave their abusive spouses, and that it has increased factors associated with violence, such as alcohol consumption, financial insecurity and mental health problems. Lockdowns have meant less contact with friends and family, contributing to women's isolation and removing their social safety net.

In less than six weeks, seven femicides have occurred in Quebec. This problem is nothing new, but the crisis that has been raging for over a year has highlighted issues related to gender-based violence. The motion that was moved today was born of a concern that my colleagues and I have. The resulting discussion this evening is of vital importance. I thank everyone who has risen to speak.

We must speak out about the deaths of these women and about all victims of violence. We need to be aware of the problem. I am sure that I am not the only one here who feels uncomfortable walking or running at certain times or in certain places. Sometimes I even have to change my route when I am running because I feel as though I am being followed or because I need to avoid people who look threatening. Unfortunately, too many women can relate.

In Sherbrooke, a manifesto for the safety of women garnered 1,102 signatures. I want to commend Guylaine Cliche for this initiative. These situations are just one part of the problem.

For many, it is not even possible to be safe at home. That is unacceptable. Since the beginning of the crisis, I have been in contact with social workers in Sherbrooke to stay abreast of their reality and their needs. Organizations such as CALACS and l'Escale saw their requests for support increase and their work become more complicated. I saw the challenges they are facing: the lack of funding, the staffing shortage and the lack of volunteers. Needs are growing and the services are not keeping pace. That is why I am proud to have announced last September with my colleague Minister Bibeau, nearly \$130,000 to support them. These organizations are a lifeline for women and victims, but we know that the work does not stop there and that more needs to be done.

This evening's discussion, initiated at the unanimous request of the House, is proof that awareness of this issue is growing. That is definitely a step in the right direction. I also want to say that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has been discussing this issue for two months now. Interesting ideas have emerged from that, such as including the notions of cyber-violence and former intimate partners in the definitions in the bill. These are potential solutions that came out of expert recommendations, and they offer hope. I am very much looking forward to continuing our work on this because it will help the women of Sherbrooke and of Canada.

The witnesses who appeared before the committee reminded us that few women turn to formal support resources and that many never report their situation. That may be because they are unaware of existing services, because of barriers to access or because they fear worsening violence after they report. These findings suggest that we have a lot of work to do to get rid of the stigma associated with gender-based violence. We need to be proactive. We need to

work with teens on prevention and raise public awareness of this insidious form of violence.

• (2235)

Before closing, I want to share this message. We all have a role to play in combatting this type of violence. Anyone who is a victim of intimate partner violence or gender-based violence should talk to someone they trust and ask for help—

**The Deputy Chair:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. Her time is up. I even gave her a little extra time.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for questions and comments.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her important speech.

[*English*]

I would like to ask about the bystanders, people who may see things going on in their environment and may have some questions whether there is an abusive situation going on. One thing we can do as members of Parliament is to encourage people who are bystanders and who see situations around them that are problematic to be supportive of victims.

Does the member have any advice or suggestions for people who might be potential bystanders on how to intervene and how to support people in vulnerable situations?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his very important and relevant question.

I was a member of the board of directors for L'Escale, a shelter for women fleeing from violence. When we would go there in the evenings for our board meetings, we would see children doing their homework in the workers' offices. Their mothers were there to help and support them, happy despite it all, despite everything they had been through.

These are courageous women who are working together, joining forces and supporting each other. We should do the same to give them a hand, support them, be there and listen to them. We should be alert for early warning signs and encourage them to speak out to put an end to the inequality they suffer.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for her speech. She identified the problem correctly. It needs to be said again and again. When we talk about femicide, we are talking about women being killed because they were women.

On top of that, there is the importance of supporting survivors. I am also familiar with the shelter sector. I am even a sponsor in my community. I would like to highlight the work of all the women who work at the Maison Alice-Desmarais.



My colleague talked about the work being done by CALACS. It is good that some CALACS in her region have received funding. In my riding, Chantal Brassard from the CALACS in Granby told me that her organization did not qualify last summer, in the midst of the pandemic, even though she had submitted a program to provide proper support for survivors.

Given that we are in the midst of a pandemic and we know that women are more affected by violence, would it not have been a good idea to make sure that as many CALACS as possible, as many organisations as possible that had projects to support survivors, could get this funding?

• (2240)

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Madam Chair, I thank my almost neighbour for her question and comments.

I agree that all our organizations need support and financial aid. During the pandemic, we have been very present, investing \$100 million in emergency funding. For Quebec, that represents \$17.5 million. We brought in the first gender-based violence strategy.

These examples show our willingness to be there to support these organizations. I know that we can do more. The recent events provide further tangible proof that we must be there and collaborate with the territories and provinces to continue offering our help.

[English]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Chair, from the work I do on combatting human trafficking, I speak with many feminist organizations from across the country and they have all noted the increase in domestic violence across the country under COVID.

My questions for the hon. member is this. Does she know whether the Liberal government undertook the gender-based analysis that it promised to undertake on all its initiatives?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for the question.

It is an extremely important question. We are present, we are here to provide support and help, and we will continue that work.

[English]

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I would like to begin by offering my sincere condolences to the friends and families of the seven women who were killed in Quebec over the past seven weeks. These women were loved by their families and will be missed by their communities and their loved ones.

I would like to share a bit of a quote about one such victim. Her name was Rebekah Harry. She lived not five minutes away from me, five minutes from where I am sitting right now. To never know what is happening behind somebody's closed doors, how desperately somebody could need help, is the most tragic and heartbreaking thing.

I would like to share a quote about what her life was about to some of her family members.

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Rebekah Love Harry was born on January 28th, 1992. ... Her mother gave her the middle name LOVE of the fact that she was already loved so much by everyone. From a very young age, this angel would serenade the family in song and spread love everywhere she went. Little would they know that Rebekah would embark on a fight of her life. At just 2 years old this angel was diagnosed with Wilms tumor, a rare kidney disease, that she was able to combat with the help of her supportive family. This early battle must have instilled a superpower in her because from that moment on Rebekah became unmatched and lived life vicariously. Anyone who had a chance to be in her presence could feel something special.

These are the women, our sisters, who get murdered through domestic violence, through hatred. As we mourn the loss of these women, sadly, they are not the only ones whose lives have been taken as a result of gender-based violence.

We also remember the lives of at least 160 women killed in Canada in 2020, the thousands of our missing and murdered indigenous sisters, and most recently in the U.S., the Asian women killed in Atlanta. These are alarming tragedies that should have been avoided.

For too long, gender-based violence has devastated individuals, families and communities in Canada. Femicide happens at an alarming rate everywhere in our country, and it needs to end. Between 2016 and 2020, there were approximately 760 women killed. Another alarming statistic is from a 2020 study done by the CBC, which estimates that approximately 19,000 women and children were turned away from shelters across the country every month because shelters were full. After a decade of underfunding, the women's movement is making up for lost time in order to provide the support these women and their children need.

Widespread reports from across the country show that movement restrictions, loss of income, isolation, overcrowding and stress, stigma and anxiety have increased the incidence and severity of some forms of gender-based violence, especially for those who face intersectional barriers.

Gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive, deadly and deeply rooted human rights violations of our time, and is a significant barrier to achieving gender equality.

• (2245)

[Translation]

The pandemic has brought on unprecedented challenges and has had an impact on the health and safety of people in Quebec and across Canada. It has widened the gaps, intensified persistent inequalities and exacerbated the rates and severity of sexual and domestic violence.

[English]

We must work in partnership with stakeholders and counterparts in the other orders of government to put a definitive end to this, but work is under way and progress has been made. The Government of Canada is working and acting now to end gender-based violence in all its forms.

[Translation]

From day one of the pandemic, the governments of Canada and Quebec have taken measures to limit the impact on women and girls. The governments of Canada and Quebec signed agreements in the spring and summer of 2020.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I would like to end by saying that women who feel unsafe at home should use resources that are available to them to remain safe. Support lines are available in all provinces and territories across Canada. They exist to help find solutions. Please reach out.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Chair, I had the honour of working with the member as we travelled on the HUMA committee with lots of laughs. It was an honour working with her.

