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CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 25, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to debate Bill C-20 and will resume from where I left off.

Bill C-20 would respond to the long-standing need to establish an independent review of the CBSA and improve review of the RCMP. This bill would build on the previous proposals to create a review body for the RCMP and CBSA. For example, Bill C-98 and Bill C-3 from 2020, were introduced but never completed the legislative process.

Bill C-20 would also respond to the recent federal court decision that the RCMP must provide a response to the CRCC interim report within six months. I would like to highlight that this bill would also advance the Minister of Public Safety's mandate letter commitments to create a review body of the CBSA; to set timelines for the RCMP's and the CBSA's responses to complaints and recommendations; to ensure continued compliance with accountability and review bodies; to combat systemic racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system; to continue advancing efforts toward a path of reconciliation with first nation, Inuit and Métis peoples; and to ensure that the RCMP and CBSA continue working to transform and to create a culture of accountability, equity, diversity and inclusion.

This bill would add to existing CRCC powers by providing enhanced accountability and transparency tools, including the stand-alone statute, which reinforces its independence from the RCMP and CBSA.

Set timelines for the RCMP and CBSA responses to the PCRC interim report mean that responses would be expected within six months of any complaints. Specified activity reviews and recommendation responses would be expected within 60 days.

Bill C-20 would include important provisions related to the collection and publication of race-based data by the PCRC, with RCMP and CBSA, to increase knowledge about systemic racism in law enforcement and inform responses.

The mandated public complaints and review commission's public education and information program would increase public knowledge and awareness of the commission's mandate and of complainants' rights to redress. This bill would provide for offences and punishments for obstruction and non-compliance with the PCRC.

Individuals detained by the CBSA must be informed of their avenue to make a complaint. This bill would also provide the PCRC with additional authorities to recommend that the RCMP and CBSA deputy heads initiate disciplinary-related processes or impose a disciplinary measure under certain circumstances. The deputy heads would be required to advise the minister and the PCRC chairperson whether discipline was initiated or imposed.

The new PCRC would also be able to conduct a joint investigation, review or hearing of complaints with appropriate authorities of any other jurisdiction when needed. The PCRC would refer national security matters to the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency and co-operate with the agency to avoid duplication of work.

The public complaints and review commission would be responsible for conducting specified activity reviews of any non-national security activities of the CBSA, either on the PCRC's own initiative or at the request of the minister.

Government Orders

• (1005)

The bill would create a statutory framework in the Canada Border Services Agency Act to govern the CBSA's responses to serious incidents, which are now governed by internal policy. There would be an opportunity for the CBSA to conduct internal investigations into alleged serious incidents. There would also be a requirement for the CBSA to notify the police of jurisdiction and the PCRC when such incidents occur.

There would be a requirement by the Canada Border Services Agency to provide the PCRC with reports or other information of serious incidents. The authority would also exist for the PCRC to send an observer to verify the impartiality of the CBSA's serious incident investigations. Finally, there would be a requirement for the PCRC to report on the number, types and outcomes of serious incidents as part of an annual reporting system.

I will speak briefly about the mechanics of the PCRC as well. The PCRC would be headed by a chairperson and up to four additional members, including a vice-chairman appointed by the Governor in Council. The bill would provide Governor in Council regulation-making powers for information sharing and related procedures.

We all rely on the CBSA and the RCMP. We interact with the CBSA and the RCMP and they safeguard our security goods, but we need to have assurances about efficient, fair and equal treatment.

Bill C-20 would be a major step forward for Canada with an enhanced review body and assurance of consistent, fair and equal treatment when Canadians interact with the Canada Border Services Agency or the RCMP. I urge hon. members to join me in supporting the important bill in front of us, Bill C-20.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech on Bill C-20. I would like to suggest a few amendments.

The Bloc Québécois believes that an independent complaint process is both necessary and good for the public. For example, in early January 2020, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada found significant flaws concerning searches of travellers' electronic devices, which demonstrates the importance of having an independent body to review complaints.

I would like my colleague to tell me what solutions can be found in Bill C-20.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very important question

I would like to point out that we are at second reading stage and that this is when questions can be asked. At the next stage, when the bill is studied in committee, amendments can be presented and discussed, and decisions will be made based on these discussions. Then the recommendations will come back to the House. The process is open and transparent, as is Bill C-20.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are two important questions that I think Canadians need answers to.

The previous iteration of this bill to enhance the public complaints and review commission was tabled in this House without consultation from union and labour, for example, the Customs and Immigration Union. As we will recall, the Prime Minister called an unneeded and unwanted election in the full pandemic because he was hoping to get a majority, which Canadians did not give to him.

First, have there been full consultations with the Customs and Immigration Union and other unions that are impacted by this?

The second is a question of resources. We have seen the government simply refuse to provide resources in a whole range of critical areas, but not for the banks. The banks get whatever money they want, such as \$750 billion in liquidity supports. However, at the border we have seen starvation, and that has meant an influx of illegal weapons.

Can the government assure us that this time it will put resources in place so that the public complaints and review commission could do all of the functions that are attributed to it in this bill?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, consultation is a key area, and we have done some consultations. Have we done all the consultation? I cannot confirm that today.

What I can say is that when we bring this to committee, we will hear from even more witnesses and experts in the field. This will provide more information so we can have those discussions, bring it back to the House, and then we can make the necessary changes if they are required at the time. The consultation continues. This is only the second reading.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, so I will be looking to see if that consultation was done. We will be making sure this comes through as a good bill, because we are in favour of this as a start.

This bill has been brought up twice before. Unfortunately, it did not make it through. It died both times. Could we get some reassurance from the member opposite that this time we are going to get this bill through and see it through to fruition?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his work on the committee, which is very important.

In 2019, we brought the first bill forward, and then again in 2020. That was Bill C-3, and it did not get through the process. The intent of the government and this side of the House is to get this done. We are counting on the opposition to support us as we move forward. This is a very important bill, which would bring in an independent body to feed us some information, as well as bring more oversight and transparency to the process.

• (1015)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize, whether it is the RCMP or border controls, the people who fill those positions do a fabulous job. Like in any other occupation, there are bad apples. What is nice about the legislation being proposed is that it would build confidence from the public in our institutions. By establishing an independent, arm's length commission, we are allowing for that confidence from the public.

Could my colleague reaffirm why it is so important for us to have these independent commissions? After all, it is the bad apples who often cause the issues that get the media's attention and make things look bad for the RCMP or the border control. A vast majority of those civil servants do an outstanding job for all citizens here in Canada.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. People need to have trust in the process, and they need to trust our institutions. That is why this independent study would bring not only the oversight but also more transparency.

What is important is that an annual report would be submitted as well. That is another process that would take place and help us in the process. Also, we will be collecting and publishing the aggregated race-based data, so there would be more data concerning systemic racism in law enforcement.

Those are key issues where we need to make improvements. We know this. Canadians have been asking us for more improvements and to have a two-way street, so if there are complaints that come forward, there is a process in place to support the work that needs to be done as a follow-up.

Mr. Doug Shipley: Mr. Speaker, it is great to have a quick rebuttal to the last answer I heard, where the member talked about Conservatives supporting this bill. We always support good legislation that comes through.

Recently on the public safety committee, we have been reviewing Bill C-21, which is questionable legislation that is coming through. What is slowing that down now is a huge amendment that has been thrown at us, not at the parliamentary stage but at the committee stage. I want to make sure there will not be any big curveballs thrown in this when it comes before our committee.

Can I get reassurance on that from the member opposite?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, we believe in members of Parliament working together to bring forward amendments that will make life better for Canadians. That is a crucial part. I believe we do that the large majority of times.

Government Orders

However, I am extremely disappointed with how things are unfolding on the Standing Committee on Official Languages, because as the members know, our government has brought forward Bill C-13. All the organizations across the country are showing clear support for this bill, and the NDP is supporting us. However, the Conservatives and the Bloc have been, for three consecutive weeks now, filibustering at that committee. That is sad.

When the member starts talking about bringing amendments in, I would like the opportunity, in the official languages committee, to go amendment by amendment so that we can get the bill passed as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment for the parliamentary secretary. I would like him to ask himself some questions. Why does the Bloc Québécois feel it has to filibuster the Standing Committee on Official Languages to slow the passage of the official languages bill? Because the Liberal Party, this government, with the support of the third opposition party, opposes amendments put forward by Quebec to protect French and stop its decline in Quebec.

Ever since Confederation, the number of French speakers outside Quebec has declined so precipitously that they are practically the stuff of legend. Nothing in Bill C-13 would change that reality. The use of French will continue to decline in Quebec. Fewer than 50% of the people on the Island of Montreal—one in two—speak French. The main reason for that is the Official Languages Act and its policies that support English in Quebec at the expense of French.

• (1020)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and his comments.

However, I disagree with him completely. We are the first government in Canadian history to recognize the decline of French in the province of Quebec. That is a good start. We want to bring in positive measures that will yield results.

Quebec also shares some responsibility, since it is partially responsible for immigration. It is up to the province to ensure that more people from around the world who speak French come to Quebec in order to increase its francophone population. That is what we are doing in the area of immigration, in places where French is a minority language in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while we have heard in previous interventions lots of people sharing their displeasure and some of the challenges they face at committee, I am rising to support Bill C-20 at second reading.

Government Orders

Bill C-20 would replace the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP and establish a stand-alone commission, the public complaints and review commission, for both the RCMP and the CBSA. As we know, the CBSA is the only major law enforcement agency in Canada without an independent review mechanism for the bulk of its activity.

There has been a major gap that has not been addressed, despite calls from the NDP dating back to Harper. It is our hope that Bill C-20 will provide accountability, increase the public trust at the border and provide an independent dispute mechanism that may be used by CBSA officials as well.

We heard comments about how, when things get to committee, bills sometimes have material departures from their initial spirit. I happen to believe that committee is precisely the place where both the opposition and the government get a chance to reflect on feedback from committee and perhaps improve upon bills to shore up some of the gaps that might have been identified.

I want to speak specifically to the good work of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. In the 43rd Parliament, it had a report entitled “Systemic Racism in Policing in Canada”. For this report, which was adopted by the committee, both government and opposition members came together. I believe there were 19 meetings within the study with over 53 witnesses. There was testimony from subject matter experts, and there was a very detailed report of perhaps 42 recommendations on how to tackle systemic racism in policing in Canada.

However, when the government has the opportunity to take the good work of Parliament, and, as an extension, the citizenry of this country, it still presents bills that are wholly inadequate to address the very topics raised in previous Parliaments and that continue to be a problem here today.

While Bill C-20 has the potential to provide these importance changes in civilian oversight to both the RCMP and the CBSA, it falls short. It falls short of meeting several of the important recommendations from the report, namely indigenous oversight, including indigenous investigators and decision-makers, and the appointment of Black and racialized Canadians.

For those who might not be familiar with these processes, I would like to expand on what it is like to have personal interactions with police, be it the RCMP, the OPP, local policing or the CBSA, anybody who has power and control over anyone's inherent rights and feelings of belonging in their own communities.

I have had these experiences in my own city as a city councillor. I have been stopped and questioned by local police simply for existing in my neighbourhood and waiting for a bus. When we were engaging in these discussions around systemic racism within policing, as a former city councillor, I would tell residents that when they have an issue, it is so important that they lodge a formal complaint.

The reason is that if there are no formal complaints, there is no quantitative data that would show problematic trends of structural and institutional racism within policing. I filed a Police Services Act complaint given my very problematic interaction with Consta-

ble Andrew Pfeifer at that time because that was what was made available to me.

I wish I had known then what I know now, which is that our civilian oversight of policing is completely culturally incompetent and devoid of any type of context that would account for the various lived experiences of people outside of the culture of policing.

• (1025)

In fact, we have always had this culture of policing policing, where we have former cops appointed to boards to investigate former cops, and then we have quasi-judicial tribunals, kangaroo courts, set up to either absolve them or, if it is politically convenient in the moment, to teach them a lesson.

I can tell members that, as a political leader within my community, I had senior members of our local police service, on their way out, tell me explicitly that they were about to teach me a lesson. From the outset, within the first five minutes of my experience at a Police Services Act hearing, as a Canadian of African descent, as a city councillor, as somebody who had been accorded power and privilege, it was made apparent within the first five minutes that the hearing officer, a former deputy from the Peel Region, Terence Kelly, was unwilling to and incapable of hearing any aspects related to anti-Blackness within policing.

It was a textbook case of racial profiling, and he said within the first five minutes that he would not hear the case. In legal terms, it is what is called a “reasonable presumption of bias”, which jaundiced the entire process. The case ended up in the courts for over two years, with over a week of hearings, in which I, as the complainant, became the target of the investigation.

It was a completely humiliating and dehumanizing experience, one that if other people in that same experience asked me if they should go through that, I would say “absolutely not”. I would tell them to save themselves, to get the best civil lawyers they can and to sue, because that is the only language the police understand. That is the only place where one can get on a full footing for proper disclosure, because as we have heard, in all levels of police review, they just refuse to co-operate.

Government Orders

We had subject matter experts provide, over the course of 19 hearings and 53 witnesses, including Robyn Maynard, a brilliant mind on what structural and institutional racism looks like, on what anti-Blackness looks like. They provided their testimony, as did former RCMP officers like Alain Babineau, who understands it from both the inside and the practical street application, both from what discipline looks like and from what anti-Blackness looks like out in communities. We had learned professors like Akwasi Owusu-Bempah break down all the ways in which systemic, institutional and structural racism occur.

The recommendations are clear, the recommendations that have been obviously omitted by the current government, which had the opportunity to address these issues.

We have a Liberal government that likes to speak the language of identity politics without any commitment to justice. The Liberals will go out at Black Lives Matter. They will take a knee and will say all the right things, but when it comes down to actually providing legislation that all members of Parliament in that committee supported, the government refused.

Namely, it refused to ensure that the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission of the RCMP allow for meaningful and engaged indigenous participation and to hold the RCMP accountable for wrongful, negligent, reckless or discriminatory behaviour toward indigenous people. There are videotapes of the RCMP brutalizing indigenous people across this country time and again.

When is it going to be enough for the current government to finally take a position, listen to the reports and implement these things?

The fourth recommendation is that the government appoint indigenous, Black and other racialized people, and residents of northern communities, to the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, and for them to have investigation and leadership positions within that organization. I am sorry, but when Officer Terrence Kelly takes on my case and says within the first three minutes that he is unwilling and unable to listen to any parameters of race, that is negligent, it is discriminatory and it only further serves to uphold the institutional, structural and systemic racism within policing.

In my closing remarks, I call on the current government to do better by people in this country, to listen to the work of the House when it comes together in a non-partisan way to address these issues, and to cease bringing back these empty and shallow bills that are devoid of any of the things that they purport to be standing for within our communities, and, with specificity, to listen to the voices of Black, indigenous and racialized people within this country.

• (1030)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton Centre's voice is so important in the House. I would like to give him the opportunity to speak to some of the amendments that he would like to put forward at committee.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. Forty-three recommendations came from the report on systemic racism in policing in Canada. I would go even further to note the recent events within the context of the occupation, the convoy and

what we witnessed in Nova Scotia. Right now there is a lack of trust and an erosion of trust within our institution of policing.

