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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 28, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)
[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ADDITIONAL ALLOTTED DAYS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC) moved:

That, notwithstanding Standing Order 81, for the supply period ending March 26, 2020, three additional allotted days shall be added for a total of 10, provided that one of the additional days is allotted to the Conservative Party, one of the additional days is allotted to the Bloc Québécois, and one of the additional days is allotted to the New Democratic Party, and, if necessary to accommodate these additional days, the supply period may be extended to April 2, 2020, and no allotted days shall fall on a Wednesday or a Friday.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise today in my capacity as the House leader for the official opposition to speak to the motion that we have put forward today.

I will be honest. I wish we were not talking about the Standing Orders today. I think there are a lot of issues gripping this country, including illegal blockades. We have seen individuals set fires and put up barricades on railroads, causing our economy to come to a halt. We have seen absolute weak leadership and no leadership from the government. Today would be a good day to talk about things like that.

We also have seen issues around investment leaving this country. As we have just seen this week, Teck has taken out its application for a very important project that we wish had been built in Alberta. It would have helped jobs right across the country. The Liberals and their policy are driving investment away. That is something we could be talking about today.

We also have the coronavirus, which is gripping the world. We do not know if it is contained. Could it be a pandemic? That is an issue Canadians are thinking about.

However, today we are talking about changes to the Standing Orders. I will get to the fact that we only have four speakers today, but for now I will say that I am sharing my time with one of the next three speakers, the member for Perth—Wellington.

I will start by giving a little background and then will quickly let my colleagues know, as some may not be aware, how a minority Parliament operates. I want to give some context about opposition days and why they matter.

Throughout the run of a full year, the government must devote 22 days for the opposition parties to raise topics of their choosing. The rules spread those out over winter, spring and fall, and from there the opposition parties agree on how to carve them up. It is up to the government to decide which days are used for opposition motions, but on those days, the opposition gets to bring forward any topic it chooses as long as it falls within Parliament's jurisdiction. Today, the Liberals decided to give Conservatives a Friday as their opposition day.

On Fridays, as we all know, the House has a much shorter sitting period, because we all want to get back to our ridings for the important things going on in our constituencies. To be blunt and very clear, for all of us who have been here for a while and know this and for the newer MPs, giving an opposition party, any one of us, a Friday as an opposition day is a full-out slap. It is a full-out insult. It is a full-out, 100% punishment.

That is what the Prime Minister is doing right now. He is punishing Conservatives. Why? It is because we have been standing up to him, because we have been pointing out his weakness and calling out some of the ways the government has not recognized that it is in a minority, not a majority, Parliament.

We have seen a number of things that we are very concerned about. We have raised them with you, Madam Speaker. They include things like the government's leaking bills to the press before they have been brought to the House. We had to rise on a question of privilege. As we saw, the Minister of Natural Resources had to stand and apologize. We accept that apology, but it was pretty disrespectful to all of us in this place for the government to leak contents of a bill to the press before we saw it.

We have also seen the government give incomplete and inaccurate responses to Order Paper questions. Actually, this is what the Minister of Natural Resources had to apologize for. No one has apologized yet for the leaking of the bill.

In responses to the Order Paper questions, misleading answers have been given, and then even in defence of those misleading answers, we have seen misleading answers given again. It is totally unacceptable, and as Conservatives, we are going to call that out.

Business of Supply

There are the two issues on which I have seen such a high level of disrespect. First is the new NAFTA agreement and how the Liberals have worked with us on that. As Conservatives, we are the party of free trade. We believe that many Canadians and many Canadian sectors need an agreement. It is not a great agreement, but we have been supporting it, while asking tough questions.

One of those questions has been about the economic impact to Canadians, and the Liberals have refused to give us that. Instead, they are getting up, as we saw when the Deputy Prime Minister stood in this place, to completely mislead and try to poke a stick in our eye, saying that we were somehow blocking the new NAFTA deal, which is completely misleading, completely disingenuous and insulting.

To add insult to injury, yesterday when I tried to expedite Bill C-4, to get it through in a much faster way, the Liberals opposed it. In fact, it was the member for Winnipeg North, a Manitoban, who said no.

The Liberals are sucking and blowing at the same time, and in doing that they are insulting us. They are not recognizing that we are in a minority Parliament.

The really insulting thing they did occurred last week, when the Prime Minister excluded our leader from a meeting of all opposition and government leaders on the topic of the rail blockades simply because our leader spoke the truth as to how to approach the illegal blockades. He was called names and excluded by the Prime Minister. Then three days later, the Prime Minister basically repeated verbatim what our leader had said. That was disrespectful and disingenuous, and not at all the way a minority Parliament should work.

Last Parliament, we said this often: The Prime Minister wanted an audience in this place; he did not want an opposition. I am afraid that has not changed. He did not get the voters' message in the election. He did not get the memo that his majority has been taken away. He needs to recognize quickly that Conservatives are going to stand up for the interests of the millions of Canadians who voted for us, who did not vote for the Liberals, and the growing number of Canadians who see a country and an economy paralyzed by the weak Liberal government.

Conservatives are not afraid to give voice to Canadians who disagree with the Liberals and the Prime Minister. Conservatives will demand that Liberals be open and transparent. They will be honest in this Parliament. Conservatives will hold the Liberal government to account.