I also know that she was one of the first women Sikh lawyers in her area, and she should be very proud of being one of the first Sikh women lawyers in Quebec. I am sure there were many challenges. I hope she would talk about some of the challenges and perhaps the discrimination she felt in her field and in her community. If she could share that, I would love to hear it.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Madam Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, with whom I had the great pleasure of working. She always made me laugh as well. She has a great sense of humour, and I look forward to continuing to work with her.

I thank her so much for her beautiful comments about the beginnings of my career. Things are never easy when starting out. I can give an example. I once went to court to represent a client, and the client was not there. I stood on the defence side, and the judge asked me, “Are you waiting for your lawyer?” I said, “No. I am the lawyer.” We see a lot of these things happening.

The field I was practising in as well is mostly male-dominated, but now we are seeing more and more women come forward and we see more female judges, so I am very happy about that.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, it is a pleasure serving with my colleague at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Some things have been done in the area of immigration. For example, it is no longer mandatory to reside with one's spouse to finalize the sponsorship application. This requirement often forced women to remain in an abusive situation.

I would like my colleague to speak of other things we can do for people who arrive here and are at a disadvantage. For example, could we consider the possibility of investing more in phone lines so that immigrants who are victims of domestic violence can report it, as well as spending more in specific support for immigration to combat domestic violence?

• (2250)

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Madam Chair, I would like to thank my colleague. I am pleased to serve and work with her on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. She has a great deal of compassion, and I really like how she presents things.

To answer her question, which relates to compassion, I find that it is really important to have support, especially for women. We see that women are becoming increasingly isolated because of the pandemic. When it comes to immigration, women are sponsored and

arrive without their family. Sometimes they have no family and no friends here, and it is very difficult at first.

Therefore, I believe that it is important to give them the tools to handle problems or to talk with someone if they need to.

*[English]*

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Chair, I too have the honour of serving on the status of women committee with the member. She is very busy.

Recent media coverage has revealed that several hate groups and anti-LGBT groups, as well as 45 anti-choice groups, received wage subsidy funding through the government and through the emergency funding. I am wondering if she would be willing to help look into that and see if the government would be willing to revoke that funding for those anti-choice groups and those hate-based groups.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Madam Chair, it is such a joy and a pleasure to listen to this colleague as well at the status of women committee. She is very, very passionate, and I enjoy listening to her and thank her so much for her kind comments.

As to the hate groups, there is no place for hate in Canada. There is no place for hate in our society and our communities. I will definitely bring this up so that we can look into it further. I thank her so much for her question and her hard work.

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** Madam Chair, tonight, as we share our stories, comments and feelings about what has been happening, I would like to split my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

We take time to mourn the loss of seven women who died as victims of heinous acts of femicide in Quebec these last several weeks: Elisapee Angma, Nancy Roy, Marly Edouard, Myriam Dallaire, Sylvie Bisson, Nadège Jolicoeur and Rebekah Harry. May they rest in peace. My heart and prayers are with their families. May their stories compel us to take greater action to combat gender-based violence and protect women.

Last Saturday, Rebekah Harry was maimed and wounded in her apartment in LaSalle, Quebec. She died three days later. She was attacked by her boyfriend. Sadly, Rebekah's story is not an isolated incident. Intimate partner violence is a crisis in our country. On average, one woman is killed every two and a half days. One in three women and girls in Canada will face some sort of violence in their lifetime.

According to Statistics Canada, in 2018, of the 174,613 women who experienced violence, 78,852 experienced intimate partner violence. There is also the overrepresentation of indigenous women suffering domestic violence. They are three times more likely to report domestic violence than non-indigenous women. These statistics are deeply alarming.

*Government Orders*

Unfortunately, the pandemic has exacerbated domestic violence, the majority of whose victims are women. In a status of women committee meeting, a first nations leader testified that many indigenous women were more afraid of their violent partners than COVID-19. We need to take that statement seriously.

Because of lockdowns, exit strategies are difficult to execute for women trapped with their perpetrators. In many rural areas, women do not have easy access to transportation to be able to escape to cities where they can find a shelter. As many social services have gone online, poor access to broadband in remote areas makes it particularly challenging for women to access services virtually. Both transportation and broadband services need to be more accessible to these women to give them a means to escape and find help.

The bottom line across Canada is that isolation from lockdowns empowers violent partners to gain more control over a woman's ability to escape. With added anxiety and frustrations from economic instability and lockdowns, domestic conflict has increased. In addition, limited social contact means fewer opportunities for friends and family to recognize and intervene in domestic abuse. With the drastic lockdown measures, we have to protect Canadians from the spread of COVID-19, but we must also take drastic measures to protect women from domestic violence. We need to provide more shelters and transition housing, and support the advancement of a national action plan on gender-based violence.

On multiple occasions in the House, I have spoken about the need for a national framework for mental health, and I am so glad our party supports that. Family wellness is critical. We need to help the provinces provide more social work and counselling for families and individuals so they can heal, manage their conflicts better and learn to love themselves and others in healthier ways.

We need to examine the criminal justice system and policies for law enforcement response to ensure women feel safe through their cases and do not suffer in silence.

Men need mentoring to know how to treat women with respect. Fathers and male authority figures need to learn to treat women with more respect and model it to counter toxic masculinity.

We also need to empower more girls and women to have stronger self-esteem. They need to learn how to identify and reject abusive behaviour. The problem with domestic violence is that it continues even after the perpetrator is outside of that woman's life, with PTSD and the rebuilding of their self-esteem. That is why they need support.

I would like to call upon my 337 colleagues in the House to stand with me in a concerted effort to protect women. It should not be a partisan issue. It is worthy of our attention and efforts.

I know there are many women out there who are feeling trapped, hopeless, unworthy and have given up on trying to leave their perpetrators. They try to leave only to give up again and again. I would like to send a message to all the women who are struggling right now with domestic violence. If they are watching, I want them to know that they are valuable, loved and beautiful, and what they are experiencing right now is not the lot they were born to live. They were made to explore life and all its possibilities. It may seem impossible for them to break free from their prison right now because

their perpetrators seem too powerful for them, but the beauty and power within them is greater than the appearance of power in bullies who harm their partners. I want them to have courage and hope. They do not need to wilt. Fight for their right to live and reach out for help.

● (2255)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for her very heartfelt speech. As she said, we really need to find that thorough and wholesome approach in combatting gender-based violence and ensuring equality for women.

Can the member comment on how she feels about her party, the Conservative Party, voting against the special committee for pay equity in 2016, and subsequently her party and members of her party's stance on a woman's autonomy over her own body and her right to chose?

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Madam Chair, I appreciate that there are many different opinions and ideologies out there. We live in a democracy. I do not agree with everything everyone says in the House, or even within my party, but we are a democratic society and our party is very symbolic of democracy. I think the questions the member has raised require a greater discussion offline. Today, we need to focus on gender-based violence against women.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, growing up, I witnessed domestic violence in my own home, and as an adult I have supported friends and family experiencing gender-based violence. This has fuelled my passion, which I can see is shared by the member opposite, to address this issue.

It is very clear to me that poverty and trauma are intersecting issues that increase women's risk of violence. I worked with Victoria Women in Need. It does incredible work supporting women on their journey from crisis to wellness, or simply women supporting women with pre-employment programs and empowering other women experiencing these barriers. It is so clear that precarious employment and economic instability mean women face these additional barriers leaving abusive situations.

Does the member support a guaranteed livable income to ensure that women will have the economic security to support themselves in making free choices?

*Government Orders*

● (2300)

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Madam Chair, I agree there are issues with poverty contributing to women finding themselves in precarious situations. A lot of times, domestic violence is perpetuated by the women's financial dependence on her partner, and the goal is to help her to find more independence. I believe in the care and financial support that the government can provide at different seasons, and think it is something that requires very detailed, specific and unique models for different circumstances.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, I want to thank my hon. friend from Port Moody—Coquitlam her very impassioned and moving speech contributing to the take-note debate this evening.