The report is good work, with 18 meetings, 53 witnesses and 43 recommendations. It blows my mind that the government will set aside the good work of Parliament that has already been done and provide incomplete legislation.

We are calling on the government to listen to the recommendations that are contained within the report on systemic racism, which is informed by subject-matter experts across the country. At committee, I implore members to address these things and make sure they are included, because if the bill comes back to the House and they are not included, there is definitely going to be a problem.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the public safety committee report that the member referred to on racism within the RCMP made a number of recommendations, as the member highlighted, about indigenous policing. I wonder if the member could perhaps expand his thinking on that a bit. The report made recommendations about indigenous policing not only on reserve but off reserve. I wonder if he has some comments about that.

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the hon. member for allowing me to expand on that, given my proximity to the Haudenosaunee territory, where the Six Nations of the Grand River are actively involved in their own policing.

If we acknowledge that we are in nation-to-nation relationships, then we have to grant sovereignty, ultimately, over all decisions within those territories, which would absolutely include policing. We only have to look at the pipeline to prison, which starts, as we know, with policing in schools and ends up with the disgusting and abhorrent overrepresentation of indigenous people within our prison systems. That is absolutely an indictment on the ways we have failed to provide fair and adequate access to the legal system.

What we need to do is work toward having a justice system in this country. We cannot have a justice system until we address the ongoing colonialism that is expressed through the state's monopoly on violence as it relates to policing within indigenous communities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, in which he pointed out some facts about indigenous people in the justice system.

What does he think of the border services complaints process? Are there any other processes that would help ensure that indigenous people are no longer overrepresented?

Government Orders

● (1035)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green: Mr. Speaker, this is an important reference to the Jay Treaty, which is a historical reference to the sovereign nationalism that is embedded in the treaties that allow indigenous first nations people who are a part of the Jay Treaty to travel freely, unencumbered, back and forth across the border. It is an integral part of our historical treaty rights, which need to be respected.

This is a very important point brought up by the hon. member from the Bloc. I suggest that given the recommendations, we invite experts on the Jay Treaty to come here. Part of the understanding of cultural competency and having not just moral duties but a legal duty to understand the implications of treaties and treaty-based systems nation to nation would include the CBSA having a full and clear training process on the Jay Treaty. Then when people who have inherent rights arrive at the border, they will not be criminalized, vilified or pulled into secondary to explain what their rights and constitutional protections are under the Jay Treaty.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments.

Canadians must have confidence in the agencies tasked with keeping them safe. Be it in our communities or at our borders, public trust is essential to the work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canada Border Services Agency. This legislation seeks to close a long-standing gap by providing the CBSA with an independent review body that would ensure transparency and accountability for Canadians. For the RCMP, the bill would update and enhance its current civilian accountability body, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission.

I would like to use my time today to speak to some of the details of this legislation.

Bill C-20 would combine RCMP and CBSA review under a newly established public complaints review commission, or the PCRC. Understanding that Canadians expect timely responses from their public institutions, and recognizing past criticisms that the RCMP has been slow to respond to reports from the CRCC, this bill would establish defined timelines for RCMP and CBSA responses to complaints and recommendations.

For specified activity reviews and recommendations by the PCRC, an RCMP or CBSA response would be required within 60 calendar days. Responses to interim reports concerning complaints would be required within six months, and the RCMP and CBSA would report annually to the Minister of Public Safety on progress in implementing PCRC recommendations.

However, establishing strict reporting standards is just one component of this legislation. Our government recognizes that in order for the PCRC to have the tools to ensure accountability, it has to be given the appropriate investigative powers and responsibilities. This bill would do just that. It would establish a robust mandate for the PCRC by giving it the ability to conduct specified activity reviews, on its own initiative or at the request of the minister, of any non-national security activities of the RCMP or the CBSA.

The PCRC would also be able to receive and investigate complaints from the public concerning the level of service provided by the RCMP and the CBSA, as well as the conduct of RCMP and CBSA employees. The findings of these investigations, along with any recommendations, would be reported to either the RCMP or the CBSA and to the minister.

In addition, the PCRC would be able to recommend that RCMP and CBSA deputy heads initiate disciplinary-related processes, or impose a disciplinary measure, under certain circumstances; conduct a joint investigation, review or hearing into complaints with appropriate authorities of any other jurisdiction when needed; refer national security matters to the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency and co-operate with NSIRA to avoid duplication of work; and have access to any information relevant to the review or complaint that the RCMP and the CBSA possess.

Another key aspect of this legislation is ensuring that the RCMP and the CBSA continue their work to transform their cultures by enhancing accountability. This would contribute to our government's efforts to combat systemic racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system, and would continue advancing efforts toward a path of reconciliation with first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

With this bill, the PCRC would be required to collect and publish disaggregated race-based data, in consultation with the RCMP and the CBSA, to increase knowledge about systemic racism in law enforcement and inform solutions to better respond to it. Canadians have made it clear that addressing systemic racism in law enforcement is an urgent priority. This includes work done by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, which culminated in the report entitled "Systemic Racism in Policing in Canada". Our government understands that collecting and publishing race-based data on complainants is one way that knowledge gaps around systemic racism would be filled.

Government Orders

● (1040)

I am pleased to say that this bill responds to the committee's recommendation that the government clarify and strengthen the mandate, independence and efficacy of the CRCC. In addition, Bill C-20 would direct the PCRC to implement public education and information programs to increase knowledge and awareness of the new commission's mandate.

With increased public information and engagement through such mechanisms, the bill aims to earn the trust of indigenous, Black and all racialized Canadians. To support this very important initiative, our government is investing \$112.3 million over six years, and \$19.4 million per year ongoing, to establish the PCRC and ensure that it is properly funded to do its job.

This is a vital piece of legislation and one that I think we can all agree is long overdue. It is a major step forward for accountability and transparency within both the RCMP and the CBSA. By providing robust and effective review, we will be ensuring that our border services and national law enforcement agencies remain world class and are worthy of the trust of Canadians.

I urge hon. members to join me in supporting this important bill.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question relates to funding for the CBSA.

We heard at committee from members working for the CBSA that it is understaffed and under a great deal of pressure. It is one thing to hold the CBSA accountable with a public complaints commission, but it is quite another for Parliament to support it so it can do its job adequately. I wonder if the member has comments about that.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, as we have said time and time again, Canadians must have confidence in our law enforcement agencies, which begins by building public trust. One way to do that is to ensure that we have adequate funding. This is why we have put in the budget extra funding for the CBSA.

The CBSA is a very important agency. It helps keep Canadians feeling safe and secure. On this side of the House, we will always make sure that the CBSA has the appropriate resources to deliver on its mandate.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I would like her to talk about what happens after the bill passes. It is one thing to have a good bill that provides a complaint mechanism, but the public needs to be well informed about it.

Take the compensation for victims of sexual misconduct in the army, for example. We recently found out that very few francophones were able to receive compensation because it had not been well publicized.

Even when the intentions are good, if the complaint mechanism is not well publicized then the legislation loses some of its value. I would like my colleague to talk to us about the importance of ensuring that the public is fully informed once the bill is implemented.

● (1045)

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. It is an important question.

Our goal is for all agencies to have more transparency and credibility. We will issue a report immediately after the bill passes. In committee, we can make more recommendations and suggestions, but our goal is to issue a report for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I have a two-part question.

Given that there has been an acknowledgement of systemic racism by both the government and the standing committee, it is a shock to me that there is not more mention about the need to address systemic racism.

The first part of my question is this. Should the commissioners not include representation from the BIPOC community?

As to the second part, when the commission is doing its work, is it not important that the commissioners have cultural competency training and trauma-informed training so they can ensure a better understanding of the BIPOC community?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, as we have always said, this government ensures that we consult with our indigenous peoples to make sure we hear of all their worries and the things that preoccupy their communities, and that they are well served.

If the hon. member has specific recommendations she would like to see on what more we could be doing to engage our indigenous communities, I welcome that conversation with her.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, words really matter in this place. The parliamentary secretary just referred to "our indigenous people". Indigenous people do not belong to anyone in this country. I wonder if she could restate her response to the member for Nunavut, specifically with respect to the call from the member for Hamilton Centre to ensure there are indigenous people on the oversight body.

Does she not agree that recommendation No. 4 from the report previously mentioned should be in the bill?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for pointing out the correction. I really appreciate it. In no way did I mean to disrespect indigenous peoples in Canada.

Yes, I do agree there should be consultation with indigenous peoples to make sure there is no gap in the bill.

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Flamborough—Glanbrook, certainly today on Bill C-20, which is an act to establish the public complaints and review commission. However, if members would allow me to depart for a moment from the debate on Bill C-20, I would like to recognize that today is my parents' 56th wedding anniversary.

A marriage of 56 years is a pretty incredible achievement unto itself, but I need to recognize that this has been a challenging year for my parents because my dad was diagnosed with lung cancer earlier in the year, in January. The great news is that they were able to remove the cancerous mass and he has undergone chemotherapy. My mom is a retired nurse, so she was by his side every step of the way, nursing him back to health and strength. He has made a full recovery. He is a naturalist with a picturesque rural property, and he is now able to get out and about to see his water fountains and his birds. He is very happy about that. In 56 years, there have been ups and downs, no doubt, but they are still able to walk hand in hand. I wish a happy anniversary to my mom and dad.

I thank members for allowing that diversion from Bill C-20. I will now move back to the matter at hand. We know that the bill would rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP to the public complaints and review commission, or the PCRC.

Under its new name, the commission would be responsible for reviewing civilian complaints of the Canada Border Services Agency as well as the RCMP. The civilian review commission would improve the oversight, and it is hoped that it would thereby help the RCMP and the CBSA become more effective agencies in their duties and functions.

Canadians certainly expect effective oversight of their federal law enforcement authorities, which is why we support this bill. I will reiterate some of the things that have been mentioned that the bill would deliver on and how that oversight would be provided to Canadians.

There would be codified timelines for RCMP and CBSA responses to PCRC interim reports, reviews and commissions. There would be information sharing between the RCMP, CBSA and the PCRC. There would also be mandatory annual reporting by both the RCMP and the CBSA on actions to be taken in response to the recommendations of the PCRC.

Race-based data, which has been referred to and discussed here, would be mandatory under Bill C-20, which would provide some additional context. Of course, there would be public education, as well as a statutory framework to govern CBSA responses to serious incidents.

All of this makes sense and should help improve the transparency that Canadians expect from their public institutions and, in doing so, the effective operation of these federal law enforcement agencies. Certainly the RCMP is there to ensure the safety of Canadians and to police our laws.

The CBSA is there to uphold the dignity of our borders. Ensuring that the CBSA is both properly resourced and equipped is an important part of doing that. We believe that these oversight bodies

would help accomplish this, and we note that the government is planning to invest \$122 million over six years, with an ongoing amount, for the creation of this independent review and complaints body. We support all of that.

We do wonder why it has taken so long to fulfill this original campaign promise from 2015. However, we do know, as well, that Liberal inaction, delay and misaligned priorities are certainly something that is not new to Canadians.

While we are on the subject of public safety, I am certainly compelled to speak up on behalf of the people of Flamborough—Glanbrook, and indeed, all of Hamilton, Ontario and Canada, to talk about the alarming increase in gangs and violent crime plaguing our streets.

A statistic was recently put out by Statistics Canada on gang-related homicides. It confirmed that there has been a 92% increase in gang-related homicides across Canada since the Liberals took office.

An. hon member: Wow.

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, wow is right. It is an alarming number. We also know that there has been a 32% increase in violent crimes as well.

● (1050)

Those are startling numbers on their own. What is even more horrifying is to imagine the faces of the victims, the women, children and seniors living in our communities, who are impacted by the notion that this increase in gang violence and violent crime is out there. That is an awful feeling to contend with, knowing that it is all too close.

The communities I represent are part of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, so we feel that increase in gang activity in the GTA. We see the headlines, the stories and the bloody images on the news. We know that our communities are not immune, as we have seen that increase in home invasions, shootings and more.

In fact, there was a very bloody shooting in broad daylight of a notorious mob boss on the driveway of a home in Waterdown, a community in my riding, which is adjacent to Burlington. It is a community of 15,000 people, and in broad daylight, a mob boss was gunned down. That made national and international news. We know that there has been a surge in violent crime in the Niagara region as well. The police there have spoken about that and the statistics that were recently reported bear that out.

Statements by Members

I would submit that all of this is because of the government's soft-on-crime approach, which we have seen with Bill C-5, the ending of mandatory minimums for a host of violent crimes. The message to gangs and violent criminals from the Liberal government has been very clear: If they do a crime, they will not do the time. They might have to do some house arrest. We are talking about very serious crimes such as rape, assault, stabbings, drive-by shootings and gun violence. It is no wonder I am hearing from more and more constituents about the crime that is happening in the community and what is happening all around us.

The homicide report that Statistics Canada put out, which I referred to, noted that 2021 was the biggest year ever for gang-related murder, the highest rate ever recorded in Canada. That is quite alarming. Homicides overall were up 3% since 2020, year over year. It is the highest national homicide rate since 2005, which means that the seven years of the Liberal soft-on-crime policies have undone all the work of the previous Conservative government, which had left our streets much safer.

In my home city of Hamilton, the homicide rate, at a rate of 2.57 per 100,000 people, is above both the national average and the Ontario average. This is a consequence of the increase in gang violence. The police in the neighbouring Niagara region recently estimated there are 32 gangs operating in the region, primarily operating between the GTA, Niagara and Hamilton, throughout the surrounding areas. The police say that, as a result of this, they are seeing increases in drug trafficking, human trafficking, robberies, home invasions and shooting incidents.

In concluding my remarks on Bill C-20, the bill itself, and the necessary oversight it would create for the RCMP and CBSA, are good in our view, although a long time coming. In the wider context of the state of public safety in Canada, the situation is getting worse. The communities in my riding and across Canada are far less safe. Gangs and violent crime are accelerating at an alarming pace. It is a very real daily worry for far too many Canadians. Seven years of Liberal soft-on-crime policies have taken their toll.

Canadians can count on a new Conservative government, after the next election, to turn this around, reverse these horrifying crimes, statistics and trends, and make our communities safe once again.

• (1055)

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the hon. member could comment on this: In the province of Alberta, we saw the Conservative provincial government cut and gut funding to local municipal police services. Does the member support the Conservative measures of cutting funding and taking revenues from municipalities that are trying to make their communities safer?

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, we are here debating federal legislation. I have cited a number of statistics put out by Statistics Canada on a federal level that have seen an increase in gang violence and an increase in violent crime, and that is impacting our communities. I can assure the hon. member that a Conservative government will reverse that trend, make those investments and make our streets safe again.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would look at Bill C-20 as progressive legislation that is bringing forward a higher sense of accountability to an area that has not really had it before, and that is the Canadian border control, with the independent commission. It will be dealing with not only the RCMP but also the border control officers at the same time.

Can my colleague provide his thoughts on the importance of bringing both agencies in under one commission?