In 1979, Joe Clark and his government fell after just 49 sitting days. It is often said it was because they could not count, but really it was because they had miscalculated badly. Today is just the 26th sitting day of this Parliament, and sadly the Liberals and their growing pattern of disrespect are hurtling us toward one unnecessary political disaster after another.

We are going to give the Liberals a chance to work collaboratively with opposition parties and work with Parliament by dedicating three additional days for each of the opposition parties. Members will notice that we are working collaboratively. Members will no-

tice that we put the opposition parties in our motion. We are not looking just for our gain. We want to see all of us work together.

The motion would give three additional days for each of the parties to put forward an idea for debate and propose solutions for the many difficulties that Canadians face. We are giving the Liberals a chance to right their wrongs toward the opposition parties. We will give the Prime Minister a chance to correct his course. Today is a chance to press reset.

Recently I read an article in which the Liberal House leader, talking to a member of the press in the context of a minority Parliament, said, "Never take one day for granted. Anything can happen." This may be a lesson for the Liberals and the Prime Minister: The things he does affect all of Parliament. This is also, with respect, a lesson for the Liberal House leader that he should never take one day for granted, because anything can happen.

Today, with the amount of time that we have, we will talk about giving additional days to the opposition. We are hoping this will result in a reset and that the Liberals will respect that we are in a minority Parliament, will tell us the truth, will not exclude people who disagree with them, will not mislead this Parliament and will be open, transparent and respectful. Then we can continue to work, as we should, as the official opposition and as opposition parties to hold the government to account and do the very best we can for this great country that we serve.

• (1010)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, as we have seen with the past government, and indeed with the current government, the Prime Minister feels this is his House. We know differently. This is the House of the electors who elected the 338 members of Parliament. We are here to be their voices.

I want to ask our hon. colleague to once again share with those who are tuning in today the importance of opposition days. I honestly think our colleagues across the way do not get it. Perhaps Canadians need to fully understand what the opposition days mean.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, it is obvious, in the last 20-some days that we literally have been in Parliament, by the number of opposition days we have been able to bring forward solutions to problems facing the country that the government has seemed unable to do themselves.

I will give the House one example. On our very first opposition day, we were able to pass a motion and establish the committee that is working right now to address the crisis with our relationship with the Government of China and the Beijing regime.

The role of the official opposition is to hold the government to account. However, our role is also to offer substantial solutions and fixes.

Another issue we brought forward was the illegal blockades. Again, we would like to be talking about that. We think there are some important things the government could do.

Business of Supply

The role of our opposition is to present a government-in-waiting, which is a party that offers solutions to the current government, and to hold it to account. That it is what we are doing.

• (1015)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is vitally important that other voices are heard in the House of Commons. With majority governments, generally those voices are marginalized, except on opposition days.

In the NDP's case, we brought forward issues that had not been discussed in the House, issues such as a declaration of a climate emergency, housing as a human right, the thalidomide compensation, the environmental impacts of microbeads and banning that practice. I could go on and on. The government often refuses to consider these important issues.

Could the official opposition House leader tell us how important it is for opposition voices to be raised more frequently and to bring issues to the forefront that the government denies? How important is that to right and privilege?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, I believe the NDP supports the spirit of this idea as well.

The role is so important. All of us come with our experiences and perspectives. We all want to see Canada be the very best it can be. We want Canadians to have the best life and we have different ways of addressing the challenges Canadians face.

The opposition can bring these ideas as well. It is not just the Liberals who have solutions to problems. The NDP have some solutions. The Bloc will possibly have some solutions. We will see. The Conservatives certainly have been providing those. Therefore, it is vitally important.

However, what is just as important is that the government not disrespect Parliament, this institution, and the important role all of us play in this place.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, giving the opposition more government time to debate their motions will negatively affect the government's legislative agenda.

Let me remind the House that this motion will delay several important bills, such as Bill C-4, the bill to implement the historic trade agreement between our great country, the United States and Mexico. Let us remember that the United States, Mexico and all premiers want this bill to be passed, and passed quickly.

Will the member comment on how this will delay very important legislation before the House at this time?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that I know for a fact that the official opposition House leader is very well able to answer this question without any help. Therefore, I would ask members to hold their thoughts and comments.

The official opposition House leader, a brief answer, please.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, that question in and of itself shows how disingenuous and disrespectful these Liberals are. Yesterday, I stood in this place and I asked that we pass a motion

that would mean Bill C-4 could be before this place today. Who said no to that? The member for Winnipeg North, a Liberal.

The Liberals shut down the opportunity to bring Bill C-4, the new NAFTA agreement, to the House today. Why? They would rather politicize it and punish all of us because we dare stand up to the Prime Minister.

We will take no lessons from the Liberals. They are delaying NAFTA and they are being disingenuous and politicizing this important agreement. We are the ones who tried to get it through, and get it through today.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, "Parliament is more than procedure – it is the custodian of the nation's freedom." Those words were spoken by the great defender of parliamentary democracy, the Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker.

Today, we find ourselves called upon to once again stand in support of this great institution, to once again stand for the right of opposition parliamentarians to hold the government to account.