I want to ask her to expand on what we can do as women. She attempted, in her speech, to directly speak to women who might be listening tonight to continue to be brave to escape dangerous situations, recognizing that at every step of the way they may face danger, even from the former partner. I would like her to expand on her thoughts.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Madam Chair, that is an amazing question that I appreciate. What it comes down to is that a woman needs to come to a place where she is so sick and tired of the way she is living that she hits that wall of not being able to live that way anymore, and finds the courage from that to be able to break free. If someone does not hate the situation they are in enough, then they are not going to find the courage. I want the women out there who are struggling with this to also identify with the hate they have and with the hardships they are experiencing to say that they are not going to take it anymore, and they will find that courage.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Madam Chair, I really wanted to speak tonight in this debate on violence against women because the fight to end violence against women is not just a women's issue.

I was moved by many of the testimonies I heard from my colleagues this evening. It is important that we make the fight to end violence against women a social issue, and we must ensure that everyone gets involved.

What prompted this debate, as we all remember, was the murder of not one, not two, not three, but seven women in Quebec in just over a month—seven women, mothers, who have left grieving children and loved ones behind. This kind of grief is difficult and unacceptable for a society like ours, which claims to be open and modern. Seven women were killed in just over a month, when the province normally averages about a dozen such murders a year, which is already far too many. To get the numbers out of the way, 160 women died as a result of violence in Canada in 2020, which is one woman killed every two and a half days. That is completely unacceptable.

I am sick and tired of this reality, which has only been aggravated by the pandemic. However, the pandemic did not cause this violence, which is present in so many men still today. It just exacerbated it.

After these events, today I called shelters back home to find out what was going on in the Mégantic—L'Érable region. I have been in regular contact with many of them for a long time. Since the beginning of the week, I have had a lot of questions about the people back home. When you live in a smaller community, word gets around when domestic violence occurs, and it is often blamed on a temporary fit of anger, emotion or whatever. Although surprising when they occur, these actions are then quickly forgotten because, unfortunately, far too many of us turn a blind eye.

I have been told that since the second wave of COVID-19 hit, the shelters are always full of women who have nowhere else to go. One of the shelters I contacted told me that it provides many services off-site because it does not have enough room. Incidents of violence are apparently becoming increasingly serious, and danger levels are rising. More cases are being reported to police, and I am told that action must be taken more quickly to get children to safety. I just cannot fathom it.

I cannot accept that a shelter that can usually accommodate people must turn them away for lack of room. Our office had to get involved with another shelter to help a woman who had problems with the system. I will not provide further details because our community is small, but it was a very difficult situation. I was also made aware of the difficulties posed by smart phones and social media, which some violent men use to monitor their partners 24 hours a day.

Obviously, these places want and ask for more money, but they especially want to see more prevention in schools, and not just starting at age 15 or 16. Even relationships among young people have the potential to be violent, and I was surprised to learn that similar behaviour can start at such a young age. We need to better educate our sons. Parents have a role to play. As a father, I have a role to play. Although my children are older, I want to do this for my grandchildren.

The legal process needs to be simplified. Enough with the lenient sentences that do not always reflect the severity of the crime committed. Sometimes, a thief will receive a harsher sentence than someone who assaults a woman, and this is completely unacceptable. Stakeholders are also calling for lawyers, judges, police officers, the directors of youth protection in Quebec, and the various stakeholders to work together. Greater awareness is needed.

I now want to talk to men and implore them to ask for help before hitting or controlling a woman. These men are not alone, and violence is not a solution. As men, we must always remember that love is not controlling and love is not violent. Love is supposed to be loving. We cannot confound the notion of domestic violence with love. Men do not express their love to women through violence.

If a man hears this message this evening, if he feels as though he is trapped in a straitjacket and he wants to talk, I would ask him to seek professional help or to call a friend but to please never again harm a woman.

*Government Orders*

● (2305)

*[English]*

**Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I want to thank everyone for the wonderful discussion this evening. It has been a real honour to listen to so many passionate voices on this super-important topic this evening. I also want to thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

Every morning, no matter how tired I am, I try to go for a run and I listen to songs. I love pop music, but there is this song by Shawn Mendes with these two lines:

I wonder, when I cry into my hands  
I'm conditioned to feel like it makes me less of a man.

From your perspective, and this is just your own opinion because I do not expect that you are a professional on this, what is it that we could do to help our boys and young men feel like it is okay to show emotion in a healthy way, and to do so in a way that respects themselves and the women in their lives?

**The Deputy Chair:** I would remind the member that she is to address all questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, it is a difficult question, but I think showing them an example in our own homes is probably the best way, and to speak with them.

*[Translation]*

We simply need to tell these boys and young men that relationships are not bad, they are not unkind, and they should not make you feel hurt.

We especially need to tell them not to turn a blind eye to the small impatient gestures we see everywhere and to talk about them. When they see things they do not like happening around them, it is important for them to say so and to be able to tell their parents about them. We need to encourage these boys and young men to speak up.

That is the reality. There are too many people who keep too many things bottled up inside them. I am not a professional, but that is what I think. Talking about things is the first step in expressing one's emotions, in my opinion.

*[English]*

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for his speech today, and I agree that this is a very important topic. I am glad that we are all talking about how we can improve.

However, I am a little frustrated hearing people say in the House that women need to be brave or that women need to get tired of it so that they will walk out the door. The reality is that it is hard to walk out that door when there is nowhere safe to go, when women do not have people who can guide them along the way and help them to get out of that and know that they are going to be safe, and that the people they are with, their children, are going to be safe.

Could the member talk about the reality that we need resources so that women can safely flee?

● (2310)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, my colleague is absolutely right. I have talked to shelter workers about that.

The first thing they wanted us to do was be more present and make sure that all community resources could join forces, talk about this, and take frontline action to help these women, who, it is true, cannot always walk out and do not want to leave their kids at home. Those are not easy decisions to make.

I think that is why, this evening, I also wanted to talk to men about their responsibility in these situations. It is not just up to women to find solutions. Men have to be involved. As a society, we all have to be involved to find a solution. Rapid intervention and making sure women know they can get help are absolutely necessary.

*[English]*

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Chair, we are dealing with a form of systemic racism here really. This is not just something that has been amplified by the pandemic, but has been around for a long time.

I would like the member's comments on the pernicious impact, especially on young men, of the way women are portrayed in video games, movies, music, television, not to mention what is going on online, including pornography.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Madam Chair, today's society has access to a lot of information. Some of it is good information, but I think most of it is bad, whether it comes from video games or social networks.

Can we control everything, or do we need to better educate our young people, especially our girls, about all this abundance?

We need to have that debate. One thing is certain: We need to prepare them better to face life, because life is not always easy. It can be hard. We have to show our young people that not everything that lies ahead will be beautiful. Some things are hard, and we must be able to talk about them.

*[English]*

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, a strong voice for women in the House. I am happy to be sharing it.

Today we have been taking in this place about gender-based violence, and I want to speak a bit about the continuum. Women face aggression and disrespect throughout their lives in public and in private, and we need to stop condoning and accepting this behaviour. I have an example. I love to run. It brings me calm and joy. However, before I go on a run I have to think about certain things. Will there be enough people around? Will there be enough light? Will I have a phone? This is about all the ways that women's movements are constrained. We are made smaller.

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I was reading a social media post by a runner. She was stopped by a man who insisted that she stop running and talk to him. It was a small thing. She wrote, “The little things that we’ve been socially conditioned to respond to ever so sweetly, that we are often too nice to challenge—these become the big things we can no longer ignore. Women do not exist to please men.” I do not have her name so I cannot credit her for that, but it has been shared many times. I want to thank her for this because all of these small things that are said and done to constrain women somehow say they are less.

I do not want to trivialize this debate. It is very important to highlight the women we have lost, in particularly the seven women in Quebec we lost recently, and the recent report about the devastating femicide numbers in our country. However, there is an atmosphere that builds toward an acceptability of deeper aggression by some people, and it is important to look at that.

The UN says that one in three women is subjected to unwanted sexual behaviour in public spaces. Frankly, if we ask women about this, we hear so many stories. We have heard some today.

When I was a young teen, grown men would make comments to me about my body and would even reach out to touch me, in subways, elevators or on a busy street. No one said anything. We need to stand up and stop this behaviour. When I say “we”, I am calling on men specifically to join us in taking action to stop this behaviour.