• (1100)

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the things we support, bringing in both of those agencies. My understanding is that it is the first time they have been brought together.

Our borders, as has been noted in debate on this piece of legislation, are extremely important. They are extremely important in my community. We are not far from the Canada-U.S. border, on a very large international trade corridor. I welcome anything that will make the CBSA more effective and more accountable.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely imperative that all levels of government make strategic investments in the affordable housing sector to assist those who need it most. Our government's historic \$72-billion national housing strategy provides supports to co-ops, non-profits and municipalities, programs that provide emergency shelter and housing to thousands of our most vulnerable Canadians.

We cannot do it alone. We need all provinces and territories to provide the same types of investments. Unfortunately, here in the province of Ontario, Premier Ford has adopted the same approach to the affordable housing file as the federal Leader of the Opposition and former prime minister Harper. They all mistakenly believe the private sector, through an archaic form of trickle-down economics, will solve the problem.

It is time we take a firm approach with Premier Ford and his government on the affordable housing file. He continues to ignore the needs of our homeless population living rough. He continues to ignore the housing needs of tens of thousands of low-income seniors and people with disabilities, who have waited years on affordable housing wait-lists. The provision of affordable housing is a shared responsibility, and it is time he got serious and committed to building more affordable housing for Ontarians.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

2022 BUSINESS CONFERENCE

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Rendez-vous Affaires 2022 took place on October 13 and 14 on my initiative. It was an economic event to give us an opportunity to get to know each other in a large riding like mine.

We can be extremely proud of the event's success, which was held with the support of the three chambers of commerce for the Rivière-du-Loup, Montmagny and Kamouraska—L'Islet RCMs. Given that 75 exhibitors and more than 2,000 people attended, including many young people from schools in my region, I think we can safely say, “mission accomplished”.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my major partners, Premier Tech, Rousseau Métal, Maisons Laprise and Alstom, for their important contribution to the event. As an entrepreneur myself, I think that the economy has a significant impact on our lives, particularly in our communities. I therefore think it is important to make these businesses attractive to everyone, but especially to employees who want to come work in our region.

I am very proud of my community and pleased to once again say, “mission accomplished”. Long live Montmagny, L'Islet, Kamouraska and Rivière-du-Loup.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL ACCESSARTS CENTRE

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the National accessArts Centre is Canada's only and largest disability arts organization, currently supporting more than 350 Canadian artists living with developmental and physical disabilities. These artists' works are showcased in Canadian embassies and arts presentations around the world, including at an upcoming event celebrating the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Korea.

Another major milestone in 2023 will be the completion of the Won Lee community arts hub in Toronto. The NaAC is making great progress on its multidisciplinary arts campus project in Calgary, based on its vision to create North America's very first accessible arts hub.

In 2021, the NaAC launched a project called “Indigenous Ways of Knowing”, the very first project of its kind, which will use the power of the arts to connect Canadians with disabilities to the truth and reconciliation process with indigenous people. I recently had the opportunity to visit, and I would like to thank and congratulate the NaAC for its contribution to Canada and all around the world.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Every six days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. Tonight, thousands of women, many with children,

will be staying in shelters, and hundreds will be turned away because they are full. Many will be forced to choose between violence on the streets or violence at home.

There is a desperate need for more low-barrier safe spaces and transitional houses for women and gender-diverse people. It is unacceptable that funding announced by the Liberal government in its violence prevention strategy from fall 2020 remains almost entirely unused.

We also cannot address gender violence without addressing poverty. Poverty is one of the biggest factors pushing women and gender-diverse people into dangerous relationships and situations, and preventing them from leaving.

As we begin the UN's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, let us redouble our efforts to end gender-based violence in all its forms. We must act now to save lives.

* * *

● (1105)

[Translation]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the first day of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

These 16 days are an opportunity to come together as Canadians and with partners from around the world to fight gender-based violence.

[English]

This year's theme, “It's Not Just”, highlights the real impact of the actions that are sometimes cast aside as playful banter, “boys being boys”, or “locker room talk”. These aggressions are not just words, and they are not “just”.

Gender-based violence limits women's income, causes health problems and perpetuates cycles of violence that can last for generations. We must not rest until all women are safe. Some members of the House have tried to gain popularity by appealing to ideologies and groups that are opposed to women's basic human rights. We believe words matter, and we will never accept narratives that can lead to gender-based violence, which must never be tolerated in Canada.

We all have a role to play in ending gender-based violence.

CANADIAN UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the 57th Vanier Cup, the Canadian university football championship, and it is a dream match-up that will occur in London, Ontario: the University of Saskatchewan Huskies against Laval's Rouge et Or. Both teams finished seven and one during the regular season, and both teams won in playoffs last weekend, setting up the third time they will meet in Vanier Cup history.

Saskatchewan are led by Scott Flory, their head coach. He has the Huskies back for a second straight time trying to win the national championship. I think we can expect a high-scoring game tomorrow. Saskatchewan led the country with 348 yards per game, thanks to fifth-year quarterback, Mason Nyhus. Rouge et Or are led by HEC Crighton Award winner, Kevin Mital, who led the country this past year in receptions and yards.

These are the stars of the future. I wish good luck to both teams tomorrow in the 57th annual Vanier Cup.

* * *

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I hosted in Ottawa a constituent, Ryan Hooley, and his dog, Joe.

Ryan is one of the 750,000 Canadians living with diabetic retinopathy, one of the leading causes of blindness in Canada. Despite the strong link between diabetes and sight loss, Ryan told me about the challenge of using insulin pumps safely and independently, because they are not accessible to Canadians with sight loss.

Can members imagine trying to manage their diabetes safely, but being fearful of accidentally causing self-harm, because the insulin pump does not provide accessible feedback for the visually impaired?

November is Diabetes Awareness Month. In the spirit of Sir Frederick Banting, let us show the world again just how innovative we Canadians are. Let us work together with manufacturers of insulin pumps to make sure they are accessible to people with diabetes and sight loss here in Canada and around the world.

* * *

BARRHAVEN FOOD CUPBOARD

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize and thank Barrhaven Food Cupboard for its service to our community.

I wish we lived in a society where there was no need for organizations like food banks or shelters, but the harsh reality is that dependency on food banks is increasing. The fact that we have some working Canadians dependent on food banks should be a wake-up call. Increasing demand for food bank support means more work for the volunteers. Fortunately, we have many Canadians who generously give their time for the greater good of the community.

On behalf of the residents of Nepean, I would like to recognize and thank the team at Barrhaven Food Cupboard, led by its presi-

Statements by Members

dent, George Macdonald, for doing great work in supporting our community.

* * *

● (1110)

[Translation]

JEAN LAPOINTE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has lost a remarkable artist, the distinguished Jean Lapointe.

It would be an understatement to simply say he was a versatile artist. In fact, as Stéphane Laporte wrote, he was an entertainer, a comedian, a singer, an actor, an impersonator, a juggler and a magician who made everyone happy.

His career spanned more than 60 years, from small stages to large venues, and he and Les Jérolas, with Jérôme Lemay, will not be forgotten. They also found success abroad with appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and at the Olympia in Paris.

Beyond his life as an artist, he was also committed to social causes. At a time when everyone knew it but no one talked about it, he was one of the first stars to publicly talk about his addiction problems. He was such a great man who showed so much humility, and what an impact he had. The Maison Jean Lapointe will save hundreds, if not thousands, of lives.

Jean Lapointe will always be remembered as the extraordinary Maurice Duplessis of the Radio-Canada television series. I see that some of my colleagues remember him. What an extraordinary character and what a magnificent performance.

I will not repeat his lines about the Liberal Party because this is not the time, but it was very inspiring.

We extend our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

* * *

[English]

DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month, a time for us to reflect upon the struggles of our fellow Canadians who live every day with the disease. There are over three million people living with diabetes in this country, which is why I am proud to be part of a government that introduced our nation's first-ever framework for diabetes just last month.

Statements by Members

Steps such as these will hopefully go a long way toward improving the lives of Canadians, Canadians such as Jacob Ellsworth, an elementary school student in my riding of Cape Breton—Canso, who lives with type 1 diabetes. Like many his age, Jacob enjoys being active through sports like hockey, but unlike many people his age, Jacob and his family bravely cope with hurdles each and every day that no child should ever have to worry about. Jacob is an advocate, an inspiration and a champion of his own expression, saying, “I have diabetes, but diabetes does not have me.”

We must continue our action to make diabetes a more livable disease for Jacob and for all Canadians who are affected.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, seniors are the lifeline of our country. The Liberals need to respect our seniors, show some compassion and understand that, with the cost of inflation and the tripling of the carbon tax, we will see more and more families struggle to survive.

Daily, I continue to hear stories of struggling seniors forced into shelters because they cannot afford housing costs or their heating bills, or forced to go to food banks because they cannot afford their groceries. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister stays in a hotel at \$6,000 per night, while taxpayers pay the bill. There are seniors who are homeless or who are living in poverty while he continues to live in luxury.

High taxes from reckless spending by the Liberal government has made Canada a country that Canadians can no longer afford. The Liberal government must stop wasting money, stop the tax increases and start putting the lives of Canadians ahead of its political agenda.

* * *

PROCUREMENT

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in November 2019, we learned that Supermax, a PPE manufacturer, was exploiting migrant workers at its glove factory in Malaysia. The Liberal government went on to buy gloves from Supermax, costing taxpayers \$231 million. The U.S. government found that these workers faced abuses such as deception, restriction of movement, forced isolation, physical and sexual violence, intimidation and threats, withholding wages, debt bondage, abusive working and living conditions, and excessive overtime.

The Liberals claim that they stopped shipments from entering Canada as soon as they heard about these violations against human rights. That is hard to believe since global distributors still ship these products into Canada, despite not shipping them to Great Britain or the U.S.A., where they are banned. We have even found boxes of Supermax gloves here in the parliamentary precinct, a direct violation of Treasury Board rules. I was shocked.

Shame on the government for claiming to stand up for workers and human rights while purchasing products produced through abuse.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

ALLEN ALEXANDRE

Hon. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2002, I was working as an assistant professor, which is how I met Giscard Allen Alexandre. He was one of my most brilliant students. Thirteen years later, during my first election campaign, my party sent its best field organizer to help us. It was Allen Alexandre. The student became the teacher. He has been one of my best friends ever since.

In his career, Allen has served ministers and the Prime Minister. Recently, he made the leap to the private sector. In his free time, he continues to pursue his passion, working for the public good. His work promotes Canada's Black communities, especially in Montreal, his hometown, and fosters their prosperity.

For the past year, he has been fighting cancer and he will soon undergo major surgery. Knowing him, he will come out of this stronger. I invite all members to keep him in their thoughts, as I do, so that Allen can get through this difficult period and continue to make our society better.

* * *

[*English*]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the first day of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

I call on the government to do more, and to support organizations, such as the Elmwood Community Resource Centre, which has been integral to the support of women, men, gender-diverse folks and youth in our community. The centre has done a great job at recognizing its strength while addressing the impact of gender-based violence.

In Canada, in 2018, 44% of women self-reported experiencing some form of psychological, physical or sexual abuse in the context of an intimate relationship. Unfortunately, we know that the pandemic, sadly, only grew that number. We also know that, of the 44% of women who self-reported, indigenous women were 61% more likely to experience intimate-partner violence.

The government has to do more today and every day. Paying lip service to the 231 calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report is simply unacceptable. The government must act on all of them. Delay costs lives.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SICKNESS BENEFITS

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the government will announce that it is improving EI sickness benefits.

I would like to remind all parliamentarians that we would not even be talking about this were it not for Marie-Hélène Dubé and her “15 weeks is not enough” campaign and Émilie Sansfaçon, who spent the final moments of her life fighting so that people who are seriously ill will never again be abandoned by the government, as she was. Every little bit of progress that is made on the sickness benefits file is thanks to courageous women like these two.

However, more needs to be done.

Before Émilie Sansfaçon passed away, she met personally with the Prime Minister. She explained to him that sick people need 50 weeks of support.

We will continue the fight for 50 weeks of benefits, because the only thing that people with diseases like cancer should have to worry about is healing, not financial concerns.

Let us continue, in memory of Émilie.

* * *

[English]

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are hurting. They look around at what has happened to this country of ours over the past seven years and realize that everything seems broken.

Canada is caught in a broken experiment of woke NDP-Liberal policies that remove prison sentences from violent offenders, flood our streets with illegal drugs and increase homelessness, crime, overdoses and death. Downtown in our city, I see the hopelessness on the faces of people every day as they take their next hit. They know that they are broken, but they have no place to go.

One in five families are skipping meals, there were 1.5 million visits to food banks in Canada in just one month, and there are over 30,000 overdose deaths since 2016. When will it get better? Who is here to fix everything that is broken?

I know a guy who is here for Canadians. The leader of the Conservative Party has a plan to put Canadians back in charge of their lives. It is time for Canadians to let our strong Conservative team fix everything the Liberals have broken.

* * *

• (1120)

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Since 2015, our government has taken action across the board to address gender-based violence, from strengthening the Criminal

Oral Questions

Code, to creating dedicated housing for women and children escaping violence, to developing our new national action plan and so much more. These actions have helped more than 1.3 million individuals experiencing violence find safe haven and access vital support in the face of gender-based violence, but our work is not done.

On December 9, organizations across Canada will be able to apply for new funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada to help organizations on the ground continue their important work. We will never accept gender-based violence in our country.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's bank governor, Tiff Macklem, confirmed that, if the government reduced its deficit, we would have lower inflation. Inflation now costs every Canadian \$3,500 more every year. These are his words, not ours. Now that we know the Prime Minister's continued extravagant spending spree is the cause of it, will they give Canadians a fighting chance and stop the spending so they can pay their bills?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, all members of the House respected Canada's institutions. Conservatives of that era must really be lamenting the state of their party today, a party that tells false narratives about our economy, attacks our institutions and systematically refuses to support Canadians in their time of need, just when they need it the most.

The Conservatives do not have a plan. We do. Thankfully for Canadians, we are on the job.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not story time, it is question period. The plan that the member is talking about has driven 1.5 million Canadians into a food bank in a month. That is nothing to be proud of. To make matters worse, he believes that \$3,500 a year more is not enough.

Oral Questions

They are reaching even deeper into the pockets of Canadians to pay for their plan to triple the carbon tax on gas, groceries and home heating. They know the plan has not worked. Why push a costly failed carbon tax on struggling Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the story that the Conservatives do not want Canadians to be told is that, since 2015, the Conservative opposition has voted against tax reductions for Canadians not one, two, three, four or five times, but six times at a minimum.

In 2015, when we reduced taxes on Canadians in the middle class, the Conservatives voted against it. When we reduced taxes on workers, how did they vote? They voted against it. When we got the child care program in place, how did they vote? They voted against. Just last week, when we reduced taxes on small businesses, how did they vote? They voted against it.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is raising taxes on Canadians. It is tripling the carbon tax. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that 60% of Canadians will pay more than they ever get back. That is a tax.