Many Canadians may not be closely following the business of supply. They may not closely follow the allotted days, or the opposition days, that are often called in Parliament. However, these days, in which the agenda of the House falls to the opposition parties, are absolutely essential to our great parliamentary democracy. We as the opposition, both the official opposition and the other opposition parties, have the right to bring forward matters that we feel are important to our constituents and to all Canadians.

Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, states "The Opposition prerogative is very broad in the use of the allotted day and ought not to be interfered with except on the clearest and most certain procedural grounds."

We have brought forward this opposition day motion on this day for very important reasons. The Liberal government decided to punish the official opposition by giving us a short parliamentary day, a short day when only two full speaking slots would be allocated to the opposition parties.

The Liberal government seems to have forgotten that it is among the weakest governing mandate in Canadian history. The Liberals forget that they actually lost the popular vote in the last election and Canadians saw fit to return them with a minority of seats in this place.

Bosc and Gagnon states the following, on page 855:

The setting aside of a specified number of sitting days on which the opposition chooses the subject of debate derives from the tradition which holds that Parliament does not grant supply until the opposition has had an opportunity to demonstrate why it should be refused.

Business of Supply

In other words, before we as the opposition can consent to the continued funding of the government, we must, and we will, have the opportunity to raise our concerns in this place. We will not be silenced. We will not accept that the government, and only the government, has a legitimate voice in this place.

I would remind members of the Liberal Party that they are first and foremost members of the legislative branch of government. Those who do not sit in cabinet are not members of the executive branch. They are parliamentarians and parliamentarians first and foremost. They too should be concerned that the members of the executive branch of government are the ones who are trying to control the debate of this very place.

I ought not to need to remind the government of its legislative record and its mismanagement of House time in the previous Parliament. At the time of dissolution, it had left at least 17 government bills lying on the Order Paper. This is in spite of the fact that it used time allocation on dozens of occasions. On top of that, there were 13 motions for closure and 40 motions to proceed to orders of the day, thereby bypassing the opportunity for opposition MPs to move concurrence motions or to table petitions on behalf of the constituents in each of our 338 ridings across the country.

Today's debate is about returning the House to the people, to give the official opposition, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party each one additional opposition day during the supply period, to give each of these parties the opportunity to raise the issues before granting supply to the Liberal government.

• (1020)

I do not need to remind the House either about the disregard we have seen in the past by the Liberal Party to this institution.

In the previous Parliament, on one of its very first bills, Bill C-14, the medical assistance in dying act, the Liberal government was found to have contravened the rights and privileges of the House by leaking the contents to the media before it was tabled for all parliamentarians to see. Old habits die hard, because it appears it did that once again this time with Bill C-7, the amendments to medical assistance in dying.

The Conservatives do not need to remind the Liberals either about the impacts they bring upon themselves when they attempt to use draconian measures to shut down debate in the House. We all remember Motion No. 6, when they tried to unilaterally take control of every mechanism for debate in the House. We do not need to remind the Liberals of the standing order standoff, when they tried to diminish the opportunity for the opposition to hold the government to account by unilaterally changing the rules of the House. It fell to the Conservatives, as the official opposition, and the third party, the New Democrats, to ensure we were that line of defence, that we were that thin line of the wedge to prevent the Liberal government from doing that.

In fact, in the previous Parliament, during a debate in this very House on a question of privilege, one of the most significant matters with which the House can be seized, a Liberal member of Parliament, the member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert, stood in the House, used a procedural measure to move to orders of the day and killed that debate. However, our Parliament is stronger than any

one Liberal member of Parliament. At that time, the Speaker saw fit to return that question of privilege to the House so members of Parliament could have their voices heard.

We see this time and again with the Liberal government. At every opportunity it has to do the right thing, it goes the opposite direction.

That brings me to the events we have seen just in the last couple of weeks on the new NAFTA. It is not a great deal and it is not the worst deal; it is somewhere in between. We are the party of free trade and we support the implementation of the new NAFTA despite its imperfections. However, to hear the Deputy Prime Minister state publicly and in this place that the Conservative Party was somehow trying to delay the new NAFTA is an insult to the opposition and to the House of Commons.

Just yesterday, my colleague, the opposition House leader, gave the Liberals the opportunity to right their wrong by bringing forward NAFTA today. We could be debating NAFTA today and I could be raising the concerns of the people of Perth—Wellington, the farmers, the manufacturers, individuals who have concerns with the bill. However, the Liberals did not budge. In fact, speaking for the government, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader said no, that the government would not be willing to bring NAFTA forward. That is unacceptable.

We stand here today debating this opposition motion, a motion that gives the rights and responsibilities of the House back to all its members. I encourage all members to stand for their parliamentary privilege, to stand for democracy and vote in favour of this motion.

• (1025)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the last Parliament, the opposition opposed our main estimates reform initiative. That is no secret.

Not only will this motion today delay government bills, but it seeks to change a fundamental balance that was struck way back in 1968 to give the opposition party time to debate motions of its choosing in exchange for an agreement to pass supply in one day. This balance and framework has remained intact for over half a century, until today.