I also recognize I am a white cisgender woman, and the experiences of women are not all the same. I acknowledge that there are women who face greater risks and fears because of race, gender identity, disability and other factors. I am speaking about my own experience, and I know there are other voices that must be amplified if we are going to get this right.

When women are not seen as having equal value, when we are seen as being there only to support and satisfy the needs of the men in our world, that leads to greater violence down the road. The director of advocacy at YWCA Toronto said that to end intimate partner violence we can start at home by teaching men and boys to respect women. A similar point was brought home by the UN in its resource document, which says, “Start conversations about gender roles early on, and challenge the traditional features and characteristics assigned to men and women. Point out the stereotypes that children constantly encounter.... Talk about consent, bodily autonomy and accountability to boys and girls”. These are important pieces.

I have focused on public spaces, but some of the greatest dangers for women can be in private ones. The UN Secretary General referred to a shadow pandemic and said that some of the greatest threats to women and girls can come from their own homes.

I want to focus on the path forward: the friends and families of women experiencing violence. Let us listen to her story without judgment and help her to form an escape plan.

I have talked with women who run the local shelters in my community and they point out that some women fear going to shelters right now because they fear exposure to COVID. I want women to know that shelters are doing important work to help keep people safe from COVID. They are using PPE, cleaning and even running

alternate sites to allow for greater spacing. Some federal funding has gone specifically to providing those resources to keep shelters safe during COVID. I want to thank the women who are running these operations for doing such an amazing job of keeping people safe in this difficult time.

In summary, let us teach our boys how to respect women and girls. Let us teach our kids about gender roles and stereotypes. Let us speak out against acts of aggression. Let us collect data about what is happening. Let us listen to women and, if needed, help them build an escape plan. Let us support our local shelters and advocacy, and let us take action against violence against women and girls.

● (2315)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Chair, I really appreciate my colleague's emphasis on teaching men and boys about respecting women. I want to take this opportunity to credit my mother, who has four sons, for really emphasizing that and trying to pass it along to us. It is something I think about a lot as a father of daughters and sons.

One of the big concerns I have is that young boys are often exposed to violent sexual images on the Internet. So much of the socialization that happens is through images people see online. My colleague from Peace River—Westlock and other members have tried to push for things like meaningful age verification on the Internet to try to address the fact that people are being exposed to images that shape their perceptions of what is acceptable regarding the treatment of women.

Does the member have a comment on what we can do collectively to address the issue of the kinds of information people are being exposed to through online images and messages? They can contribute to violence against women. How can we combat that?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Madam Chair, it is important that we think about all of the different sources of information that come to young men and women about stereotypes and about demeaning people. We should make sure to provide resources and guidance as family, friends and people in the community, specifically for things like the non-consensual sharing of images, child pornography and other types of images. We are working on legislation to deal with those online harms, and they will be important pieces.

• (2320)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on equality and what can help achieve it.

We know that women are currently not equal to men. They have been more harshly affected by the pandemic. There are still problems with pay equity. Furthermore, more women are victims of violence.

In the 1970s, a royal commission on the status of women stated the following: "No country can make a claim to having equal status for its women so long as its government lies entirely in the hands of men." At that moment, there was only one woman and 264 men in the House of Commons.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the participation of women in politics. Could achieving equality in politics help achieve equality in other areas?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her question because I find that it is very important. One thing I really liked this evening is that we heard from many women. Also, our Chair is a woman.

There are women here who have important roles. Our voices are very important and we must use them to provide support.

[*English*]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Chair, the report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls found that the link between resource-extraction projects and violence against indigenous women is a serious problem that demands attention.

I had a meeting with one of my constituents and she told me about her nation, which is located close to a resource-extraction project. She talked about the threat of violence. She also talked about her worry over COVID and its spread during the pandemic.

Does the member agree that the government needs to do more to address the issue of man camps and violence against indigenous women?

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin:** Madam Chair, I mentioned it briefly, but there is no question that many intersections play a role in violence against women and increased risk. We absolutely do need to provide more support.

Regarding the recommendations in the missing and murdered indigenous women study, I have been able to participate in some of the round tables coming out of it. There is a lot of important feedback about the path forward and really important leadership from first nations, Métis and Inuit communities that can lead the path forward so we know how best to respond.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Chair, I want to especially thank the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth for sharing her time with me and for her kind words.

Tonight's take-note debate has been mentioned several times as being historic. I have to say I was surprised to find that this is the first time in the history of this Parliament and in the history of this place that we have had a take-note debate on the issue of women

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murdered by their intimate partners. Violence against women is so prevalent in our society that it strikes me as strange that this is the first time Parliament has taken up the debate, but I also want to say that I am impressed with the speeches, with the sharing and with the non-partisan commitment. I regret the extent to which partisanship crept in now and then, but I think it is important to recognize that we are all in this together.

We recognize that we are in a society that is, whether we want to face it or not, a patriarchy that is, to its bones, sexist. We also live in a society in which we have to acknowledge systemic racism. We have to acknowledge that a lot of work needs to be done.

What prompted tonight's very important take-note debate was the tragic killing of seven women so very, very close together in time in Quebec, but we recognize as well that over the course of this pandemic, 160 femicides have taken place. One hundred and sixty women have lost their lives to intimate partner violence.

Many of the references have been to urban centres. There could not be a place in this country more idyllic than Saanich—Gulf Islands. I am so honoured to represent the community here, but we had, in one of the most idyllic places within my idyllic riding, a case of a woman murdered by her husband in June of 2020.

I want to say her name: Jennifer Quesnel. She had three little boys. She left her husband of 18 years because she was unsafe and only went back to the home because she was certain he was not going to be there. He was there. He murdered her and then he took his own life. It left the community reeling, but it happens far too often.

There is lots of good evidence and there are lots of good studies showing that men in some situations are jealous, do not want their wives to find happiness, and Jennifer Quesnel's family gave a statement to the media to say that he had killed her because if he could not be happy, he did not want her even to live.

Margaret Atwood is credited with something as a quote that actually was a longer commentary in which she said:

Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.

This is how we live our lives. I was taken by the fact that Global reporter Mercedes Stephenson wrote a long thread on Twitter within the last number of days about what it is like in the normal course of our days as women to navigate dark places, to get from where we parked the car to where we are moving through a dark place. She describes step by step what she does unconsciously, looking around to see if she is in a safe place. Other women have mentioned this tonight. Is the area lit? A woman clutches her keys in her hand in case she needs to lash out to protect herself.

*Government Orders*

What I found striking was not her relating to everyone what a woman does day to day to navigate safely in spaces that are public; tonight we recognize the most dangerous spaces are the private ones. What I found astonishing was how many of her male colleagues posted comments to say how shocked they were. “This is how you live your life?” Yes, this is how we live our lives.

We should do things differently. Let us celebrate those movements and those men who want to make a difference, like Paul Lacerte, his daughter Raven and the Moose Hide movement. Let us end violence against women and children. Let us have men step up and say what is acceptable and what is not. Let us fight patriarchy by saying we are equals at all times from our birth, baby boys and baby girls, and let us make sure that as babies they get a fair chance, that they are not subjected to trauma themselves. This is a societal project.

[*Translation*]

This is a societal project.

[*English*]

It starts tonight.

• (2325)

**Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Madam Chair, the member's words moved me very much, as have many of the women who have spoken tonight, and some of the men as well.

She is right: It is a societal problem. From day one, children need to be taught that we are equal, that one is not more important or valuable or loved than the other. It is a societal problem and it is a serious one.

If we look at what is going on in England right now, what does the member think about the idea of making misogyny a hate crime?

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester publicly for her bill, which we carried through the House a few days ago to second reading to deal with environmental racism and how it has affected the lives of Black Canadians and indigenous people in this country.

Misogyny is clearly a hate crime. We do not acknowledge that these are hate crimes, when we have the incel movement, and we had that killing. I will not say the name of the killer, but he has just been found guilty of murdering people on the streets of Toronto. What was his incentive? He hated women. This is not something that is rare in our society. It is all too common, and it should be recognized as such.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Chair, first off, I want to thank all the participants in tonight's debate. I do not know or have all the answers on how we can completely eradicate violence against women, but I do know education and shining a light on the fact that women are being held hostage by their partners is one small step in doing that.