It will cost an Albertan more than \$2,000 after the rebate. In Ontario, it will be almost \$1,500 after the rebate. It is all on page 13 of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, and the minister should read it. Therefore, I want to know if they calling the Parliamentary Budget Officer a liar, or is today the day they will finally be honest with Canadians about their tax plan?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us share the facts about where we are in fighting climate change. Albertans lived through the heat dome. We saw the atmospheric river in B.C. We just lived through the worst natural climate disaster in the history of our country with hurricane Fiona.

Our economists and people all the way back to the founder of the Reform Party, Preston Manning, said that the best market mechanism to make sure that we fight climate change is to price pollution. We have done just that. Albertans get \$1,100 more than they spend. Those are the facts.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inflation is devastating Canadian families, and the rising cost of food, an essential good, is brutal.

Just last month, 1.5 million Canadians visited food banks here in Canada. That is the real consequence of inflation. However, it does not seem to have curbed the government's insatiable appetite for taxes. The Liberals want to triple the carbon tax next year.

Is there a government minister who can stand up and say, with a straight face, that raising taxes during a time of inflation is a good thing?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us state the facts clearly.

Over the past seven years, the Liberal government has steadily reduced Canadians' income taxes. The Conservative opposition voted against that every time. When we reduced income taxes for the middle class, they voted against it. When we reduced income taxes for workers, they voted against it. When we cut the price of child care by 50%, they voted against it.

Those of us on this side of the House are voting for Canadians; the Conservatives are voting against them.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. The Liberal government has been running the country for the past seven years, and it brought in the Liberal carbon tax. Seven years later, here are the facts. Canada ranks 58th out of 63 countries in the fight against climate change. If a carbon tax worked, we would know it by now, but it does not work, as we have seen. Still, the government wants to triple the carbon tax next year.

Once again, can the minister stand up and clearly say, with a straight face, that raising taxes during a period of high inflation is a good idea?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be perfectly clear. The carbon tax will not be tripling next year. That is simply not true.

As everyone also knows, the price on pollution does not apply to Quebec through federal taxation. It is Quebec's system that applies. Hurricane Fiona in Atlantic Canada was the worst environmental crisis in our country. The best way to combat climate change is to put a price on pollution, and that is what we have done.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister just showed the Rouleau commission that he was on a power trip. He admitted that the truck convoy was not a threat to national security for the purposes of the Emergencies Act, but he invoked the act anyway by interpreting the text more broadly, even though he had been given advice to the contrary. In other words, he decided to interpret it to his liking. The minister is not only a minister; he is the Attorney General. He invoked a very significant law knowing that he did not meet the threshold.

Is he aware of the precedent he has just set?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously there is a commission of inquiry that is in the process of hearing testimony—

An hon. member: We are watching it too.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hon. David Lametti:—and we are following the hearings. We decided to participate in the process. We have been committed from day one to participating in this process. We invoked the Emergencies Act because there was an emergency situation in the country. We maintain that it was necessary. We saw the result: The occupation ended.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have the rule of law to protect ourselves from arbitrary decrees, to ensure that the law is enforced uniformly, whether or not we like the person it applies to. The minister just threw the door wide open for future governments to make arbitrary decisions.

Does he realize that a Conservative leader could have used the same argument against the indigenous demonstrations during the Wet'suwet'en crisis? Does he realize that he is giving the green light for another leader to use this argument against environmentalists blocking a pipeline, for example? Does he realize what a dangerous precedent he has just set?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, we were in an unprecedented situation last winter. The impact that this very complicated and difficult situation was having on workers and families is exactly why the government made the very serious decision to invoke the Emergencies Act. Earlier this week, I provided my testimony to carefully explain all of the reasons we made that decision. Now, we look forward to receiving Justice Rouleau's final report.

* * *

• (1130)

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, London's Children's Hospital has seen an influx of kids and, as a result, has had to delay surgeries. Parents are agonizing about care for their children.

Today, months too late, the health minister announced no new solutions to address this crisis. The government walked away from meetings with the provinces and did nothing for months as pharmacies ran out of children's medication.

Why is the health of Canadian children not a priority for the government? When will the government stop blaming everyone else and start taking this health care crisis with our kids seriously?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for the attention paid to this extremely important matter.

Next week, an exceptional shipment of child analgesics will arrive in Canada. Our domestic producers have indicated that they have ramped up production here at home. We have done everything we can for the last five months to ensure that pediatric hospitals across the country have enough supply.

It has been a really tough cold and flu season. I urge every Canadian to share what they have, buy only what they need and take care of themselves by wearing a mask and getting vaccinated whenever they can.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Windsor was under siege during last winter's illegal protest. Residents lost their employment, schools and doctors' offices closed and people lost contact with their families.

The City of Windsor stepped up to clear the blockade at the Ambassador Bridge in a professional way that became an example for Ottawa, but it came with a price tag of \$5.7 million. Who is paying the price? Windsor residents are, including the affected area, which has high child poverty, low incomes and immigrants. Who has not paid? It is the federal government.

What will it take for the government to respect the people of Windsor and pay for the harm its lack of action caused? Most importantly, why is it sticking it to the people who followed the law and did all the right things?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues, the member for Windsor West and the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, for being strong advocates with respect to the devastating consequences that the illegal occupation visited on workers, families and the small businesses that dot the Huron Church Line Road leading to the port of entry to Detroit. We do our most significant day-to-day trade with our most important trading partner, the United States of America. That is precisely why we invoked the Emergencies Act. We invoked the Emergencies Act to not only restore public safety but maintain public safety.

We will continue to work with the City of Windsor and the other communities that were unprecedentedly impacted by this to make sure they are made whole.

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CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Governor of the Bank of Canada confirmed this week what Conservatives have been saying: Inflation is higher because of the Liberals' wasteful spending. He also said that the average Canadian is paying \$3,500 more a year because of inflation. That is not per family. That is per person. No wonder people cannot afford to heat their homes.

Will the Liberals stop forcing their failed carbon tax on hard-working Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are facing a tough time, as are people around the world, due to rising global inflation. This weekend, residents in my riding of Edmonton Centre thanked us for reducing child care costs because they said it is really making a difference.

We are doing more than that for the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country and people across the country by eliminating student and apprenticeship loan interest, by speeding up the Canada workers benefit, by providing a \$500 housing top-up, by providing dental care to half a million kids and by making housing more affordable. It may not matter to some Conservatives that we are putting \$500 into the pockets of people, but we are doing it because it is the right thing to do.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals would have everyone believe that Canadians have never had it so great.

I was speaking with a senior from my community recently who was forced to make the tough decision to sell his home because he could not afford to live in it anymore. I attended a fundraiser in Joe Rich in my community, where neighbours were coming together to raise money so that neighbours could afford basic necessities.

This is Canada. This is what is happening. Let us stop the pain.

Will the Liberals stop forcing their failed carbon tax on hard-working Canadians who can barely afford basic necessities?

• (1135)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, day in and day out, the Conservatives stand up and profess to support seniors. However, year after year, since we came into government in 2015, they have voted against everything we have done for seniors.

That dog will not bark. Canadian seniors know who has their backs, and it is not the Conservative Party of Canada.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal costly coalition's carbon tax makes everything more expensive. Half of Canadians are already \$200 away from bankruptcy each month. They now have to pay more in taxes than they can afford in food, clothing and shelter combined. The prices for gas, groceries and home heating are at record highs, and a record number of students, seniors, families and working Canadians have to go to food banks.

When will the Liberals stop forcing their failed carbon tax on struggling Canadians?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is good news, particularly for Atlantic Canadians. On July 1, the price on pollution and the climate action rebate will be coming to three Atlantic provinces. A family of four will receive up to \$248 in Nova Scotia, the Speaker's home province, \$240 in P.E.I. and \$328 in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that comes quarterly. Eight out of 10 families will benefit.

The Conservatives should stop their climate denial and get on board with climate change.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the carbon tax is up and so are emissions. On top of that, the Liberals' claims about rebates are misleading, because they are only talking about the carbon tax line item on people's bills. Their own budget watchdog confirms what the Conservatives have always warned: Carbon taxes drive up the cost of everything, so most Canadians pay more than they get back. That is why the PBO said, "most households incur a net loss" because of the carbon tax.

The tax is up, emissions are up, prices are up and the Liberals will make it three times worse. Why will they not axe their failed carbon tax?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the Conservatives are peddling misinformation. Emissions are going down. We are on track to making our targets by 2030.

Let us listen again to the Conservatives' record. They cut \$350 million from the environment and climate change budget. They withdrew from the Kyoto climate accord, which blew up our emissions targets. They did nothing for 10 long years and now they are blaming us for their inaction.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives do not lash out at hard-working Canadians when they want their concerns to be heard, but that is exactly what the senior minister from Newfoundland and Labour did this week when he said he is "sick and tired of people talking about the cold [weather]". Atlantic Canadians are sick and tired of being told sit down, stop complaining and look the other way while the government reaches into their wallets and takes their hard-earned cash to pay for policies that just do not work.

When will the minister from St. John's South—Mount Pearl apologize for his shameful comments and implore his parties to axe the tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is shameful is when Conservatives vote—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the Conservative record on reducing taxes for Canadians. It does not exist, so there is not a lot to say, but I can tell members about the Liberal record on cutting taxes.

For the Canada child benefit, the Conservatives voted “against”. For cutting taxes on the middle class, they voted “against”. For the \$15 minimum wage, they voted “against”. For providing dental and rental supports for half a million kids, how did they vote? It was “against”.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had multiple votes where we have asked the government to vote with us to get rid of the carbon tax and reduce HST. Just this week, the *Voice Of The Common Man*, or VOVM, in Newfoundland and Labrador, released a poll, and 91% of respondents said a federal carbon tax is not necessary in light of high fuel prices.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Maritimes have seen the failure of the carbon tax in the rest of Canada. They have heard the PBO tell them that 60% of Canadians pay more for the carbon tax than they receive.

If the Prime Minister will not listen to the Conservatives and will not listen to the PBO, will he listen to the *Voice of the Common Man* and axe the carbon tax?

• (1140)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is more good news for Atlantic Canadians. In three provinces, they are going to have access to the climate action rebate, and it is going to put more money in their pockets. There is even more good news: Hundreds of millions of dollars will be flowing into four Atlantic provinces to help them move away from polluting and expensive heating oil to greener forms of energy.

We are focused like a laser beam on affordability and fighting climate change. The Conservatives are focused on neither.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Laser beams are not what they used to be, Mr. Speaker.

The federal government is bringing the deadline to submit infrastructure projects forward by two years. If Quebec fails to meet the deadline, the federal government will keep \$2.7 billion that is owed to our cities. It is bullying our municipalities and threatening to keep every cent that is not spent by March 31.

Meanwhile, yesterday, the federal government announced a new \$1.6-billion infrastructure project to fight climate change.

Is that program being funded with the same money it plans to steal from municipalities at the end of March?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no, not at all.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned because this is not the first time this government has stolen money that belongs to our municipalities.

Oral Questions

That is exactly what it did last June with \$342 million in another infrastructure program, so, yes, we are concerned when this government threatens to keep every penny that has not been spent by March 31 of next year. When it comes to stealing money from our cities, this government has always kept its word.

Why not collaborate instead and announce that any money remaining in the fund will simply be transferred to Quebec?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it worries me that my colleagues from Quebec seems to disagree with the idea of helping all Canadians, including Quebecers, adapt their infrastructure to handle climate change.

After hurricane Fiona hit the Magdalen Islands, my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, witnessed the resulting difficulties first-hand.

We will set up programs to help Quebec's municipalities, Quebecers and the Government of Quebec prepare for such events in the future. I am surprised that my colleague seems to be against that.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSIS has confirmed it is currently investigating lethal threats to Canadians from Iran. Iranian Canadians have begged the Liberal government to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

How can the Liberal government say it is using all of the tools at its disposal, yet fail to take the basic step against a regime that has killed and is threatening to kill more Canadians?

When will the government prioritize the safety of Canadians and list the IRGC as a terrorist organization?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would submit to my colleague that we have gone further by using a very sparingly used provision under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that not only designates members of the IRGC but also the entirety of the Iranian regime itself, which will target those who are most responsible for the transgressions of human rights and women's rights on the ground. As a result, Canada will never be used as a safe haven for the supporting of any kind of transgression of human rights.

We are putting \$77 million on the front lines of the law enforcement community to make sure that this happens.

*Oral Questions***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a Quebec radio show this week, former CSIS director and national security adviser to the Prime Minister, Richard Fadden, questioned the Prime Minister's denial that he was briefed on Chinese government interference in the 2019 election.

He said, "I would have a hard time believing that no one would have spoken to [the Prime Minister] about it."

If the former CSIS director and national security adviser does not believe the Prime Minister's story, why should Canadians? After all, he has denied things in the past that have been proven to be true.

Did the Prime Minister receive any briefings, verbal or written, on foreign election interference, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague and all members in the chamber that the Prime Minister receives briefings all the time with regard to intelligence and any threats to our national security, including potential foreign interference as it relates to our democratic institutions. That is why independent reviews were launched and confirmed the free and fair status of the elections in 2019 and 2021.

We will continue to ensure that national security apparatuses in this country have all of the tools that they need to protect our democratic institutions.

• (1145)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated that China and other countries "are continuing to play aggressive games...with our democracies". He must have been briefed.

Later, he said that he does not have information on election interference from China. Either he has a selective memory or a very short one. Let us try to refresh it.

Has the Prime Minister received any briefings or memos on election interference in Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend across the aisle knows very well that our government took historic steps, because we take this issue very seriously, to put in place, in 2019, the critical incident panel chaired by national security experts and involving the Clerk of the Privy Council.

This group of independent experts reviewed, during an election period, any allegations of this sort. If it meets the threshold, it reports to Canadians that there are significant concerns. That was in place in 2019. That was in place again in 2021. I am surprised that my colleague is not reassured by the fact that it did not report out to Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ever since it was reported in the media that the Chinese communist regime tried to influence the outcome of elections in Canada, the Prime Minister

keeps saying that he was not briefed on it, that he was not informed.

He must know something, however, because Canada's intelligence services cannot keep the Prime Minister in the dark. That is impossible.

Did he receive any briefings or memos on Chinese electoral interference, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government shares the concerns of all Canadians.

As my colleague knows, in order to ensure that elections in Canada are free, open and democratic, we created a body in 2019 that the previous Harper government failed to create. It is a panel of experts chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council, and its job is to ensure that elections are free and democratic.

If the members of that panel note any concerns in that regard, they have a duty to report that to Canadians. I would draw my colleague's attention to the fact that nothing was reported in 2019 or 2021, precisely because those elections were free and democratic.

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[English]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, communities need to be ready before a crisis hits, not after. It took years for the Liberals to finally announce a climate adaptation strategy, a strategy even they deem insufficient. It is underfunded and fails to deliver the urgent help communities need to face the catastrophic impacts of the climate crisis.

We need to use every tool at our disposal, including changing the way the Canada Infrastructure Bank does its work. Indigenous and northern communities are already bearing the brunt of climate change.

Why are the Liberals shortchanging regions like ours?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the discussion my colleague and I had in terms of making the Infrastructure Bank more responsive to indigenous communities and to the fight against climate change. That is exactly what our government is doing. Our adaptation strategy is designed specifically to support communities like hers that are vulnerable from these extreme weather events.