Opposition days are very important when they bring to light an issue that is of material concern to the country, a province, a region or a group of Canadians. These are important debates that need to be had in this House. This is not that kind of debate. This is a blatant attempt to change the rules of the House of Commons in less than four hours.

In the last Parliament, the government brought forward what I viewed to be a sensible proposal to study certain rule changes. Instead of agreeing to the study, the opposition tried to shut down the House and disrupt the budget presentation, and all opposition parties cried foul. How things have changed. This is remarkable.

I thought the long-standing principle was to have this done by consensus. The procedure and House affairs committee is a proper place. I am curious if the hon. member of the opposition would like to describe why the opposition members are bucking this trend of building consensus. Why did they not do this in PROC, where it should have been done?

• (1030)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, the rights and privileges of this House are not a gift given to the opposition by the Liberal government; the rights and privileges of this House are enshrined in the Constitution. They are enshrined in the authorities of this House. They are enshrined as a right and privilege of all parliamentarians to raise the issues that matter to them.

I do not need to remind the member for Central Nova that it was his House leader at the time who tried to unilaterally change the Standing Orders through a blatant attempt to reduce accountability through the discussion document she tried to table. It was unacceptable.

I would remind the Liberal government, which will soon be the opposition again, that this is not a change to the Standing Orders; this is an order of this House, an order of this Parliament, for the supply period ending March 31.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an important distinction the member just made. Of course, it is quite a regular practice of the House to make orders that say “notwithstanding the Standing Orders” or “notwithstanding the usual practice of the House”. We do this on a regular basis when we have tributes and foreign leaders come to speak, so it does not in any way upset the balance. It does not change the Standing Orders to have an order that exists notwithstanding the Standing Orders. I wonder if the member has comments on that.

Also, could the member take the opportunity to share a bit more about what he is hearing in his riding about the new NAFTA deal and some of the negative impacts of the concessions the government has made? We still want to move forward with it and it is unfortunate the government has been delaying its own legislation when we could have been debating that today. If there is time in the response, what is he hearing from his riding about these issues?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is absolutely right. This is a special order of this House for three additional opposition days during the supply period ending March 31, which has the option to be extended to April 2. This is a run-of-the-mill opposition day motion that works within the rules of this House, but he is right, we should be debating NAFTA.

Perth—Wellington has more dairy farmers than any other electoral district in the country. We have more chicken farmers in Wellington County than any other county in the province. They are

Privilege

expressing their concerns to me about some of the challenges they see with NAFTA, and we should be debating that now in this House.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's passionate speech. On March 21, he was very passionate about making such a change to the Standing Orders. He said:

The learned amendment that's been put forward would require that all parties agree to any changes...made to the Standing Orders. That's what's been done in the past....That's what's been done in a proper functioning...of...[doing] this.

Obviously, this is changing how a Standing Order works, so it would be hypocritical if he voted for this motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that using words like “hypocritical” is really not acceptable in the House. It is okay to talk about parties, but not about individuals.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I 100% agree with what I said then and I agree with what I have said now. Changes and amendments to the Standing Orders of this House should be done with the consensus of all members of this House.

This is not a change to the Standing Orders; it is the granting of three additional opposition days, during the supply period, to the members of the official opposition, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. It is not a change to the Standing Orders of this House.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader's question of privilege yesterday, regarding my bill.

I worked hard on this bill. I did speak to some of the MPs from the Liberal side and I spoke to a reporter as well, not knowing the rules. I apologize. This is a good bill. I still think it is a good bill. I did not know the rule not to speak to reporters before the bill was tabled.

Regarding the change to the title of the bill, this is the title I always wanted. It is a clear title. I asked my office staff whether we can change the title of the bill and they said I can, which I did.

I appreciate your time, Madam Speaker.

Business of Supply

● (1035)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know that this matter was raised yesterday. I appreciate the additional comments from the member for Markham—Unionville. We will certainly add it to the information that was provided yesterday, and a response will be forthcoming.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ADDITIONAL ALLOTTED DAYS IN THE SUPPLY PERIOD

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to clarify something the opposition House leader said in her speech.

She stated that the Liberals opposed a motion to expedite CUS-MA legislation. While she talked about working together with other parties in a collaborative manner, what she fails to mention is that she purposely provided the text at the very last minute, with no time to review it. The Conservatives are playing silly tricks and gotcha politics because they are on the defensive, trying to slow down this important bill.

We did the responsible thing. We took time to review it and then agreed with it and moved it again ourselves. However, once we moved it again ourselves, the Conservatives opposed it. There was no consent.

The actions of the Conservatives on this merely show their current desperation, and they are on the wrong side of history of this important issue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member is misleading the House with respect to a vote that took place yesterday. There was no denial of consent from anyone in the Conservative caucus on expediting that issue. The member cannot simply lie or mislead the House with respect to what actually happened yesterday. That is a violation of the rules of order, I think you will find, Madam Speaker.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would just say that this is not a point of order. It is debate.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to continue his debate.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, it seems we hit a nerve. It is clear the members of the opposition do not want to go forward on this important bill, a bill that is required, that businesses are crying out for, that farmers are crying out for, that people across the country want us to move forward on, but we are playing gotcha politics and we are playing petty politics on this particular day.