These women do not choose this abuse. They are hostages. I am hoping tonight's debate will help more people become more aware of this horrific situation. Finally, for all those women watching out there, they should know there is help out there. There are resources

such as, in my own riding, Women's House Serving Bruce and Grey.

I fully acknowledge more resources are needed. Does my hon. colleague agree?

• (2330)

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Chair, I want to acknowledge that the hon. member holds the seat of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, once held by the first woman elected member of Parliament in this place, Agnes Macphail, in 1929, and I am sure he speaks with her spirit.

Yes, we need more resources. Yes, even though the government has increased resources to women's shelters, the fundraising that is usually happening through volunteer organizations has not been possible with COVID, so they are still terribly short of resources. We need to do more.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her comments and her involvement in the feminist cause. We are both members of the Canadian Association of Feminist Parliamentarians, which is a cause that unites us, much like the environmental cause.

That being said, a few days ago, I had the opportunity to watch some United Nations meetings. Because of the pandemic, an event that was supposed to take place last year in New York was postponed to March of this year and held virtually. It was an event to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action.

What came out of this meeting was the connection between the threats that women still receive, the violence and dangers they may encounter, and the fact that these are still barriers to going into politics. According to the data and statistics, on average, a maximum of 25% to 30% of parliamentarians are women. That does not include countries that still do not have enough women at the helm, in government or in elected positions.

I would like my colleague to talk about the connections between the power that women can wield and the barriers still posed by the risk of violence.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Madam Chair, I will respond briefly.

It is an honour to talk to my colleague from Shefford about feminist issues around the world and at the United Nations. This is an issue for women around the world and at the United Nations, not just those in Canada. We need to do more than we are doing now.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cloverdale—Langley City. As always, I look forward to her remarks. I find her to be an incredibly thoughtful individual who is constantly in touch with her constituents. I know she will add a lot to this debate.



*Government Orders*

Before I begin my comments, I will compliment the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam. This is a member who joined our caucus after the 2019 election. She has repeatedly touched my heart with her remarks, specifically about Bill C-7 and the necessity for hope. I actually think those sentiments ring true here this evening as well, as we discuss such an important matter, the issue of violence against women here in Canada. This has really come to light with the terrible tragedy of these seven lives recently being lost in Quebec.

As I reflect upon this and the situation within myself, my family, my circle of friends and my community, what I keep coming back to is the incredible toll this last year of being in the pandemic and working together for the collective good has taken. It has been so important, but it has come at such a price to our mental health.

I genuinely believe that although this problem existed, and of course it existed, as the previous speaker indicated, for generations before I was here, we have really seen it amplified in the last year with the situation of the pandemic.

I am really happy that my leader, in his five-point plan for securing the future, has indicated he will make mental health a priority. That is of absolute necessity. Our discussion here this evening reflects it.

I see it in my own community. CTV here in my city has reported that before COVID-19, 5% of Canadians reported high to extreme levels of anxiety. Now we see that that number has multiplied to 20%. Self-reported cases of depression have more than doubled from 4% to 10%. When asked what they expect if social isolation continues onwards, respondents generally anticipated anxiety levels to remain the same but for depression to worsen.

These types of mental health impacts are the things that we are seeing playing out within the pandemic. It is taking a severe toll. In fact, there is fear that when we finally come out of this pandemic or return to the new normal, we will experience an echo pandemic.

In addition, we have seen opioid overdoses spike during COVID-19, as a result of people's attempts to cope and figure out a way through this pandemic. My province recorded 301 opioid deaths from April to June of this last year, more than double the rate from January to March. We see that increasing significantly, as well.

Distress Centre Calgary has said that suicide-related calls, texts and chats were up 66% in the month of October over previous months. I could go on and on.

All to say, I think this is a problem that has existed for a long time, but the situation we have found ourselves in over the last year has amplified it beyond belief. We have to figure out a way to emerge from this as a society with the government leading the way. Unfortunately, it has led to horrific consequences, as we have come to learn.

● (2335)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, in the member's speech she mentioned that there is a lot more to do to address the issue of gender-based violence. I wonder, as we find out through a holistic, all-emcompassing approach the

role of a woman's autonomy over her own body, what role that plays within gender-based violence.

I ask the member how she feels about the stance of her party and members of her party on the control a woman has over her own body and the way that interacts with gender-based violence in teaching a woman that perhaps she is lesser than somebody else who has control over what happens to her body?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Chair, what the member is really asking is how we can contribute to solutions in our own communities, and that is an excellent question.

Personally, I try to meet with the YWCA to look for solutions as a member of my community on a regular basis. I am always very certain to attend the YWHISPER Gala, which directly addresses these issues we face, and which are really at the centre of this discussion here today.

I want to thank her for that question. I hope she will look for constructive ways we can work together and look to our participation in our communities to improve this dire situation.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Chair, I want to first thank my colleague for seeing how forms of violence such as patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour are often a precursor to overt physical violence.

The member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has put forward a bill to make this kind of behaviour a criminal offence, which would allow earlier intervention by police, courts and service organizations, without having to wait for violent incidents to take place. Does my colleague see that legislation like this would be really important in preventing violence against women?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for the work he and his party are doing in an effort to end violence against women. They do incredible work in this regard. I have the good fortune of sitting on the HUMA committee with some excellent members from his party.

I definitely think we always have to be thinking of legislation that moves us in that direction. The first step is to think of legislation that allows us to emerge into the new normal with our mental health intact. That is the first step. Certainly while there are other things that can be done and other steps in the future that can be taken, I am very much focused on the here and now, as is my party, and as is my leader, and emerging from this pandemic whole.

● (2340)

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** Madam Chair, I would like to ask my colleague, within the federal framework we are talking about, how could women be more supported and empowered in the area of mental health?

*Government Orders*

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Chair, I think it starts here in the House with us all supporting each other and always respecting each other's positions and opinions. It starts with our work here together to further Canada because that really is our ultimate goal, to have a whole and complete Canada. It starts with us working together and not against each other.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC):** Madam Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in tonight's important debate on the Parliament of Canada's response to the disturbing rise in gender-based violence that we are seeing across our country.

Before I get to my remarks on this motion, I want to start by offering my sincere condolences to the families of the seven women in Quebec who recently lost their lives in heinous acts of gender-based violence and to all of those who have been affected by this kind of violence in our country. Canada mourns their loss and their pain. On behalf of at-risk young women across this country, I will be supporting this motion.

Tonight I would like to talk specifically about the part of the motion that calls on Canadians to do more to combat the problem of gender-based violence. When it comes to ending violence against women, we need to look at some of the root causes, and one of the most glaringly obvious cause that we seem to gloss over here is the prevalence of violent pornography. The fact that anybody in the country can log in to Pornhub and watch videos of women being raped is a serious problem that we need to address.

Boys as young as 10 and 11 years old are easily able to access pornography, which has a massive impact on their developing brains and poisons their attitudes toward women. According to a 2010 study that analyzed 304 scenes from best-selling pornography videos, almost 90% of scenes contained physical aggression, while nearly 50% contained verbal aggression primarily aimed at humiliation and degradation. How are we allowing this to be made so easily available? How can we allow young men to grow up consuming this horrific material and expect to have a society where women are treated with the respect and honour they deserve? Why is it acceptable for men to get pleasure out of watching women being abused? Men are not born to hate women and see them as objects. The attitudes and behaviours that lead to gender-based violence are learned. We are never going to be able to protect women without addressing the root causes.

I watched in horror the ethics committee testimony of David Tassillo and Feras Antoon, two men who sat there in front of all of Canada as if they were merely a couple of simple businessmen. These men are profiting off the complete humiliation of women, many of them minors. They talked about ensuring the best quality experience for their customers. They said they wanted to be the best in the world at providing online entertainment, but let us be clear: This is online entertainment that traps women in a web of shame and helplessness, online entertainment that teaches men to view sex as nothing more than a transaction they can pay for on demand.

It is absolutely no wonder that a young, wealthy, elite politician's son could come to the conclusion that groping a female reporter is perfectly acceptable. It is no wonder that he believes he experienced things differently than she did. Of course he did. When we

regularly portray women as objects, taking that object in hand is no different than grabbing a beer from the fridge.