My colleagues made an important announcement this week. This is a continuation of the work our government has already been doing. The good news for my colleague is we intend to continue doing more and more in the coming months.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost a million Canadians with disabilities are living in poverty. The government has an opportunity to fix that by improving the Canada disability benefit. That is why the NDP proposes to include a minimum income in Bill C-22. This would ensure people living with disabilities could make ends meet and live in dignity.

Will the minister accept the NDP amendment to provide an adequate income for people living with disabilities to lift them out of poverty, yes or no?

• (1150)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have taken historic steps toward building a barrier-free Canada. In addition to the \$112 million committed to in budget 2021, with budget 2022 we are investing nearly \$300 million in disability inclusion, including an employment strategy for persons with disabilities and funding to support the creation of materials for persons with print disabilities.

We also introduced the framework legislation to create the historic Canada disability benefit that will lift millions of Canadians out of poverty. We also released Canada's first ever disability inclusion action plan, which establishes a robust employment strategy and enhances eligibility for government disability programs and benefits. We all benefit when everyone participates equally in society and has the support they need.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands full well how important it is to stand up for consumers and to assist Canadians with their living expenses. Consequently, we recently enhanced resources available to the Competition Bureau, and even more recently, launched a review of the Competition Act.

Would the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Industry explain to us why this is timely and necessary?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Willowdale for his interest in and advocacy for this important announcement. Maintaining up-to-date competition law is key to growing our economy, to making sure Canadian consumers are protected and ensuring businesses can effectively operate in a competitive marketplace.

The Competition Act review will improve enforcement methods and improve competition policy. We will continue working to support Canadians, workers and businesses in our modern and evolving economy.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recent statistics tell us that the Liberal soft-on-crime approach has failed. People in my community are tired of being

Oral Questions

victimised. They are afraid to walk alone at night. They are afraid for their children. They should be worried. Gang-related homicides are up 92%, and the Liberal government's reaction is house arrest for violent gun criminals.

When will the Liberal government realize its soft-on-crime approach has failed?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. What we are doing with our various policies is ensuring that serious crime always gets treated seriously, that we have a fight against gangs and that we strengthen our border measures in order to take serious crime seriously.

Former Supreme Court Justice Michael Moldaver implored us to spend fewer resources on parts of the criminal justice system where there was no threat to public safety, and not to incarcerate people at that end of the spectrum. That is what Bill C-5 does. Nobody can accuse Michael Moldaver of ever being soft on crime.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is there “no threat to public safety” from people who do drive-by shootings, who can now serve their sentences on house arrest? I do not think so. The Liberals have taken a sledgehammer to 20 years of reductions in violent crime. Homicides are up and violent crime is up, but one thing, if the Liberal government has a say, will be down, and that is sentencing for gun crimes.

When will the Liberal government end its soft-on-crime approach and keep Canadians safe?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given the advanced stage at which Bill C-21 is being debated by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I would have hoped my colleague would see that the government proposes to raise maximum sentences against hardened criminals who would terrorize our communities with the drive-by shootings he describes in his question.

In addition, I am somewhat surprised the Conservatives did not support the fall economic statement, where we invested an additional \$137 million to stop the illegal smuggling he is concerned about.

The only thing the Conservatives have put on the table is making assault-style rifles legal again, and that is wrong. They need to be sure they are on the right side of this issue.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the number of homicides is on the rise in Canada. In 2021, it reached 788; that is two per day. In Quebec there were 88 homicides, and that number is also on the rise. It is the highest national rate since this Liberal government came into power. The Liberals have failed in their duty to ensure that Canada is a country where citizens feel safe.

Will the government finally do its job and protect Canadians?

• (1155)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the very short answer is yes. That is exactly why we introduced Bill C-21, which seeks to give police more tools and provide surveillance tools that will help them disrupt the activities of criminal organizations trying to illegally import firearms. That is exactly why we are proposing harsher sentences for members of organized crime. I hope that the Conservatives will finally support this bill.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians feel less and less safe in their community and yet this government is doing absolutely nothing to help them. That is the case for women who have to go out at night. The government even reduced sentences for certain violent crimes. The Liberals' soft-on-crime approach is reckless and puts Canadians' lives at risk.

When will the government do the right thing and come down hard on violent criminals?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are all concerned about victims of gun violence, which disproportionately affects women. That is why Bill C-21 proposes a "red flag" provision to protect women.

Again, when will the Conservatives support this important government initiative to make all Canadians safer? It is high time they did.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is doing a worse job than ever of processing EI claims. Members need to listen to this, because I could not even make this stuff up. Do members know what public servants have been telling people who have been waiting for months for their benefits because their claim is stuck in the system? They are suggesting that they ask their family and friends to pay for their groceries. That is how bad things have gotten. Mouvement action chômage du Lac-Saint-Jean is the one that brought that information to light. These people are not asking for charity. They are asking for benefits that they have paid into all their lives.

When will the government send them their money?

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has had workers' backs during the COVID pandemic in the worst of that crisis, but

we also understand that Canada needs an EI system for the 21st century moving forward. That is why we consulted widely with unions, workers, employers and other partners from coast to coast to coast to build an EI system that meets the needs of Canadians.

We are committed to strengthening rights for workers employed by digital platforms and establishing new provisions in the Income Tax Act to ensure their work counts toward EI and CPP. With budget 2022, we are investing \$110 million to extend the existing seasonal pilot until October 2023.

Modernizing a system that serves millions of Canadians each year is a serious task, and we are taking the time—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the wait times for EI benefits are endless, but it gets worse, specifically for seasonal workers. They already know that they will be living in poverty this winter because they no longer qualify for EI after the rules suddenly changed. Seasonal work is one of the main economic levers for the regions of Quebec. Obviously, if these workers are unable to collect benefits this winter, it will threaten worker retention in our industries and threaten the entire economies of regions like mine.

When will the government move forward with the EI reform it has been promising for ages? When will the government understand that this is urgent?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are collaborating with workers, unions, organizations and businesses in order to introduce reforms to the EI system. I am also working with my hon. colleague and all the Bloc Québécois members to ensure that we address individual cases where there have been delays with people's employment insurance. As for seasonal workers, we are working with the Government of Quebec. We will continue this important work.

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Japan announced it is rescinding any increase to its carbon tax, because it is causing inflation. This leaves Canada as the only G7 country that has not repealed its inflationary carbon tax increases. Every major economy is repealing these taxes, because of the effect they are having on food, fuel, home heating and everything else. Canada is the outlier.

What does this finance minister think she knows that the rest of the world is missing?

• (1200)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully during this question period, and all this talk of axes reminds me of a famous song from the Conservative chorus, which is the “Conservative Austerity Shuffle”. How does it go?

Cut a little here,
Cut a little there,
Cut a lot here,
Cut a lot there.

Who was responsible? They were. Who was damaged by that? It was seniors, veterans, families, scientists, our environment and our international reputation.

Not on our watch. We are going to build this economy, support Canadians and do the right thing.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, carbon taxes are designed to be inflationary. They are meant to add taxes, and to make everything cost more.

Inflation is now at 40-year highs. It is destroying the savings of hard-working Canadians and everything they need to take home. While the government is collecting more tax in this scheme, hard-working Canadians have less in their pockets. It is time the minister took a lesson from all of her peers around the world.

Why is she going to be the last to figure out that she has to repeal this tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it highly questionable that a member who lived through the Calgary floods is saying that the best market mechanism to combat climate change should somehow not be in place in this country.

There was hurricane Fiona, atmospheric rivers and the heat dome in my city and my province. It is the best market mechanism. Emissions were down in 2019 and 2020.

That side of the House cannot even resolve itself to climate change. We have, we will, and we are doing the right thing. They do not have to be happy about it, but we are and so are Canadians.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not a single climate target has been met, not one. The Liberal tax plan disguised as a climate plan unfairly targets rural and remote communities.

Oral Questions

In northern Saskatchewan, driving is absolutely necessary. People travel great distances for groceries and medical appointments. Freight costs are significant on every item on every shelf everywhere. Heating our homes at -30°C is not a luxury.

Will the Liberals finally cancel their failed carbon tax, which is crippling Canadians?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member, I am from the Prairies, and no region of the country has been hit harder than the Prairies. There was not just one, but two \$1-billion floods. There were one-in-300-year weather events and the worst drought in over 50 years, which devastated farmers.

The costs of climate change are rising. The Conservatives are in denial. They need to get serious about climate change.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we recover from the pandemic, we must address existing challenges that were made worse for many people in Canada over the past two years.

This week, I was happy to learn that the Minister of Health and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions announced an agreement with Quebec that will continue to support improved access to home care as well as mental health and addiction services.

Can the minister tell us more about this agreement?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Louis for his excellent work, especially on palliative care.

The \$270-million agreement announced Monday will help address these gaps and provide Quebeckers, especially young people, with better access to mental health, prevention and addictions services.

This agreement is vital because our government is continuing its efforts to ensure that Canadians have better access to mental health services and good-quality and timely support services for addictions.

Oral Questions

• (1205)

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything the Liberal government touches gets broken. Fifty-four million dollars was spent on an ArriveCAN app that could have been built for \$250,000. There were 10,000 people wrongly sent into quarantine because of this faulty app, which caused them mental duress and financial hardship. Inflation, house prices, rent, groceries, overdoses and violent crime are all at generational highs.

Will the Liberals stop trying to build back better and leave things as they found them?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government will never apologize for trying to be better. Progress is based on better. The kind of chaos that Conservative members are trying to pursue is the enemy of progress.

From the beginning of this pandemic, we have been there for Canadians. We have been there to support them with wage subsidies and with CERB. We are supporting them through rental supports and dental supports. Just a couple of weeks ago, we doubled their HST return rebates. Next year, we are going to be there with dental supports for their kids.

The party opposite is all about slogans and no solutions.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals break everything they touch. Darryl is a small business owner in Saskatchewan. He has waited 11 months to hire a foreign worker, but he is stuck in limbo waiting for final approval. He is not alone. Fifty-seven per cent of the files in the system are beyond the acceptable processing timeline set by the government. Now it wants to add another 500,000 applicants to the existing backlog of 2.4 million people.

When will the Liberals quit breaking everything they touch, so that Darryl can finally get the help that he needs?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, temporary foreign workers are absolutely vital to the Canadian economy. Employers should be able to obtain decisions on whether they can hire TFWs in a timely manner. We are taking additional measures to address labour shortages, including removing the cap on low-wage positions for employers in seasonal industries. We are extending LMIA validity from nine to 18 months, expanding flexibility for LMIA applications in low-wage occupations, and we are increasing the maximum employment duration for high-wage and global talent streams from two to three years.

We will continue to work with employers to ensure their solutions meet their needs.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfettered access by incarcerated individuals to spiritual guidance from prison chaplains is a key component of recovery and plays an important role in reducing the chance of reoffending. Equitable access to this guidance across faith groups is also a charter right. Therefore, it is disturbing to learn that incarcerated Canadians from a number of faiths, including over 1,000 Muslims, have no access to chaplain services in their own faith.

Why has the Liberal government broken the prison chaplain system and allowed this situation to develop?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, I have been in touch with a number of colleagues on both sides of the House regarding this issue. I assure my colleague that we are in touch with Correctional Service of Canada so that those inmates who are fulfilling their sentences are able to exercise their rights under the charter during this season.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians feel the impacts of the climate crisis from extreme heat and wildfires to floods and storms, there is immense urgency to build resilient communities. Yesterday marked another important step forward to equip Canadians to face the mounting impacts of the disrupted climate with the release of Canada's national adaptation strategy.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change tell the House how this strategy will help to protect people and communities from coast to coast?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Fredericton for her long and strong environmental advocacy.

Our government has launched Canada's first-ever national adaptation strategy to help protect communities from coast to coast to coast with \$1.6 billion in new investments and 84 focused actions. Taking measures to adapt can save lives, avoid damage to communities and spur innovative technologies and jobs. Adapting to climate change requires all orders of government, the private sector and Canadians to work together to build resilient communities and a stronger economy.

HEALTH

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, a group of terminally ill cancer patients and their doctors came to Ottawa calling for regulations for the medical use of psilocybin. Using psilocybin can alleviate clinical depression, anxiety, chronic pain and people's dependence on substances like opioids and alcohol. This could even mean fewer medical assistance in dying requests in the future. The government has the tools to help people lessen their pain and to help improve their treatment, but the Liberals are not using them.

When will the Liberals provide the needed funding for research and clinical trials for psilocybin so that doctors can treat people's chronic suffering?

• (1210)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is prepared to use every tool available to address mental illness of Canadians, and it recognizes the need to explore all possible treatments. While psychedelics have shown promise in clinical trials, further research is still needed and we are funding that.

Currently, the best way for patients to access psilocybin is through their participation in a clinical trial. Alternatively, patients can talk with their health care provider to inquire about the possibility for them to submit a special access program request to receive a prescription and be supervised. Last, patients can request an exemption on compassionate grounds when other paths are unsuitable.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, we have pretend Chinese diplomats operating pseudo police stations in Canada and intimidating Chinese Canadians. We know of China's interference in our electoral process. There are also Chinese spies infiltrating Canadian businesses. A wealth of evidence also points to the Iranian regime stalking and intimidating Iranian Canadians. Our country has many exemplary citizens who left China and Iran to live in a free Canada.

Is the government going to continue its do-nothing approach with the undiplomatic actions of China and Iran, or will it act to finally stand up for our citizens?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are exhausting every effort and are remaining on guard against foreign interference. We have heard the RCMP make very strong pronouncements about these so-called police stations. That is why we declared the entirety of the Iranian regime to be under IRPA. This will ensure that Canada can never be a safe haven for the suborning or supporting of any kinds of transgressions against human rights. We will always stand up for human rights, both here and around the world.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

SENIORS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand to present a petition from Single Seniors for Tax Fairness. This petition was signed by 35 Canadians but could effect change that would better the lives of thousands of single seniors in Canada.

The petition calls for the government to make changes to the current tax system for seniors, which currently favours couples with numerous ways to lower taxes, while single seniors have none. Of the six million seniors in Canada, over one-third are single, and many of those are women. This petition calls on the government to offer tax benefits to single seniors equal to those now in place for senior couples.

I support this petition and thank Jane Robertson and Katherine Cappellacci from Single Seniors for Tax Fairness for meeting with me and many other MPs from all sides of the House, a large majority who support the need for tax fairness for these single seniors.

HOUSING

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to present a petition today. The petitioners recognize that housing unaffordability and homelessness are twin national crises. They also note that the financialization of housing inflates Canadian real estate prices, and that corporations, numbered companies and real estate investment trusts are rapidly buying up affordable units and flipping them to market rate units.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take significant action. They list eight specific actions the government could be taking, including redefining affordable housing to match a definition that reflects the economic realities millions of Canadians face. They encourage the government to create regulations with respect to real estate investment trusts, among others.