I would like to offer some comment on the importance of what we are debating today. This is not a motion that will likely attract the attention of many Canadians outside this chamber or outside the Ottawa bubble. It does not touch on the issues that are important to many of our constituents: the economy, jobs, affordability, climate change, health care, pensions, reconciliation with indigenous people, keeping our streets safe and securing Canada's place in the world.

These are, of course, the issues that are at the forefront of our government's agenda. These are the issues on which our government was elected to make changes. These are the issues on which our government has a mandate from Canadians.

This motion today does not call on the House to have a constructive debate on any of these matters. Make no mistake, the motion from the Conservative House leader has profound implications for Parliament and for the democratic system that we cherish. It is a motion that is reflective of the Conservatives themselves. While they were in government and during recent years in opposition, we have all seen their track record.

In government, under Stephen Harper, Conservatives showed disdain for Parliament and for all the members on the opposition benches. In opposition, under the current leader, who will be replaced in June, they have continued to show disdain for the traditions and decorum of this chamber. They heckle when I talk about decorum in this chamber, which is ironic.

Canadians have not forgotten the behaviour of the Conservatives in the 41st Parliament, as well as in the last one. It is the Conservatives who, all too often, held the House of Commons hostage with political tactics and manoeuvres, repeatedly obstructing MPs from debating important legislation. On more than one occasion, they forced the House to hold all-night marathon vote sessions. They voted against funding for infrastructure during that time, on national defence, veterans, police, security, VIA Rail services, Parks Canada, indigenous peoples and more.

This was a political stunt, and Liberal MPs stood proudly to vote in favour of those services that are important to Canadians. One of these voting marathons kept MPs in the chamber for 30 hours in the last Parliament. This came at a cost to Parliament's reputation and literally a cost to the taxpayers. Indeed, the Conservatives' current House leader said in a news release, when she was part of a previous Conservative government that was facing an NDP filibuster in 2011, that these tactics cost the House of Commons an additional \$50,000 per hour to stay open. Where was that outrage in the last Parliament?

One of the Conservatives' most shameful episodes was when they tried to prevent the finance minister from reading his budget speech in the chamber by banging on their desks and shouting him down, like bullies in a schoolyard. It was an undignified spectacle.

These are the political stunts that the Conservatives like to call tools from their tool box. It is quite the tool box. This behaviour from the Conservative opposition has done nothing to restore Canadians' trust in Parliament. In fact, I fear what they have done has deepened the cynicism among all of our constituents.

Business of Supply

Unfortunately, it has become clear that the Conservatives have not changed since the last Parliament. Last Thursday, they kept MPs in Ottawa for a vote on an opposition day, which never happened because once everyone had missed their flights home, they deferred the vote to the following Monday. MPs missed events in their riding, they missed spending time with their kids, husbands, wives and families. Why did they do this? For one reason: they could.

Simply a day later, on Friday, the Conservatives dipped into their bag of tricks again to obstruct the work of Parliament. On that day, members were debating Bill C-3, supported by all parties, including the Conservatives, that would bring great improvements to the accountability of the Canada Border Services Agency, and yet the Conservatives moved to literally shut down the business of the House that day.

They moved a motion to adjourn the House at 12:30 p.m., during their lunch hour. I know most Canadians do not move to end their work during their lunch hour, but the Conservatives did. They wanted to turn off the lights for the day. When that did not work, they attempted to adjourn debate again. When that failed, they attempted to shut down the House early, again.

● (1040)

These political stunts consumed over two hours of time in the House. The Conservatives' objective was clear: preventing the House from debating this important legislation. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened. Without a doubt, the Conservatives have shown their true colours. They do not believe in Parliament.

Conservatives have shown this once again with the motion we are debating today, for at the heart of what the Conservative opposition members hope to achieve is tilting the balance from long-standing practices and procedures that have served the House well for many decades. This balance is simple in its design but crucial to its core.

The following is what makes our parliamentary system so successful. When an election happens, Canadians send their elected representatives to the House of Commons to act on their behalf. The government is elected with the responsibility to move forward on the agenda that Canadians have given it. That means introducing legislation, ensuring it receives vibrant debate from all sides and ultimately bringing legislation to a vote. There is limited time in the parliamentary calendar, and the government must always endeavour to schedule the time Parliament needs to examine and vote on its legislation.

Across the aisle, the opposition has the responsibility to hold the government to account and raise issues of public concern. Our system, under standing orders, allows for supply days to be scheduled. These days are also known as opposition days. On these days, government legislation is not debated. Instead, the opposition has the opportunity to bring forward a motion for debate and, ultimately, a vote.

This is the balance. Parliament needs time to debate legislation and to debate the supply days motion from the opposition. We believe Parliament can strike that balance.

Already we have come forward with important bills to ratify the new NAFTA, improve the CBSA, require training for judges on sexual assault, modernize the oath of citizenship and adjust the rules surrounding medical assistance in dying. These are just some of the parts of our platform to keep moving forward with policies that are both ambitious and achievable.

Our throne speech in December provided a road map for Parliament that outlines our agenda. We want to strengthen the middle class, make life more affordable for Canadians, protect the environment, fight climate change, improve the lives of indigenous people and secure Canada's place in the world.