It is sad that tonight that when we come here to debate the terrible scourge of violence against women, it seems that we women are again being used, that this debate might have an ulterior motive lurking below the surface. I am hoping that our words here tonight will be more than noisy gongs and clanging cymbals, that we really care about those vulnerable daughters and granddaughters who have met death far too early at the hands of an abuser.

I am here to stand for young women across this country. I am here to stand for my daughters and my unborn granddaughter. I want them to know they are far more than an object to be used and discarded like yesterday's trash. They are precious jewels. Their bodies are more valuable than gold. Their ability to love and care for others is immeasurable. They should ignore the message that is hammered into their heads by the media and popular culture day after day. They are not objects. They are not for sale. They do not deserve to be treated as trash. They are priceless.

Together, with all Canadians, let us be the catalyst for building a better world for our daughters and granddaughters, as well as our sons and grandsons. We can do this and it just takes beginning right here.

• (2345)

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I have a lot of concerns about the member blaming the pornographic industry as the sole reason for intimate partner violence, gender-based violence and toxic masculinity.

I will pick up on her closing remarks when she said that women are not objects and ask her if she believes that a woman has the autonomy to decide what happens to her body. I will leave it at that.

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen:** Madam Chair, I would first like to correct the record. I did not say it was the sole reason. It is one of the root causes, but there are many reasons why we have this happening. We live in a world where girls are told that their value is in their WAP and how well they can straddle a stripper pole. We live in a world where Willie Pickton was able to pick up a prostitute, rape her, kill her and throw her in a meat grinder and nobody noticed. I am ashamed that instead of this being about violence against women, it seems that we are instead making this a political ploy. Please, let us make a difference for women. Let us really take this issue in hand and make a difference.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Chair, we know that under the Conservative government of Stephen Harper, women's organizations saw cuts to critical funding that would have been really important to prevent violence against women and provide safety for women who were the most vulnerable. They did not get the stable funding that they needed. I believe that it is going to take all parties in the House coming together and supporting long-term stable funding for women's organizations, to give them the support they need to deliver the important services they provide.

Does my colleague agree that we need to invest more, and it needs to be something we all support if we are going to support these important women's organizations across our country and the important work they do?

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen:** Madam Chair, it is very important that we do not try to just throw money at this issue. This issue is much bigger than that. This is a very core issue and we, as a Canadian society, really need to look at what we teach our young people. Absolutely, we need to continue to support our women. There has been tremendous work done during the pandemic to give assistance where needed. There has been a large increase in violence against women and we need to continue addressing that, but we need to look at the core issue and where we are really going off the rails.

• (2350)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Chair, I thank our member who provided such a passionate speech because she does have a great passion for her constituents and for all Canadians.

As we are looking at this issue, I want to talk about what we do when we speak to our young boys. I feel sorry for my son every single day when he brings his girlfriend in and I remind her to just tell me if she ever has a problem because I am right there. I think sometimes it is about showing that we are strong and I want to be that role model for the young women and girls in our community, and for the boys as well.

We have Changing Ways in the City of London, which helps young men who have gone through difficult circumstances with domestic violence and violence against women and young girls. What are some of the things she sees in her community, and how can we expand those resources to help our young boys become good men?

**Mrs. Tamara Jansen:** Madam Chair, honestly, the big thing is this definitely starts at home. For myself, I know I tried very hard to ensure my kids were not accessing anything that was unacceptable, yet we still struggled with the problem. We, as parents, need to be very aware that this is getting more and more accessible.

I have an 11-year-old granddaughter and I fear for her when I see the kind of material that is available and how these young girls are being lured through things like Snapchat and Instagram. It is terrifying. As a grandmother, I want to make sure that I support my own daughters in helping them in any way we can to make sure we are keeping them safe from these kinds of—

**The Deputy Chair:** Resuming debate; the hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I am so glad we are having this debate tonight. I think it has long been overdue.

I heard a lot of people speak. All of them were passionate and really cared about what they were saying, but I want to make a statement: COVID did not cause violence against women. It exacerbated it and exposed it, but violence against women is pervasive. It has been rooted in history, tradition and culture for millennia.

In history and culture, women were possessions. They were chattels. It is only a little over 100 years ago that women in this country stopped being chattel and had the right to vote. They began that long march to being treated equally.

The idea of toxic masculinity, while it sounds horrible, is very real. It is real because, as women are becoming more equal and are moving forward toward equality, we find that some men who are still rooted in that history, tradition and culture do not like it, especially as women like MPs or judges begin to make decisions in influential places. These are the women who are being focused on. We need to think about that and recognize it.

Also, violence against women is intergenerational. We know that 43% of boys who grow up in an abusive home become abusers themselves and that 35% of girls who grow up in an abusive home marry, live with or find a partner who is also abusive. I think we need to talk about the fact that this is a reaction. What we have seen today is an absolute reaction by toxic masculinity against women moving forward.

When we look at violence against the women we love, we get upset and react if they are raped or murdered, but that is not the only form of violence against women. Women experience psychological violence every day. They are being threatened. Social media have increased the ability for people to speak out against women. Social media have been threatening to women. They can be threatened anonymously on social media, and those threats are part of the violence. They do not even have to happen. Just the fact that they are being threatened with language that demeans women to make them feel less valuable and feel badly about themselves—

**The Deputy Chair:** I am sorry to interrupt. I cannot remember if the hon. member mentioned if she was splitting her time.

• (2355)

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Chair, no, I did not. I am sorry. I would like to say that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Vancouver East. She is a champion for the cause of gender equality as well, so I am pleased to share my time with her.

*Government Orders*

However, I wanted to say that it is the psychology that starts it all. For instance, when we sit around a boardroom table with male colleagues and say something, they pretend we did not speak or put it down or make it sound silly. When women are threatened with rape, the death of their children and those types of things, they do not have to come to pass, but it is part of that act of putting women back into their places, of demeaning and threatening them. We see it everywhere. We see it specifically in the language in pornography and social media, the language that shames women, makes them feel like less than they are and devalues everything they do. It happens in the workplace and it happens at home. When carelessly we say something to our daughter or we say something to a female partner and it is putting down something that she just said, that again gives a strong message. We see it in film. We hear it in jokes.

What is more important is that we see it in parliaments around the world. I want to point to Ocasio-Cortez in the United States, who was berated, shamed and had vile language used against her by members in her own Congress.

This is the kind of thing we need to talk about. We need to talk about all those root causes.

We need to talk about intersectionality. Women are not one large group of people. Women of a visible minority, women who are LGBTQ+ or indigenous or suffer with mental illness or disabilities are put down and demeaned and experience violence, whether it is physical or verbal or comes in other ways.

I want to quickly touch on what we need to do about it.

We have shelters, and right now my government is responding to the emergency of it all by putting millions of dollars into shelters and helping women get food, find stability and be safe. That is all good, but that is a band-aid, as far as I am concerned. We need to deal with the root causes. We need to change the institutions—the police, the judiciary, parliaments and all of the institutions that continue to foster systemic violence against women in the way they behave and the way they treat them, and the way that moves forward.

I want to talk about one institution—

**The Deputy Chair:** Unfortunately, there is no more time. The member only had five minutes. There is five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for her passionate remarks, and it has been a pleasure working with her on the foreign affairs committee. We do not always agree, but it is certainly a pleasure working with her.

I think that the member is quite right to say that this problem of violence against women did not start with the COVID-19 pandemic. It certainly did not, and there are many root causes. However, she also said that the situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the issues may be the kind of isolation some people have experienced as a result of the pandemic. People are not as able to connect with others and maybe share things that they are experiencing, which is much more challenging as a result of this kind of isolation.

Could the member comment on that social context? How can we think about the particular challenges that result from the isolation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirements that are in place, and how can we try to combat that to ensure that people can access those supports in the midst of an environment where they may not be exposed to community outside of their home in the same way they might normally be?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Chair, I think we could do that by providing shelters and places that are safe, such as safe houses, where women can go and be free from violence. Here I mean all women, not just women who suffer from domestic violence. I think that is the first thing we can do. However, as I said before, that is a band-aid.

We need to now look at how we can deal with it, and I think we need to teach our children, our boys, to value women. We need to teach it in schools. We need to work with provinces and create a pan-Canadian plan, because provinces are responsible for education. The value of women should be taught in schools.