* * *

• (1215)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Bill C-20 is a piece of legislation that really does make a difference. We are taking a look at the RCMP and ensuring there is an independent commission to reinforce public confidence in our RCMP when we get bad apples, but it also extends out to Canada's border control. Again, a vast majority, whether they are RCMP officers or border control officers, do a fantastic job seven days a week, 24 hours a day for Canadians, but we need to recognize that there are bad apples and within that group, there is a need for this legislation and for the independent commission.

Can I get the member's thoughts on the importance of enforcing public confidence in our institutions?

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for the promotional message on behalf of Bill C-20 and the apparent work of his government.

We support Bill C-20 for some of the reasons he outlined and other reasons we have articulated in our interventions on this piece of legislation, but there is something the Liberals still have not talked about. The question was asked in question period today and was not answered. There is a 92% increase in gang-related homicides. That is an alarming statistic. That is of concern to people in my community and communities all across Canada. That is causing women, children and all people in every community to be concerned for their safety. There are no answers from the government on this. We have seen that trend, because of its soft-on-crime policy.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to this debate and I want to make a comment in response to the member for Winnipeg North, who has intervened several times to talk about bad apples among, basically, our border officers. I take exception to that, as someone who serves on the border, in view of the stress, the anxiety and the way our CBSA officers were treated during the pandemic, when there was no plan to even actually vaccinate them and it was left to be addressed border crossing by border crossing.

They have had a high degree of problems related to collective agreements that were never signed on time and never negotiated in good faith with the government.

I find it, quite frankly, offensive, with regard to these men and women who are on the front line every single day, under incredible stress and pressure, that the member for Winnipeg North is continually obsessed with pointing out that there are some so-called bad apples.

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Windsor West is in a bordering community, a very important border, where a large percentage of the Canada-U.S. trade crosses each day. The hon. member for Windsor West knows full well the impact that CBSA officers have and what they are dealing with every day.

We agree. We need to have fluidity and resiliency in our supply chains. He raises some good points that the government should consider at committee, on reflection on this piece of legislation.

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today aware that we stand on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation.

Today we are discussing Bill C-20, which would enact a new stand-alone statute. The public complaints and review commission act would provide an external review regime for both the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Canada Border Services Agency.

The bill responds to a long-standing need to establish an independent review body for the CBSA and improve RCMP review, which builds on previous proposals, such as Bill C-98 from 2019 and Bill C-3 from 2020.

Additionally, this bill advances the Minister of Public Safety's mandate letter with commitments to create a review body for the CBSA and codify defined timelines for RCMP and CBSA responses to complaints and recommendations; combat systematic racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system; and continue advancing efforts toward a path of reconciliation with first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Currently, the RCMP has a civilian accountability body in the existing Civilian Review and Complaints Commission. This bill, through the establishment of a public complaints and review commission, would build upon the existing CRCC and provide additional accountability and transparency tools to deal with complaints concerning the RCMP and CBSA.

Bill C-20 includes timelines that codify when a response is required to an interim report related to complaints, reviews or recommendations from the PCRC. Through the PCRC, codified timelines would provide six months for RCMP and CBSA responses to interim reports for complaints, and 60 days for specified activity reviews and recommendations. Not only would the RCMP and the CBSA have to report to the commissioner of the PCRC within these timelines, but the bill would also obligate the RCMP commissioner and the CBSA president to submit an annual report to the Minister of Public Safety on how they have responded to PCRC recommendations.

Government Orders

Combating systemic racism continues to be a priority for this government and will be reflected through PCRC initiatives. The PCRC will collect race-based data to increase knowledge about systemic racism in law enforcement in order to provide informed responses and recommendations. As with the collection of race-based data, the public information mandate will be especially important in increasing awareness of the PCRC's mandate among indigenous, Black and racialized communities. As a former city councillor and city of Calgary police commissioner and chair of the public safety task force in the city of Calgary, I know how important this data is to support local decision-making within and across our country.

Overall, the PCRC would look to support previously established timeliness goals. Over the last year, the RCMP has improved the timelines within which it responds to the CRCC. We want to ensure these efforts are maintained. To ensure this improvement continues, the PCRC would be able to conduct specified activity reviews for the CBSA and the RCMP of any non-national security activities, either on the PCRC's own initiative or at the request of the minister.

● (1220)

The bill includes provisions for the PCRC to conduct complaint-related investigations. The PCRC would receive complaints from the public about RCMP and CBSA conduct or levels of service. It would also conduct reviews when complainants are not satisfied with the RCMP's or CBSA's handling of their complaints.

For the CBSA specifically, this would include non-national-security activities conducted by agents at the border, and in land, while administering duties under more than 90 acts, regulations and agreements on behalf of other federal departments and agencies, provinces and the territories. The PCRC would report findings and recommendations to the RCMP, the CBSA and the minister.

The bill would provide a statutory framework, through the CBSA Act, to govern the CBSA's responses to serious incidents, which are currently governed by internal policy. More precisely, the bill would establish an obligation for the CBSA to conduct internal investigations into alleged serious incidents, which include notifying police of jurisdiction and the PCRC, when such incidents occur, and the creation of reports for serious incidents.

The bill before us is a high priority for this government. We remain determined to strengthen transparency and accountability. The bill we are discussing today encompasses all that we have learned throughout this process, by responding to the overdue issues while reinforcing established priorities.

This bill would address previously discussed difficulties, such as the need to respond to recommendations in a timely manner, and importantly, this bill partly responds to the evidence of systemic racism in the law enforcement system and the urgent need to find solutions to support and protect marginalized communities in Canada. The government has responded to those issues with a stand-alone bill that highlights the importance of civilian review of law enforcement.

I urge hon. members to join me in supporting this proposed legislation.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the principle stage, bills are never perfect, but could my colleague tell me, given the searches that officers can conduct of travellers' cell-phones, how Bill C-20 in its current form could preserve solicitor-client privilege in an exchange between a client and their counsel?

[*English*]

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, this bill is extremely important, and it would provide an opportunity for claims or issues to be brought forward so an independent review process can occur. I think it is a great piece of work our government has done in bringing this forward. We would also collect important race-based data to help with identifying and bringing forward better decisions.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, earlier today we heard an impassioned speech from the member for Hamilton Centre on Bill C-20, specifically mentioning a report from the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security entitled "Systemic Racism in Policing in Canada". He noted there were 42 recommendations in that report, many of which have not been included in Bill C-20, including ensuring that indigenous people, alongside racialized and Black people, are on oversight bodies.

Could the member for Calgary Skyview comment on his level of support for going further, once this bill goes to committee, to see improvements made that would align more with reports like this?

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, these are really important and serious issues. In my time as a police commissioner in Calgary, one of the challenges we saw was with the collection of data and the ability to use it to better understand the challenges we were facing. We can support members of marginalized communities with the challenges that occur when it comes to policing by having a robust system to help bring those complaints forward so we not only have the information but also can make sure we can support them.

I look forward to working with my colleague and other members to have further conversations on how we can strengthen the work, and that will be done at committee moving forward.

● (1230)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I have one criticism, and that is that the data collection on racialized communities is not enough.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member agrees that his party made a huge and critical oversight by not implementing the important report recommendations to ensure that systemic racism is addressed, and by not mandating the appointment of indigenous or BIPOC community members to the commission.

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to make sure that indigenous voices are reflected and heard. I think this bill would provide an opportunity for Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, with any of the complaints they have, whether with respect to the RCMP or the CBSA, to be able to bring them forward. We must continue to work together with all members of communities who have faced discrimination and racism to make sure that we tackle these issues head on and make sure we have a strong system of complaint where folks can make those complaints, but where they can also be addressed.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention the important work of the CBSA agents who protect our borders and this nation. However, I have heard many stories in my home province of New Brunswick where particularly members of indigenous communities have faced discrimination. Random checks are not quite as random in their experience. I wonder if the member could comment briefly on how important it is to address issues when discrimination arises and ensure people have faith in our CBSA.

Mr. George Chahal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Fredericton for her great advocacy and hard work.

This is extremely important. I have seen it, through my time in Calgary as a police commissioner and my time as chair of the public safety task force, and in meeting and talking to community members about their concerns with policing and the challenges that they have had. There were opportunities for them to come forward.

The City of Calgary had an anti-racism hearing for three days to have these important conversations in public. I was part of that and was proud to support that. We have done great work through the public safety task force to make sure that we are working together with communities and members of our community to make sure we address these serious issues.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and privilege to bring the voice of Chatham-Kent—Leamington to this place, and today it is to put some comments on the record regarding Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments.

Before I get into the content of the bill, I want to begin by thanking the women and men who wear the uniform to keep Canadians safe.

Canadians expect accountability. They expect law and order, and they expect strong oversight mechanisms to ensure that there is no abuse of power. We recognize that our RCMP and CBSA agents put themselves in the possibility of harm's way every time they put on the uniform.

Canada and the U.S. share the world's longest, undefended border, and we as Canadians share this border with a country that owns more firearms than they have citizens. This is part of a different

culture and a different history, and that is not the subject of today's debate.

The point I am making is that the CBSA has received much attention recently, and we look to them for their role in preventing gun violence, particularly in our cities. We ask that they address the issue of criminals smuggling illegal guns into this country, and we know that this activity is often also tied up with drug smuggling and trafficking. We ask that these people, along with law enforcement, put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe, and for that I want to thank them.

Let us look at the content of the bill.

The legislation would rename the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or RCMP, to the public complaints and review commission, which I will refer to as the PCRC. Under its new name, the commission would also be responsible for reviewing civilian complaints against the CBSA. The bill's goal is to ensure that all of Canada's law enforcement agencies have an oversight body.

What I really do like about the bill is that it would codify timelines for the RCMP and CBSA responses to the PCRC. We have all heard of complaints that went into the civilian body, but then there was no response back. The reports, reviews, recommendations, and the information sharing between the RCMP and the PCRC, and the CBSA and the PCRC would be mandated and codified. The bill also stipulates annual reporting by the RCMP and CBSA on actions taken in response. This would be a further mechanism to ensure action follows complaints. As well, the bill would mandate reporting of disaggregated race-based data, provides for public education and provides for a statutory framework to govern the CBSA responses to serious incidents.

By way of some further background, the bill was introduced in the 43rd Parliament as Bill C-3. However, it did not pass second reading. It was introduced very late in the session and died on the Order Paper when that unnecessary election was called. In the 42nd Parliament, it was known as Bill C-98, but it died awaiting a vote in the Senate.

I want to put on the record that Conservatives have supported this legislation at each stage. I also want to note that this legislation appears to be straightforward and meets its objectives, but the newly created PCRC can only recommend disciplinary action and cannot enforce it. There will still need to be a further step as this process unfolds.

Conservatives believe in upholding the dignity of our borders and ensuring that our Canadian Border Services Agency is properly resourced, both in manpower and equipment. The civilian review commission should improve oversight and help the CBSA be an even more effective agency in its duties and functions, similar to the function of the renamed Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP.

As I stated earlier, Canadians expect effective oversight of federal law enforcement agencies, but what is disappointing is the length of time it has taken to get this done. The Liberals promised oversight in the 2015 election, then squandered two Parliaments in fulfilling their promise. Now, one month before Parliament breaks, the House is supposed to hurry up and pass this legislation. We are supportive, as we have been in the past, but we will review it, and we will do our job in this place. We have always stood for the security of Canadians and will continue to do so.

I live in Leamington, only 45 minutes away from the Windsor-Detroit border. I have crossed that border to the U.S. numerous times. By and large, I have had many good experiences and professional interactions with CBSA staff as I returned to Canada either from travelling to the U.S. or abroad, or just from an evening or afternoon in Detroit.

● (1235)

However, several years ago, while my four daughters were still quite young, my wife did not have such a pleasant experience. It was some time ago, in 2003 during the SARS outbreak, so there are similarities to today's times. My brother-in-law, a Canadian, was working in St. Louis at the time and flew to Detroit to come back to Canada to renew his status paperwork.

While my wife answered the questions asked by the CBSA agent, the agent assumed some information regarding my brother-in-law's citizenship that he had not confirmed through questioning. Frustrated once he learned of his error, he swore at my young children, and literally threw the paperwork of six people into the van. I was not there; I was tied up elsewhere, so my wife took my four young daughters, a credit to her, into the U.S. to pick Darrell up. This agent now demanded that the paperwork be returned in a different order.

If the PCRC would have been in existence then, it would have heard from us, and this officer's conduct would have been reported. This is a relatively minor incident in the scheme of things that could have happened, but there is a role for this oversight agency.

This situation occurred 19 years ago, so some time has gone by, but I know that it has been seven years since an idea for this oversight body was introduced in this place. The government campaigned on that promise. Let us hope it will not take 19 years to get this promise to Canadians completed.

Government Orders

Yesterday, in the House, we debated Bill S-4, a bill that enjoyed support at second reading on all sides of the aisle. Bill S-4 was Bill C-23 in the last Parliament, which also did not see the light of day in this chamber, but I digress. It seems that good bills do not receive good priority for this file in this place, but we will leave that for another day.

Bill S-4 asks to improve the efficiency of our court system through bringing in the use of video and other changes to address the huge backlog of cases. This backlog, of course, was exacerbated by the pandemic. We have all heard the expression "justice delayed is justice denied", and the Jordan decision by the Supreme Court has codified this expression.

My purpose is not to re-debate yesterday's work in this chamber. Bill S-4 is off to committee, and hopefully it will be improved through amendments. Then hopefully it will be quickly returned to this place for third reading. My point in raising Bill S-4 is that during debate, several statistics were tabled during the interventions and I found them troubling.

There has been a 32% increase in violent crime since 2015. There were 124,000 more violent crimes last year than in 2015. There were 788 homicides in Canada last year. There were 611 in 2015, a 29% increase.

As we have heard before, there has been a 92% increase in gang-related homicides since 2015 and a 61% increase in reported sexual assaults since 2015. Police-reported hate crimes have increased 72% over the last two years, and 31,000 Canadians lost their lives to overdose between 2016 and 2022. There have been 7,169 deaths from opioid overdose in Canada in 2021 alone, and 21 people are dying per day from overdoses. Before the pandemic, it was 11.

Thus far, this is the record of the government when it comes to keeping Canadians safe over the past seven years. At their core, Bill S-4 and Bill C-20 are pieces of legislation that take us in the right direction. This cannot happen soon enough. I hope they now receive the priority they deserve.

● (1240)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague mentioned that justice delayed is justice denied. One observation I have, and I am not pointing the finger at anyone within the organization, is that the current review process the RCMP has for complaints, whether because of vexatious complaints or faulty processes, seems to be quite long. It can take over a year before someone even has their file updated so that the process begins.

Private Members' Business

Given the fact that the government does not seem to pay attention to its own bureaucrats when they say they have an issue with passports and need to increase resources and staff, does he feel that the government will be able to successfully implement this new complaints process so it includes both RCMP and CBSA complaints?