Canadians sent us all a message in the recent election. They want us all to work together, and we agree. Indeed, we believe the House of Commons is a place where we can work on legislation to make important decisions for Canadians. Every day, we work hard in Parliament to find common ground on behalf of the Canadians who sent us all here.

While this happens, while we debate the merits of legislation and look to improve it, the opposition has many opportunities to bring issues to the forefront. This happens routinely in question period, and I would be remiss if I did not remind the House that it was our government that made fundamental changes to question period. It was our government that created the prime minister's question period on Wednesdays. Our Prime Minister answers every question during question period from all sides of the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, again we hear heckling from the other side. It is something Stephen Harper would never do in his wildest dreams, but something that the Prime Minister put forward to make himself accountable to the opposition, to Parliament, so that Canadians can hear the government's agenda. This is true accountability.

In addition to this, there are supply days. Today is the 26th sitting of the session. In December, as the previous supply period ended, the Conservatives were allotted an opposition day in which they put forward their motions. In this supply period, which runs from December 11 to March 26, seven days are allotted for opposition days. These are the rules under the Standing Orders.

Today marks the sixth opposition day. The Conservatives had four of those opposition days, and the Bloc and NDP have each had one to present their motions to the House for debate and a vote. Under the rules, one more opposition day remains up to March 26. Once we get to the next supply period, from April to June, there will be eight more opposition days.

Business of Supply

This is the balance I spoke of. It works, it is democratic, yet the Conservatives are proposing to turn their backs on the Standing Orders and tilt the balance by adding three more opposition days to this supply period.

There would be a consequence to this change. There would be three fewer days for members of the House to debate legislation that Canadians have elected the government to move forward with. The motives behind the Conservatives' political tactic are transparent. They do not believe Parliament is a democratic institution to achieve consensus and change for Canadians. When Conservatives do not like the rules, they simply bulldoze over them.

• (1045)

This is a stunning hypocrisy given that the Conservatives continually preach that any rule change needs to have the unanimous support of all parties, but this should surprise no one. When it suits their needs Conservatives are willing to do anything, even if they were against it before they were for it.

They have become politically isolated and are in the midst of a leadership race that is exposing their own divisions. They are increasingly becoming irrelevant. Their objective is to obstruct the government's agenda. We are committed to making that agenda a reality.

I would like to talk about some examples of what we want to accomplish. There is no greater challenge facing this country and the world than fighting climate change. We believe strongly in this government's pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. It is no surprise that Conservatives do not want to debate that because, for the last five years that I have been here, we have heard the language of denial, mistrust of scientists and doing nothing.

We are committed to building upon this plan to ensure Canadian businesses will seize on the immense economic opportunities that are involved in the transition to the clean economy of the 21st century. We will set a target to achieve net-zero by 2050. Our goal will be ambitious but necessary, as we protect the environment but grow the economy.

We will help make energy-efficient homes more affordable. We will make it easier for Canadians to buy zero-emissions vehicles. We will cut taxes for all Canadians except the wealthiest. This will provide more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians who need it the most.

To many Canadians who are unable to buy their first home, we will continue to take action with significant investments in affordable housing. We will introduce measures to make it easy for more people to purchase homes. It would be nice to see the Conservatives' provincial counterparts take action on that as well and work with us as partners to make affordable housing a reality in the provinces across the country.

Canadian workers, families and seniors are facing anxieties about making ends meet. We will assist parents with the time and money they need to raise their children. We will support students as they bear the cost of higher education and skills training. We will

increase the federal minimum wage. We will reduce cellphone bills by 25%, and strengthen pensions for our seniors.

Four years ago, we promised to put Canada on a path forward toward reconciliation with indigenous peoples. We put the country on that path and we will keep Canada firmly on that path. The work toward reconciliation has not ended.

Once again, I hear heckling on that, but the leaders of their party talk about sending in the army. They call indigenous protesters terrorists, yet they are the ones heckling us on our record on reconciliation when the Harper government did absolutely nothing on the subject.

Canadians are worried about gun violence in our communities and we will crack down on this. We will also ban military-style assault rifles. We will work with provinces and territories to strengthen the health care system to get the service Canadians deserve. Once again, it is shocking that we are debating changes to the standing order, rather than talking about issues like climate change or health care.

Pharmacare, for example, has become one of the key missing pieces of universal health care in this country. Our government will take steps to introduce and implement a national pharmacare program so that Canadians have the drug coverage they need.

I cite these examples of where we intend to lead the country. We believe that parliamentarians must put the interests of Canadians first. Parliament is not a place only to debate our disagreements, but also a place to come together and find common ground. This is what can happen when we maintain the crucial balance about which I have spoken.

I would implore members to look at the legislation before this chamber, as well as the bills before us in the future, and work together on all of those bills. Parliament needs time to debate those bills, to scrutinize them and, when necessary, improve them. It is not time for political stunts and obstructions. This is the time for constructive debate, returning our attention to the legislation that can improve the lives of Canadians. It is the time to do the right thing for Parliament.