There are so many things we can do, such as in our institutions, including training our judges, training our police and MPs, because sometimes without knowing it, what we tend to do in the House when a woman speaks with a high voice and says “Oh, excuse me”, is to titter and laugh at her. This is part of being—

**The Deputy Chair:** We do have to allow time for more questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

• (2400)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her passionate speech. All of the speeches we have heard this evening have been passionate.

There is one topic that we have not really talked about, though, and that is violence among seniors. Talking about how seniors have been affected by the pandemic has become a recurring theme for the Bloc Québécois. Financial violence is a form of violence, and we have highlighted the fact that the pandemic has left a lot of seniors financially vulnerable.

Does my colleague agree that we need to make seniors more financially secure and that this could have a direct impact on violence among seniors?

[*English*]

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Chair, I fully agree with the member. When we talk about intersectionality, we want to talk about all of the different types of women who are more susceptible, and seniors are susceptible.

*Government Orders*

Financial violence against seniors by dependants, by their children or by someone they are sharing their home with, also disempowers them. It treats them with that kind of psychological violence that we talk about where they are frightened and unable to make decisions on their own or to have any money to go out and buy something for themselves. That is a huge piece, but we have to talk about that under the intersectionality rubric: the different types of violence that women face based on who they are and the group they belong to.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Chair, the member talked about societal issues, institutional barriers and changes. Sex trade workers often face some of the gravest situations, yet our society continues to segregate them and treat them in a way that puts them in even greater danger. I wonder whether or not the member will support the call for action to decriminalize the sex trade.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Chair, absolutely. The Supreme Court ruled on it. With regard to the three areas that we have to decriminalize, we just have to do it.

I speak to sex trade workers very regularly, about 50 of them, on Zoom. They really need to get help to find safe places to work, to live and to be protected.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Chair, I thank the member for Vancouver Centre for sharing her time with me as we acknowledge and highlight the risks and violence women are exposed to in the face of the pandemic, but, of course, not just during COVID-19.

Many members spoke about intimate partner violence, toxic masculinity and offered statistics about the situation. I really do appreciate their heartfelt words. I would really like, though, to harness the energy tonight into action. As we know, behind every number is a real person, someone's daughter, a partner, a mother, an aunt, a friend, someone who is loved and deserves to be loved.

With the onset of the pandemic, income loss was dramatic and significant. We know that 63% of pandemic job loss was experienced by women. Other factors affecting women included things like school closures, which meant women were more likely to stay home with their children and abusers all the time. It meant that fewer people were reaching out for support and had no privacy to call for help. For some women, especially those in precarious employment such as the sex trade, their loss of income was swift and significant, yet they were not eligible to access federal emergency benefits.

In fact, PACE Society, an organization that does exceptional work in my riding in support of sex trade workers, knows all too well what that meant for so many of the women with whom it works. It had to resort to crowdfunding to generate some support for the women, because it was not able to access government support. This is in no small part the result of societal as well as the government's lack of action in addressing the structural issues, the criminalization of sex workers, which, in turn, put them in an even more unsafe and precarious position not just during the pandemic but every day.

Parliamentarians can do something about that. It means we have to challenge ourselves to step outside our own comfort zones. It

means we have to set aside judgments. It means valuing the women as they are. All too often, there is so much judgment, which escalates the stigma. Whether a person is someone in the sex trade, or struggling with mental health challenges or experiencing domestic violence, the stigma is real and its effects can be deadly. This must stop.

Over the years, I met so many women and their children who shared their experiences with me of being in a violent relationship but had nowhere to go because they could not access support or housing. Some told me that they felt they had no choice but to return to the abuser. For me, it is not that they do not have the courage to act. The pandemic has brought to the forefront the situation and has highlighted social inequities in our communities that have existed for far too long.

The biggest challenges are stemming from the collective inability to address poverty on a larger, much more comprehensive scale; the homelessness and housing crisis; and the inadequate supports for mental and physical health. COVID-19 brought these issues to the forefront and made things more dramatic, but those are the issues of many of the women in all our communities. In Vancouver East, this is especially apparent for those in the Downtown Eastside.

With COVID-19, this also meant an impact to less access to services, supplies, food security and even sanitation. Lack of bathrooms and sanitation options are a major problem for those who do not have a place to call home. WISH, another great organization in my riding, has been working to get some space as an extension of its services so it can get washroom trailers out back in its lot. Safe spaces now limited also means fewer spaces for people to be in the community in shared spaces to access free meals.

It also does not help that the perception of those who are deemed to be "lawless" in the media require significant police crackdown. This reality means that it all too often creates an even more dangerous situation for the people who are in those situations. Policing is not necessarily the primary solution. Addressing the issue of poverty and housing is. Safe, long-term housing is what is needed.

● (2405)

The report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, in its call for justice no. 4.5, calls for the government to establish a guaranteed annual livable income for all. Calls for—

**The Deputy Chair:** Unfortunately, the member's time is up.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I want to echo some of the things the hon. member for Vancouver East spoke about. I know that women in the sex trade have been given help by our government, by helping them with all of the things they could do.

*Government Orders*

WISH has an overnight shelter now. It is not just a shelter, but a place where women in the sex trade can come. During COVID, women in the sex trade had no single means of support. That was when they talked to me, and we went to bat and worked very hard to support them in many ways.

It is really important that we pick this up and run with it, and that we recognize that if we are going to talk about women and about violence against women, we need to empower women. Women in the sex trade should not be looked down upon by most of us. There should not be this stigma and fear. Pickton was able to do what he did because they were hiding in all of these places where the police and no one—

**The Deputy Chair:** Unfortunately, I have to allow for more questions and for the answer.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Chair, that is the crux of the issue, which is that we need to get at the structural issue. Yes, those organizations need funding, no question about it. They need core funding, by the way: many non-profits do not have access to core funding. More than that, we need to change the laws to address the issue and change the structural barriers there, including addressing poverty, racism, stigma, misogyny, discrimination, criminalized communities, criminalized activities, violence against women and long-term housing so that people can have an option and the support that they need.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to ask the member a question specifically about the issue of sex trade workers, which she spoke about in her speech. She knows the approach that was taken by the previous Conservative government was to recognize that sex trade workers are victims, to ensure that we are not prosecuting sex trade workers but that we are prosecuting their abusers: we are prosecuting pimps and johns.

This follows the Nordic Model, which has had great success in reducing human trafficking. Generally, if we look at European countries, those that have legalized the buying and selling of sex have had higher rates of human trafficking, whereas those countries that have stopped any prosecution of sex trade workers but have prosecuted those who are buying sex, including pimps as well as johns, have had much more success in reducing human trafficking.

I wonder if the member would see value in an approach that allows us to support workers and support victims but continue to prosecute the pimps and johns who are victimizing these women, while also providing a housing-first approach to homelessness and other measures that were put in place in the past.

Does the member agree that we have seen the success of this Nordic Model in Canada as well as in other jurisdictions?

• (2410)

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Chair, there are still very many sex trade workers who are in very dangerous situations. What has been done, frankly, is not enough. The reality is that they continue to be criminalized. That is their reality right now, and it puts them in danger. We have to set aside our judgment to say, “What do we need to do to ensure that those women are safe?” We need to look at that

and take it seriously, and not just say that what we have done so far is enough, because it is not.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her speech. She spoke about how we need to ensure women have safe, adequate housing to break the cycle of violence.

Why is it important for the federal government to invest more by transferring more money to Quebec, the provinces and the territories to do just that?

[*English*]

**Ms. Jenny Kwan:** Madam Chair, I absolutely agree that the federal government needs to invest in, and partner with, the provinces and the territorial governments as well as with the non-profit communities and indigenous governments.

On the issue of housing, the federal Liberals cancelled the national affordable housing program in 1993, and we now have a major housing crisis on our hands. We need to actually step up and do this work.

For tonight's debate, it is important for us to talk about the issues, but more important than that is for us to take action. That is what I am fighting for.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Chair, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and the people of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, even though we would prefer it if the issue that brings us together here this evening simply did not exist.