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, it is a good question. On the positive side, as I mentioned in my remarks, the timelines for responses are codified in the legislation, and those specific timelines will, I am sure, be examined at committee when this piece of legislation goes there. However, there is an open question: Will the government act on the very legislation that it has put in place? The government has shown at other times that it has not. It is therefore incumbent upon all of us to put pressure on the government to hold it to account. That is our job as the loyal opposition, and we will continue to do our job until we form government. Then it will become our responsibility to ensure that proper oversight of our federal agencies sees the light of day.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member highlighted a lot of the positive aspects of this very important bill and the urgency to seeing this pass. It is a very important step forward.

I want to pinpoint the specific piece where he mentioned that he would be supporting the legislation. Can we expect the Conservatives to help us ensure that it passes quickly in the House?

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, numerous speakers on our side of the aisle have indicated that we support sending this piece of legislation to committee. We will be seeking amendments to improve it, but we do support it. As I said in my closing remarks, it is a step in the right direction.

I share the member's concern about speed. The bill was announced seven years ago, and unfortunately we are again debating it here now. However, we certainly all want to see it go through all the steps both here and in the other place and become the law of the land.

• (1245)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Seeing as there is no more debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I request that it be agreed to on division.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I request that it be agreed to on division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried on division. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House at this time, you might find unanimous consent to call it 1:30 p.m. so we can begin private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to make a quick comment. It is funny how things can pass quickly in the House when we really want them to go quickly. I recognize the hon. member for Fredericton for making that comment a bit earlier.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

COPYRIGHT ACT

The House resumed from October 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-294, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (interoperability), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I agree with you that the time went by really fast. I did not think it would be my turn to rise so soon, but I am pleased to do so.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-294. I already spoke in April about Bill C-244, which has the same objectives. If anyone wants to read the speech I gave in April, they can safely apply my comments *mutatis mutandis* to Bill C-294 because they still hold true. Perhaps that is what people refer to as recycling and it is completely in line with the bill before us today.

Bill C-294 seeks to combat planned obsolescence, but what is planned obsolescence?

I want to remind members that the term “planned obsolescence” was coined by American businessman Bernard London in 1932 in an essay entitled “Ending the depression through planned obsolescence”.

At that time, we were in the midst of the Great Depression following the roaring twenties. Mr. London complained in his writings that, because of the crisis, consumers had taken to using products until they were no longer useful, until they were completely worn out. London said this was hurting the economy. As a result, companies began to create strategies to replace items as quickly and as often as possible in order to boost sales. This has led to a form of disposable culture: manufacture, buy and throw away. It has had a very significant impact on the environment.

The main pillars of planned obsolescence are as follows. First, goods are designed to be less durable. We see this happening more and more these days. For example, my washing machine is older than I am and I will do everything I can to avoid having to replace it, which is what my washing machine repairman suggested to me, because they do not make machines like mine anymore. The last time I tried to fix it, it cost me \$5 because it is a simple part, but modern machines are so complicated and fragile that they break after five years.

Second, fashion is another pillar of planned obsolescence. People are urged to buy something new even if the version they already own is still perfectly good.

Third, an item can be designed so it is impossible to repair, forcing us to buy a new one. That is what Bill C-244 addresses. I am very pleased that it passed at second reading because it allows people to circumvent digital locks in order to repair goods that otherwise could not be repaired because of a technological barrier.

Today, we are looking at the possibility of preventing new functionalities from being embedded in a device and rendering it obsolete more quickly. The bill before us today would amend the Copyright Act. In general, the Copyright Act seeks to make it possible for creators to earn a living from their art and to protect their works from being copied or used in a manner that they would not permit. That is a good thing. However, the problem is that it also applies to digital works. A digital work is protected by a digital lock that the Copyright Act has prohibited users from circumventing since 2012.

The work cannot be altered without the consent of the copyright owner. That is a good thing, generally, but it does have a negative impact. For instance, some companies have decided to invoke the Copyright Act to prevent people who own devices running on the company's software from downloading new apps that would require access to the operating system in order to function. The legislation already includes an exception to address this aspect and, since the bill before us contains only two clauses, I would like to go through the bill and explain a little more about the legal process that applies here, since we do not often take the time to do so in the House.

Under the former section of the Copyright Act, circumventing a technological protection measure was prohibited. Circumventing a digital lock is therefore prohibited. The legislation included an exception to indicate that it does not apply to the owner of the program, who has the right to circumvent the lock if it is for the sole purpose of obtaining information in order to make that program interoperable with another computer program.

- (1250)

For example, the person who creates software to run a device has the right to break the lock on another piece of software to ensure that their software works if they want to use someone else's product on their device.

The lack of a broader exclusion in the law means that the owner of a product that has computer software becomes somewhat of a prisoner of the original software owner, who grants himself or herself exclusivity over any new software or applications that might be installed.

Private Members' Business

Take cellphones, for example. As we know, there are plenty of apps available to download that make our phone much more interesting. Technically, this could be covered by the Copyright Act. Apple could say that they do not want a software creator to break the lock on the Apple phone to ensure their application is compatible. Obviously, this is unattractive to Apple because it would make its phones virtually useless and uncompetitive on the market. Apple therefore does not invoke the Copyright Act, but the fact remains that it could.

The amendment in the bill would add to the existing interoperability exception in the Copyright Act by saying that it:

does not apply to a person who...manufactures a product and circumvents a technological protection measure that protects a computer program embedded in another product for the sole purpose of allowing the person to make the computer program, or a device in which it is embedded, interoperable with [it]

This means that external individuals who create programs have the right to break locks on devices they want to connect to to make sure they are interoperable.

Agricultural machinery is one example that I talked about during my last speech on Bill C-244. Take John Deere tractors, for example. The days of tractors like my dad's old 1958 Farmall are long gone. My dad still enjoys putting around with it to plant a dozen rows of corn behind the house. Today's tractors are much more powerful and are equipped with GPS.

The lack of an exception in the Copyright Act prevents companies from doing things like creating software that could be added to the tractor's computer to help with spreading different kinds of fertilizer. That is impossible because John Deere holds the intellectual property rights to everything on the tractor.

That means external suppliers cannot add anything to improve the device, nor can external software be added that might, say, extend the useful life of the things we own.

Let us be clear, the bill does not seek to abolish software designers' copyright. That is being maintained. It does not allow it to be copied, either. It does not facilitate unfair competition from predatory competitors. It just ensures that we can maximize the lifespan of products we already own by adding external components.

Two bills on this topic are being studied in the House. Bill C-244 addresses the issue of repair. Today, we hope to address the issue of interoperability through Bill C-294.

Private Members' Business

Quebec is addressing the sustainability aspect, which is another pillar of programmed obsolescence, through legislation that would assign a sustainability score to objects. Bills C-294 and C-244 would ensure that people could not invoke federal copyright legislation to get around Quebec's measure. That is a good thing. Now we just have to work on planned obsolescence in fashion. We hope this will be a pillar that will allow us to have an impact on social awareness. I do not think we are at the point of legislating fashion in the House, but there is still a bit of work to do.

I hope that all these other bills will be an incentive to finalize, in good conscience, our work to counter programmed obsolescence.

• (1255)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I had the benefit of hearing the speech by the member for Saint-Jean. She was very good at detailing the division of the bill, the importance of the bill and how we could move forward on a number of issues related to copyright.

It is really key to reinforce the fact that this is not about trying to circumvent a process to protect copyright. Bill C-294 would deal with interoperability and other issues, similar to the right to repair work I have been doing, where the digital age has created competition issues, ingenuity issues and practical applications that have become very difficult, not only for farmers, which are of particular interest to the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands who put forth this worthy legislation, but also others in different fields.

In the past, when it came to a number of different innovations, there was the ability to alter work among platform differentials and to be innovative on products and services in our economy. That has allowed a lot of people, whether it be in repair shops, their own home environment or smaller businesses and companies, to thrive, build on innovation, build competition and do so in a way that is very responsible and important, especially when it comes to rural and remote areas where there is often not even the chance to get certain things repaired.

In a digital age where we have programs and services that are very much affected by updates and the management of data, there can be gatekeepers and those in strategic positions who try to make things redundant, expose things to weaknesses or go to a source point of development or renewal, which really should not be taking place in a free-market economy that is now dependent on the digital age. That is why the computer program software issue is of particular interest to me. I want to touch a little on the right to repair issues so people get a better understanding of that. This is part of the bill in some respects, but it also goes to a deeper level. I will get to that later.

The right to repair work I have been doing over the last decade involves Canadians being, quite frankly, treated the same as those in many other jurisdictions across the world, where people are allowed to fix their vehicles and vehicles used for emergency services and other types of goods and delivery to get proper updates. What people may not be aware of, or maybe they are, is that sometimes garages or repair facilities are restricted in fixing vehicles because they could not get a simple flash update or a downloaded pro-

gram. What we pushed for and got is the CASIS agreement, which is a voluntary agreement to allow the fixing of vehicles.

Nobody is asking for anything for free, so this is just a process where the aftermarket can purchase training, data or equipment to repair vehicles, often at times when even the dealers or the OEMs' officially designated repair facilities were not able to do so because of sheer volume. This put vehicles on the road that were damaged, not in proper working condition or were substandard to what they could be. Unfortunately, that has consequences in terms of traffic accidents and emissions, and it is a competition issue as people are forced out of business, not from lack of ability, skill set or investment, but basically from not being able to download a program.

A vehicle that needed a simple software update after being physically repaired might have to be towed sometimes hundreds of kilometres to another place to get the update, which could be on one's computer or personal phone. Different types of data could go through these things, so it is unfortunate because that creates a drag on the economy. This bill would prevent customers from being locked out where there should not be that type of behaviour.

• (1300)

The amendment to the act would allow for greater competition. It would stop the denial of access to technology. There would be some responsible rules related to sharing that information.

Interoperability issues are another part of this bill that is a little different. It would allow for someone to use one version with another. I think we have all had those frustrations in the past. A simple analogy would be sharing a song from an artist that one legally purchased, yet not being able to use it on different platforms. That used to be the case several years ago, really in a toxic type of way. Now it is better, but there are still some issues. That is a good example that, if one pays for something once, one should be able to use it with several different types of platforms, provided it is being done responsibly and is part of the agreement.

Agricultural equipment is particularly vulnerable to this. We should also recognize that it is a changing environment. The agricultural equipment we are talking about represents millions of dollars in investment for small business operators and people with family farms, so we are talking about investments that go for generations. This is not just about the big ones and the ones in the after market.

This is unfortunate because it also affects our food safety and our food supply, so it is a serious issue. That is why I congratulate the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for this legislation. It tackles a particular problem in the venue it is related to, but the issue is not a mere inconvenience. It is actually a significant economic hindrance as well as a food safety issue, in particular when looking at some of our western producers. That is one of the reasons New Democrats really support this bill. We also want to make sure that it is also part of a repertoire of legislation that is more enforceable.

I will return to the work that I did with the issue of a right to repair, and we ended up getting voluntary agreements. My legislation actually passed in the chamber. It went to the committee and then the OEMs decided that they could live with the aftermarket with voluntary agreements.

Unfortunately, what we have seen now though, is companies, such as Tesla, opting out of and not even participating in the voluntary agreements. I have called for repercussions on Tesla because there are different vehicles now on the road that are participating in this voluntary agreement to certain degrees. This bill would not have that critical flaw.

We knew of the flaw at the time. We accepted it, so it was kind of like we got a field goal instead of a touchdown in passing the legislation, getting it through the chamber and getting a voluntary agreement, but now we are left with the consequences 10 years later. We have to actually re-table legislation, which I have done. There is a movement on the Hill for this bill, my bill and another one that talks about access to information and data, which is really important because it is affecting our competition.

I really think that this bill can go to the next stage. It is one that we would like to see as a part of the discussion and repertoire of changes taking place. It is critical to understand that there is also a social justice component to this. Some of the OEMs and some of the ways in which we have been treated as a country could be seen as us being more like a colony. I can say that quite clearly with regard to consumer protection. There have been a number of examples where we have not been treated the same as other nations. This bill will also bring us in line with some international responses.

Just because we have a small population compared to other places, I do not think we should be taking ourselves to a point where we accept these types of conditions. Our purchasing power is significant. Our economic power is significant and our contribution to the world is significant. All we are asking for, and what this bill is asking for, is proper treatment in that context.

I will conclude by again thanking the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for this legislation, which that continues a necessary debate to modernize our policies. Hopefully, we will see better digital rights for all Canadians. As New Democrats, we believe that our digital rights include elements like this, and they should be protected.

• (1305)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time the House is dealing with measures in right to repair legislation and modifications to the Copyright Act.

Private Members' Business

In fact, Bill C-244 was here a bit earlier in the year. It was introduced by the member for Richmond Centre, and we had a fairly healthy debate on that issue. As alluded to earlier, some members had the opportunity to put some comments on the record with respect to that legislation. Many of the things that were said during that debate could also be said for this particular debate. Today, Bill C-244 is still at the committee stage, and I suspect there is going to be a great deal of seriousness in looking at the ways we can improve upon it.

With respect to the member's bill, Bill C-294, the government will be supporting the legislation. More importantly, I think there is a great deal of sympathy from all members on all sides of the House in recognizing the importance of the principles the member is trying to achieve through passing Bill C-294.

Modernizing the Copyright Act is of critical importance. There are certain things one has to take into consideration. Whenever we think of copyright, we like to think it is pretty simple and straightforward. We should be able to do this and that to different products, and there are things in place related to international trade. We can talk about, for example, the trade agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States. We can talk about international agreements. Copyright does play a very important role in society, and we can look at it from both an economic and a cultural perspective. That is why it is absolutely essential that we have copyright legislation.

The member made reference to modernization, and I think that is, in essence, what we should be looking at, whether it is with Bill C-244 or Bill C-294, the bill we are debating today. They demonstrate that it does not matter what side of the House we are on; there is very much a keen interest in the copyright legislation we have in Canada today. This speaks to the need for us to look at ways to maybe further study the Copyright Act.

The nice thing about Bill C-294, and why we will be supporting it, is that ultimately, by going to committee and listening to the different stakeholders, we can make some changes and, at the same time, still abide by those important agreements that allow for our economy and cultural sector to continue to grow and prosper. It is so very important.

I have indicated that things tend to get a bit more complicated and a bit more expensive, and I recall the days when I could buy a car, pop the hood and do all sorts of wonderful things to it. Believe it or not, I even did a motor transplant of sorts back in the late seventies on a 1976 Mustang. Today, if I pop the hood on a 2022 Mustang, I am not going to touch it. I suspect that if we were to investigate it, we would find TPMs on all forms of things that are locked. Some of that no doubt is justifiable, but other aspects, I would suggest, are not. I like simplicity and to think I own something.

This year we are focused a great deal on agriculture. I remember, from many years ago, the farms out in Saskatchewan. It was truly amazing to see the farmers' abilities to fix equipment.

Private Members' Business

• (1310)

We see a lot of equipment on a farm, from tractors and combines to cultivators. The ingenuity and expertise there is such that farmers can add something to a piece of machinery that would even make it work better. If something breaks down, they do not have the opportunity to call John Deere or whomever else to get them to come out to the field and fix the machinery. There are issues, and we are talking about hundreds of thousands if not going into the millions of dollars' worth of machinery.