• (1050)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is very difficult to hear what the member is saying and contrast that to what my constituents are saying. For context, in my riding of Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, we had 63,000 votes in the last election. Looking at the election results, if we combine the member's results with those of the four Liberal members from P.E.I., it does not amount to as many votes as we had in Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. We have 47 Conservative members out of the 48 members of Parliament for Alberta and Saskatchewan. Nothing that the government does reflects anything that matters to the lives of the people of Alberta and Saskatchewan and other parts of this country.

They are not being heard. The member talks about political stunts. His deputy House leader and one of the ministers went to my riding last week. They did not call me. They did not let me know they were going. They met with mayors from outside my riding, including Naheed Nenshi. They are not listening to the concerns that matter to the people on the ground. People in my community are committing suicide because the economic measures the government is taking are absolutely destroying the lives of Albertans.

When will the member come to my riding, call me and meet with my constituents about the things that really matter to them?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that it requires the invitation of members of Parliament to meet with the mayor of another community. That is shocking in and of itself. We can throw around statistics all day. In my riding—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, they clearly do not want to debate the issues of the day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he had an opportunity to ask his question without being interrupted and I would hope that he would want to hear the response in its entirety, as do other members, I am sure.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, we can talk about the riding of St. Catharines, where the Conservative vote went down. Residents of my riding look at the harmful cuts that a Conservative Ford government has made. They have looked at the terrible actions of austerity and what that has done to the people of this country. We can talk about the 70% of St. Catharines residents who want action on climate change.

Why are we not debating that? Why are we debating this political stunt?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I got a little worried listening to my hon. colleague's speech about opposition days. I did not really hear him talk about those allotted days.

That makes me feel like when I rise in the House to defend a motion, as the Bloc Québécois did with regard to the proposed extension of the EI sickness benefit period, I am not standing up for Quebecers or Canadians, doing constructive work or seeking common ground, as someone said. That makes me feel like I am just the opposition.

I would like to hear what my hon. colleague has to say about the objective and purpose of opposition days in a democratic Parliament.

• (1055)

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I remember sitting in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs at three in the morning one day in the previous Parliament because of a filibuster from the opposition. There was a suggestion that we enter into a debate to consider changes to the Standing Order. That was so out of

Business of Supply

bounds from the opposition, that we would even engage in a discussion to proceed that way. The opposition has an opportunity, as I have stated, every day in the House to call the government to account. It will have that in five minutes. Every day that happens.

The opposition has said repeatedly it will not change the Standing Order, and should not change Standing Orders unless there is the consent of all parties. That seems to have disappeared today.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think if people were neutral on the issue of the motion brought forward by the Conservatives today, after hearing the member's speech, they would be inclined to support that motion because they would recognize the importance of having the opposition bring forward issues that the government denies.

Clearly, the sense that I get from Liberal members is that their definition of democracy is what the government puts forward and the government agenda only. This then reinforces the argument that what we need is more opposition days to counter the government's rhetoric.

The member talked about the government's environmental initiatives, but in my riding we are trying to force through a major pipeline that will cost at least \$20 billion. This is the most massive fossil fuel subsidy in Canadian history, yet the government has a line that is completely contrary to that.

Is the member not actually reinforcing the importance of having opposition days, to get those diverse points of view on the floor of the House of Commons and to have Parliament make decisions that may be counter to the government line?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the hon. member talks about a pipeline that is subsidized and is being overseen by an NDP-Green coalition government.

That aside, I sat on the PROC committee with the hon. member David Christopherson for years. He talked about the need for consensus in any change to the Standing Orders. Having heard that from the NDP for the two years that I sat on that committee, it is shocking now to hear from the NDP that "Well, this benefits us, so it is okay. We should just go ahead with this. Do not worry about what we said in the last Parliament or the Parliament before. In this one instance, it benefits us. Do not read Hansard. We would rather you not do that."

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a lot to unpack there from the parliamentary secretary.

I thought it was interesting that the member for Spadina—Fort York was nodding along while the parliamentary secretary was upset about heckling in the chamber and while he is next to an arch-heckler in this place. They talk about collaboration as they continue to heckle.

Statements by Members

In talking about collaboration, I had a FedDev announcement in my riding this week and, lo and behold, the parliamentary secretary and the minister did not even let the member know that they were going to be there. There was no collaboration.

Then in meetings with leaders of all parties recognized in the House, the Prime Minister does not invite the leader of the official opposition. When we talk about collaboration, it is pretty rich coming from that side, and if they are not going to hear from opposition parties, we are going to make sure that we are heard with more supply days.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I cannot speak to the one announcement in the hon. member's riding, but I will speak to the last announcement in Niagara. It was at Brock University, and it was great to see the hon. member for Niagara Falls come and cut the ribbon on a new green energy facility there. This facility will cut greenhouse gas emissions, and it was funded under Kathleen Wynne's cap and trade program.

It was great to see the member in attendance after having been invited, smiling to see the benefits of cap and trade in helping the environment, helping Brock University, and bettering the community and all of Niagara.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened intently and I wonder if my colleague could explain to Canadians what is really going on here.

• (1100)

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, if we take a step back, this is gamesmanship, pure and simple. When the Conservatives get an opposition day on a Friday, which is a perfectly legitimate thing for the government to do, they decide to team up with opposition parties to change the rules for their benefit.