I really wanted to take part in this evening's debate because it is more important now than ever. The pandemic has affected lots of people in lots of ways, especially the most vulnerable people. The pandemic has also exposed other problems. Unfortunately, it has shown us just how sick our society is.

In recent weeks, there have been seven femicides in Quebec. Seven women were killed by a violent partner—seven women in seven weeks. I want to express my deepest condolences to the family and friends of the victims and to the family and friends of the 160 women who were victims of femicide this past year.

Some people might hear the word “femicide” and wonder what new words they will think of next, but words say more than we think. We have to call things by their true names. Violence against women is real. This is a real epidemic.

Earlier this week, a well-known media personality in Quebec criticized people and the media for using expressions like “crime of passion” and “intimate partner violence”. He was right. What we are talking about is femicide.

As others before me have probably explained, femicide refers to the killing of a woman simply because she is a woman, regardless of the context. We are talking about a hate crime against women, perpetrated by men. This is still happening far too often in 2021. It happens to our sisters, our friends, our aunts, our mothers and our daughters. In Quebec, one out of three women will be a victim of domestic violence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this scourge. It is time to acknowledge the incredibly alarming rise in gender-based violence across the country. It is time to condemn gender-based violence in all its forms.

Just a few hours ago I learned about a woman in her 30s in Maria, in the Gaspé region, in my riding, who was hospitalized because her husband beat her on the head with a hammer. I repeat, she was beaten with a hammer. The victim apparently took advantage of the fact that her husband was working out in the garage and fled on foot to the hospital. The documents filed in court reveal that the acts of violence took place over a period of 17 years. The news is absolutely horrific. Every time we turn on the television, we hear about another tragedy like this one.

In the past few days we have seen that people seem to finally be waking up and wanting to do something tangible. I sincerely hope that this will encourage women who are victims of violence to leave and report their abuser. I hope that this shows that we want to do better and fight with them. Everyone has a role to play to improve the society we live in, not just elected members and governments. We can certainly do more and we must do better to help these women. As human beings we can do better to eliminate toxic masculinity and to educate our boys. We must show them that violence is never the solution.

Men must also have this conversation. I was glad to hear the Premier of Quebec, François Legault, say that there is nothing masculine or virile about lifting a hand against a woman. It is quite the opposite. It is sheer cowardice. The fact that a man, a premier, called out this problem is a good thing, but it does not solve everything. We need to keep repeating the message and driving it home to change the mentality.

I will come back to a concept I raised earlier. We use it more and more all the time, but we do not really know what it means.

Toxic masculinity is a concept that refers to the stereotypical image of a man, the well-known traditional stereotype that says a man must be socially dominant and virile, a synonym for insensitivity. Toxic masculinity is harmful not just to women, but also to men, who are drowning in contradictory messages.

According to the code of toxic masculinity, a man must not show emotion, cry, be afraid or break down. These gender stereotypes are sometimes instilled at school and can have serious consequences, like the ones we are seeing today.

How do we eliminate toxic masculinity? There are not many solutions. It starts with education, socialization and example setting. A boy who grows up with a violent father is highly likely to turn out the same way in spite of himself. Children who grow up in a violent setting are exposed to a type of learning where the traditional gender roles are deeply internalized. Not only do they sexualize

### *Government Orders*

the parental roles, but they ascribe powerlessness to the mother and strength, violence and power to the father. Unfortunately, it is a cycle. The child grows up with this association and develops toxic masculinity because they learn early on to associate certain behaviours with the sex of the individual.

The seven femicides over the past few weeks are a cruel reminder of the existence of physical violence, but violence comes in many forms, such as psychological, verbal, sexual and financial violence. These types of violence have serious consequences for women and their children.

Studies have shown that one of the main reasons women leave their violent partners is the knowledge that there is help for them and their children.

• (2415)

These resources exist, but they are in serious need of our help, of financial assistance from the federal government.

It is more important than ever for women to know that they are not alone if they decide to flee. They need to know that we will not fail them. Tonight's debate sends them a message, and it gives me hope to see men and women prepared to send the message and act.

I am not here to blame the government this evening. Sure, it should have done more, but we are all responsible in some way.

Violence against women is not a partisan issue. It is an issue that demands that we step up, join forces and work together, in spite of our differences of opinion on other issues. We owe it to all of these women who are suffering every day.

There are already a number of solutions on the table. We have talked about education, but what, specifically, can we do at this level of government to deal with this issue? Can we work on prevention? Can we support the organizations?

The pandemic has cut victims off from their social support systems and has isolated them, exacerbating the problem of domestic violence. We need to send a clear message to victims that they must not hesitate to call 911 and flee the situation. Even during curfew, the police are there to help victims. Where can they go? That is often a big fear. In Quebec, shelters are unfortunately underfunded, and the demand continues to grow.

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A Radio-Canada article reported that the organization SOS Violence Conjugale has noticed a clear trend over the past three years. For a long time, the number of calls was stable, at around 25,000 per year. Over the past three years, it has risen, first to 29,000 and then to 33,000. This year it is around 40,000. There were 40,000 calls for help from women in Quebec. This increase in the number of calls for help comes at a time when there is a serious shortage of accommodation, whether it be emergency shelters, second-stage housing that takes in women after their stay in an emergency shelter, or affordable and safe housing for the future. In 30% of cases, SOS Violence Conjugale has to ask the person to call back later.

Despite the shortage of spaces, some organizations were recently refused the funding they need to run shelters or social housing projects. That is what happened to the Alliance des maisons d'hébergement de 2e étape pour femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale, or Alliance MH2, which submitted a project to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as part of its federally funded rapid housing initiative. This project has been put on hold and is not considered a priority. There is no way to find out whether it will be a priority in the future. However, the situation is urgent. The refusal rate for housing applications at Alliance MH2 shelters in Montreal is 75%.

Unfortunately, many organizations that provide social housing for women have also had their projects put on hold. That is the case in Montréal, the Eastern Townships and throughout Quebec. I am also thinking of women in regions like mine, in the Gaspé, where there are virtually no resources and everyone knows everyone else, so victims cannot see any way to report a violent spouse who is well liked by everyone outside the home. That situation is far from easy.

Fortunately, there are dedicated people in the region who are fighting for these women. I will take this opportunity to commend the work of the team at the L'Émergence and Mary Grace women's shelters in my riding. They help women who are victims of domestic violence and their children. These people have been fighting for years to ensure that women have access to a safe place where they can escape their abuser and provide a safe haven for their children.

For more than 30 years, these people have been working tirelessly to secure the necessary funding to ensure that the women in the Avignon RCM have shelter and housing, as well as high-quality counselling and support services. In fact, one project that just got off the ground is a thrift store whose purpose is to fund the organization but also help the women rejoin the workforce. It is an excellent initiative, but it proves that the financial needs are dire.

I am glad that the Government of Quebec says it is ready to invest more money and more resources if necessary, not just to help

women, but also to provide more prevention and mental health resources to help men who have issues with violence and behavioural problems.

That is what we need, and the federal government needs to do its part too. It has to work with the Government of Quebec and the provincial and territorial governments to accelerate investment in shelters and transitional housing.

We have a lot of work to do, so let us get started.

● (2420)

[*English*]

**Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.):** Madam Chair, the member is absolutely right: Violence against women is not a partisan issue. However, it continues because there is no accountability. There is a culture of impunity.

All night I have been trying to get answers from certain members of the opposition to find out if they believe that a woman has control over her own body, so I want to ask the member, who gave a very passionate speech, about this. If we do not hold our leaders to account, how are we going to address violence against women?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud:** Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for her excellent question, which, frankly, is also a very difficult one.

I do think that is where we must start. As I was saying, we must work together, regardless of our differences or the political parties to which we belong. Yes, it starts with accountability.

Unfortunately, it is 2021 and we still do not have full control over our own bodies. We must send the right message. The next generations, the girls who are currently in school, must have the self-confidence to go out into society without being afraid of becoming victims of violence. Unfortunately, they still live with this fear.

The message that society is sending is not the right one. Our role as elected members is to change it. We have a lot of work to do, we have to start right now and we have to work together.

**The Deputy Chair:** It being 12:23 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the committee will now rise.

(Government Business No. 4 reported)

[*English*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:23 a.m.)







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