There is a great deal of understanding and sympathy that there are certain aspects where we do need to come down a little harder in recognizing that consumer rights are very important. Consumer rights and competition in society is of the utmost importance, which is why I think that, as legislators, we need to be diligent in terms of what comes before us, with the idea of recognizing that we have a responsibility to look at ways in which we can protect consumer rights and encourage, wherever we can, competition. Through that competition, we are able to ensure that there are better price points and better quality products.

Someone earlier made reference to the fact that when we purchase something we like to think that it is ours. Unfortunately, because of things such as the TPMs that are put in place, a lot of things ultimately go in the garbage a little sooner than they should have. Often it is more practical or less expensive to throw something into the garbage and buy something new in some situations. In other situations, if we had the simple solution of having a third party, or better yet a third party part as opposed to having to purchase a manufacturer's part, it could save us a great deal of money. It could also make it that much more accessible in terms of availability when we actually need to use that part.

When we think of it from that perspective and factor in the issue of competition, at end of the day, there is more that we can look at, which is why I am pleased that not only do we have one but now two pieces of legislation. One is from the Conservatives and one is from my colleague and friend from Richmond Centre in the form of Bill C-244 on the right to repair.

When I spoke on the right to repair, one of the examples I used when debating Bill C-244 was something as simple as a washer and dryer. It is amazing what we see when we go to landfill sites now. We can compare to average usage to the ability to repair. These are the types of discussions that I would like to see at committee, with the idea that we keep an open mind and look at ways in which we can make some modifications to the Copyright Act.

However, we do have to take into consideration how important the Copyright Act is. As I said, it does foster creativity and innovation, which is why we have it. There are also obligations through international agreements. After all, Canada is a trading nation, but we are also a nation that cares deeply about consumer rights, which is the primary reason I think it is important that the bill before us be passed.

• (1315)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-294, the unlocking innovation act. I was delighted to hear from the member for Winnipeg North just a few moments

ago that the Liberal members will be supporting this very important piece of legislation introduced by my Conservative colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands. I want to thank that colleague for all the hard work he has done to bring this important piece of legislation before the House.

The bill would amend the Copyright Act to allow a person, in certain circumstances, to circumvent a technological protection measure to make a computer program interoperable with any device or component, or with a product they manufacture. It would allow the owner of a software-enabled device to bypass the lock in order to make it compatible with other applications, even if they are not developed by the original software developer. It would not allow anyone to break digital locks in order to copy or alter the work of an artist or a copyright holder without their consent. Authors have been protected by the act since 2012.

The bill would allow people to break digital locks solely so the program can be used with another platform. This is called interoperability, and it is a very good thing. The bill results from a loophole in the Copyright Act applying to computer programs, also known as software, which are increasingly found in any number of digitized products imaginable.

The bill would also harmonize our Copyright Act with American legislation, ensuring Canadian innovators and businesses remain competitive with small innovators, not just in the United States but in the European Union and Australia. The American regulation currently views that reverse engineering a computer program for a legitimate reason, such as achieving interoperability, falls under the general copyright exception of fair use.

This is what the bill seeks to extend to Canadian innovators. The bill is also complementary to Bill C-244, addressing the right to repair. Whereas the right to repair tends to focus more on the consumer's needs, interoperability necessarily carries broad implications for how competitive markets can function. There can be an equal or greater impact on the marketplace than from the right to repair. Specifically, it determines if small innovators and entire areas of industry can exist, let alone succeed, as seen in the Nintendo v. King decision.

This case centred around the expansive use of technological protection measures. Increasingly, content creators and copyright owners have turned to technological protection measures to control how their works are accessed and used. Technological protection measures include technology that provides digital locks, preventing individuals from undertaking a variety of actions, such as printing, making alterations or controlling viewing. However, when a customer buys a product, they should be allowed to make alterations or repair the product themselves if they wish. After purchasing it, they are the owner of that hardware.

In the case of *Nintendo v. King*, Go Cyber Shopping had advertised and offered for sale devices, referred to in the judgment as “mod chips”, a type of computer chip. Go Cyber Shopping offered mod chip installation services as well, which means it had merely offered to sell and install computer chips, including ones a customer may have bought elsewhere. The Federal Court in Canada found these activities constituted a circumvention of technological protection measures and awarded Nintendo \$11.7 million in statutory damages and \$1 million in punitive damages.

This is why a bill like Bill C-294 is so important. It would allow small businesses who want to assist customers who own a personal technology device to make upgrades, modifications or alterations, or to repair that device. These small businesses would be able to do so without running afoul of overly expansive copyright regulations.

The bill would not only help with consumer technology devices; it would also help many Canadian farmers. As Donna Boyd, president of the Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada, said:

In today's digital environment, physical product design is increasingly reliant on software, networking and computerization, and farmers must continue to have the freedom of choice to select the equipment that is right for their operations. Canada's framework for interoperability is outdated and reflective of an era prior to widespread technological advancement, and it is time for meaningful modernization.

● (1320)

By amending Canada's copyright law, Bill C-294 seeks to provide a clear and limited exemption for consumers and future innovators to enjoy the benefits of interoperability.

A growing number of Canadians believe the Copyright Act is long overdue for an update. Those who deal with copyright and intellectual property, including industry associations, are actively calling for it. This is what Bill C-294 will accomplish, allowing industry to meet modern technological demands.

For the last 10 years, since 2012, Canada's Copyright Act has enforced technological protection measures to help businesses and creators benefit from their own work, including software. Some companies use this to put digital locks in place, limiting which information their competitors or users can access within their products. Combined with a lack of clarity in copyright law, this can block users from having their machinery or devices interoperate with other equipment, as they were once able to do.

Along with consumers, manufacturers are left with both practical barriers and uncertainty under the current legal precedent if they want to sell their competitive products. This bill will provide a clear, limited exemption for consumers and innovators who simply wish to enable their devices or machinery to interoperate with other equipment, as they were always able to do before.

If passed, Bill C-294 will better support Canadian innovators and consumers to maintain a competitive marketplace while upholding Canada's copyright framework. I look forward to having the opportunity to vote to send this bill to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

I would like to again congratulate my colleague for bringing forward this important initiative for us to consider. I hope that, as par-

Private Members' Business

liamentarians, we can all work together to get this bill passed as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has the floor for his right of reply.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise at the end of this debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-294. I would like to thank all of my colleagues who have expressed interest in speaking to this bill, in particular the members from all of the other parties of the House and the great ideas that they spoke about on this bill. I think of the planned obsolescence issue that the Bloc Québécois raised in both of their hours of debate. I definitely appreciate what they had to say about that issue.

At the start of our discussion, I provided the background for the issue of interoperability. I spoke about what it is and how it is important for the life of communities across Canada. It will allow them to survive and to keep on doing the good work that they have been doing for decades. That is what leads me to raise this issue and bring this bill forward.

While I focused on the familiar examples of farming equipment in rural areas, I will repeat that interoperability is something much larger than just a single sector. We are really talking about something that lays a foundation for stronger competition and innovation in the workplace.

It is not anything new. Before digital technology was a factor, there were always innovators creating new equipment or devices, which customers could freely use with the products from established brands. It happened in an open market where all of the players, as well as their customers, could benefit. One such example is a simple USB connection. That is one of the easiest ways to describe interoperability. One simply plugs it into one's computer and the brand does not matter; it will work. That is what copyright is supposed to encourage and protect.

All we need to do is to update and clarify the law to uphold this principle under changing circumstances. It should never be discouraged by a technicality found in the Copyright Act. Digital locks and TPMs have a legitimate function and the law will continue to enforce them as such, but the force of law should never be used by larger companies to discourage or shut down competitors and innovators. For this sole purpose, Bill C-294 would provide a clear, limited exemption to enable interoperability.

I would like to go back to what brought attention to this issue in Parliament. A short-line manufacturer from my riding provided witness testimony while the industry committee studied the CUS-MA trade agreement. Considering our trade relationship, they said this:

Private Members' Business

It's a challenge for us to achieve the ability to continue to legally manufacture our product and sell it onto these platforms. The copyright act in the United States has provision for circumventing for the purpose of interoperation. The Canadian Copyright Act does not have this same term in the agreement.

They explained that they do not want to have an uneven footing with the U.S. if they are facing a barrier in Canada that does not exist south of the border. Even if a short-line manufacturer operates outside of a small town or rural Saskatchewan, they are still selling their equipment internationally, whether it goes to the States or down to Australia. Both of these countries, by the way, are moving in this direction with interoperability. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has studied the situation with agricultural machinery and recommended data standards to promote interoperability between brands of machinery.

Similarly, our own Competition Bureau has discussed barriers for interoperability and has signalled some support for updating the Copyright Act. The U.S. Copyright Office, with the Library of Congress, regularly reviews the application of TPMs and provides exemptions. Their ruling, in 2018, allowed for circumvention in different areas, which included agricultural equipment, vehicles and phones, to name a few. This worked well enough for them to renew the exemptions in 2021 for another three-year term.

While the process might work differently in their system, Bill C-294 is seeking to provide an equivalent exemption here in Canada, as requested by our own industry. We have industry associations, manufacturers and dealers from many provinces, including Ontario, who see the growing need for us to do this so that they can stay in business and remain competitive.

As I said earlier, the process that led to this bill began with studying CUSMA. Our international agreements are an important

factor for our policy decisions. Canada has made certain commitments with respect to intellectual property and what our own copyright laws will look like. I want to reassure my colleagues that I have kept this in mind while researching and discussing the issue with policy analysts from the Library of Parliament. It has shaped the drafting of this bill from early on.

With the support of my fellow members at this stage, I am hopeful that Bill C-294 will be studied at committee and we can continue to have a constructive discussion throughout the legislative process. As always, I am happy to talk with my colleagues further about this as we go forward.

● (1325)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 30, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 1:29 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:29 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Friday, November 25, 2022

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Public Complaints and Review Commission Act

Bill C-20. Second reading	10009
Mr. Samson	10009
Ms. Bérubé	10010
Mr. Julian	10010
Mr. Shipley	10010
Mr. Lamoureux	10011
Mr. Ste-Marie	10011
Mr. Green	10011
Mrs. Atwin	10013
Mr. Van Popta	10013
Ms. Bérubé	10013
Ms. Koutrakis	10014
Mr. Van Popta	10015
Ms. Normandin	10015
Ms. Idlout	10015
Mr. Morrice	10015
Mr. Muys	10016
Mr. Chahal	10017
Mr. Lamoureux	10017

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Housing

Mr. Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	10017
--	-------

2022 Business Conference

Mr. Généreux	10018
--------------------	-------

National AccessArts Centre

Mr. Chahal	10018
------------------	-------

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Ms. Gazan	10018
-----------------	-------

Gender-Based Violence

Ms. Koutrakis	10018
---------------------	-------

Canadian University Football Championship

Mr. Waugh	10019
-----------------	-------

Diabetes Awareness Month

Mr. Kusmierczyk	10019
-----------------------	-------

Barrhaven Food Cupboard

Mr. Arya	10019
----------------	-------

Jean Lapointe

Mr. Deltell	10019
-------------------	-------

Diabetes Awareness Month

Mr. Kelloway	10019
--------------------	-------

Government Priorities

Mrs. Roberts	10020
--------------------	-------

Procurement

Mr. Lloyd	10020
-----------------	-------

Allen Alexandre

Mr. Fergus	10020
------------------	-------

Gender-Based Violence

Mr. Blaikie	10020
-------------------	-------

Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits

Mr. Thériault	10021
---------------------	-------

The Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Redekopp	10021
--------------------	-------

Gender-Based Violence

Ms. Sudds	10021
-----------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Finance

Ms. Lantsman	10021
Mr. Boissonnault	10021

Taxation

Ms. Lantsman	10021
Mr. Boissonnault	10022
Ms. Lantsman	10022
Mr. Boissonnault	10022
Mr. Deltell	10022
Mr. Boissonnault	10022
Mr. Deltell	10022
Mr. Boissonnault	10022

Justice

Ms. Normandin	10022
Mr. Lametti	10022
Ms. Normandin	10023
Mr. Mendicino	10023

Health

Ms. Mathysen	10023
Mr. van Koevorden	10023

Public Safety

Mr. Masse	10023
Mr. Mendicino	10023

Carbon Pricing

Mrs. Gray	10023
Mr. Boissonnault	10024
Mrs. Gray	10024
Mr. Fisher	10024
Mrs. Stubbs	10024
Mr. Duguid	10024
Mrs. Stubbs	10024
Mr. Duguid	10024
Mr. Small	10024

Mr. Boissonnault	10024
Mr. Small	10025
Mr. Duguid	10025
Infrastructure	
Mr. Ste-Marie	10025
Mr. LeBlanc	10025
Mr. Ste-Marie	10025
Mr. LeBlanc	10025
Public Safety	
Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	10025
Mr. Mendicino	10025
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Brassard	10026
Mr. Mendicino	10026
Mr. Arnold	10026
Mr. LeBlanc	10026
Mr. Généreux	10026
Mr. LeBlanc	10026
Climate Change	
Ms. Ashton	10026
Mr. LeBlanc	10026
Persons with Disabilities	
Ms. Zarrillo	10027
Mr. Kusmierczyk	10027
Innovation, Science and Industry	
Mr. Ehsassi	10027
Mr. Fillmore	10027
Public Safety	
Mr. Caputo	10027
Mr. Lametti	10027
Mr. Caputo	10027
Mr. Mendicino	10027
Mrs. Vien	10028
Mr. Mendicino	10028
Mrs. Vien	10028
Mr. Mendicino	10028
Employment Insurance	
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	10028
Mr. Kusmierczyk	10028
Mrs. Desbiens	10028
Ms. Gould	10028
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. McLean	10029
Mr. Boissonnault	10029
Mr. McLean	10029
Mr. Boissonnault	10029
Mr. Vidal	10029
Mr. Duguid	10029
Health	
Mr. Scarpaleggia	10029
Ms. Bennett	10029

Government Priorities	
Mr. Epp	10030
Mr. van Koeverden	10030
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Patzer	10030
Mr. Kusmierczyk	10030
Correctional Service of Canada	
Mr. Reid	10030
Mr. Mendicino	10030
Climate Change	
Mrs. Atwin	10030
Mr. Duguid	10030
Health	
Mr. MacGregor	10031
Ms. Bennett	10031
Public Safety	
Mr. Vuong	10031
Mr. Mendicino	10031

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Petitions	
Seniors	
Mr. Brassard	10031
Housing	
Mr. Morrice	10031
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux	10031

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Public Complaints and Review Commission Act	
Bill C-20. Second reading	10032
Mr. Lamoureux	10032
Mr. Muys	10032
Mr. Masse	10032
Mr. Chahal	10032
Mr. Thériault	10033
Mr. Morrice	10033
Ms. Idlout	10033
Mrs. Atwin	10034
Mr. Epp	10034
Mr. Albas	10035
Mrs. Atwin	10036
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)	10036

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Copyright Act	
Bill C-294. Second reading	10036
Ms. Normandin	10036

Mr. Masse..... 10038
Mr. Lamoureux..... 10039
Mr. Morantz..... 10040

Mr. Patzer..... 10041
Division on motion deferred..... 10042

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