What the opposition parties are clearly aligned on today is a blatant attempt to give them more opposition days, which means less time for government bills. Not only would this provide less time for government bills, but it would also slow the progress of the parliamentary process.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have about one minute for questions and comments right after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

2010 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this month we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Canadians welcomed the world to Vancouver with glowing hearts to showcase and celebrate Canadian athleticism, talent and culture.

West Vancouver and Whistler hosted a number of Olympic events. In one of them, Alex Bilodeau won Canada's first gold medal on home soil at Cypress Mountain.

The games provided a unique opportunity for the four host first nations to work together and to work with our communities to reconcile with them. The games showcased their language, culture and history on a global scale, providing a model for our country and for future Olympic games.

The games were also a catalyst for critical improvements to our communities, including the Sea to Sky Highway, the Canada Line, affordable housing and a green building industry. The games united our country to celebrate a record number of medals, capped off by the storybook ending of Sidney Crosby's golden goal 10 years ago today.

These games provided memories we will never forget, and I look forward to again hosting the world in Vancouver in 2030 and beyond.

* * *

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is one thing I have learned since being elected, and that is that what the left says never means what people might think it means.

When Liberals talk about unity, what they really mean is "My way or the highway." When they talk about diversity, they never mean diversity of opinion. When they talk about truth and reconciliation, they have no intention of respecting elected band councils unless it is convenient. When they talk about consultation, what they really mean is, "Let me tell you what I think." When they say "dying with dignity", they only mean euthanasia.

Canadians look to this House for compassion, truth and leadership. In light of this week's debate on Bill C-7, let us ensure that when we say we are committed to quality palliative care, we truly mean what we say we mean.

* * *

PURE ART FOUNDATION

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House to recognize the good work of the Hudson-based Pure Art Foundation. Founded by Robert and Brigitte McKinnon and their incredible boys, the foundation is committed to empowering people and building stronger communities. With initiatives in Peru, Tanzania and Nepal, the impact of the foundation cannot be overstated.

On March 5, their work continues with 68 dedicated and generous people departing for Peru, including 13-year-old Laurelie, 88-year-old Donna Munroe and our community's very own Father Demers. They will pursue the wonderful work of the foundation by building four additional homes, starting two new medical campaigns with the help of local nurses, enhancing the sewing initiative with the addition of financial literacy programs and enrolling 300 kids in the school program during their trip.

Today, on behalf of all members of my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, I would like to wish them all a safe and productive journey and thank them for the work they are doing in bettering the lives of not only those in our community but also all around the world.

I wish them all the best and I wish them safe travels.

* * *

HOMELESSNESS IN VICTORIA

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, my riding of Victoria is facing a serious housing and homelessness crisis. Too many people are living in precarious housing, or worse, finding themselves sleeping on the street. We need to take urgent action to invest in affordable, social and co-operative housing.

We should be taking the lead from community organizations like the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness in adopting a Housing First approach. The role of the Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness is particularly critical, because we know that indigenous peoples are eight times more likely to end up homeless. Their work is centred on the lived experience and perspectives of indigenous peoples.

We need a housing strategy by indigenous people for indigenous people. Housing is a human right. In a country as wealthy as Canada, no one should have to go without a safe place to call home.

* * *

● (1105)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was first elected as the member for Outremont one year ago this week. It is a tremendous honour to be here in the House to speak on behalf of the 100,000 residents of my riding.

Protecting the environment is the number one concern for residents of Outremont and Mile-End. I recently met with several mothers who are members of For Our Kids, an organization that urges us all to do more to fight climate change.

[English]

Our government has made protecting the environment a top priority. We have committed to reaching net zero by 2050, and we know that the best way to get there is through a price on pollution.

As a mother of a two-year-old, I share the fears of the parents in my riding, for whom the number one concern is the planet we will be leaving our children. We know we need to do more, and I will join them in that fight against climate change.

* * *

OCHL VOLUNTEER

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, given Oshawa's long hockey history, it is not surprising that many families in my riding spend their winter nights and early mornings at the arena, but as much fun as our kids have playing the game they love,

Statements by Members

no minor hockey team, game or league exists without the hard-working volunteers who make them possible.

Since he was 17 years old, Dave Glazier has spent much of his life giving back to the OCHL, one of the local house league associations in my riding. Like many others in Oshawa, Dave spent his days on the General Motors assembly line during his working career, but his nights and weekends have been spent at the rink. As a coach, a board member and a tournament convener at the annual Heritage Classic, Dave's love for hockey has shown no bounds, and his volunteer work has been his way of sharing that with young players.

Dave will be retiring from his volunteer work with the OCHL come the end of this season, and hockey in Oshawa will not be the same without him. I thank him for the tremendous work he has done for the past 50 years and wish him a happy retirement.

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SHIPBUILDING PROGRAM FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIANS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we celebrate Black History Month, I want to recognize the 19 students currently enrolled in Irving Shipbuilding's Pathways to Shipbuilding for African Nova Scotians.

In June of this year, these students will graduate and start their careers as welders at Halifax Shipyard, where they will build the next fleets of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard. This program is a collaboration between Irving Shipbuilding, the Nova Scotia Community College, the government and community groups such as the East Preston Empowerment Academy. This program also creates opportunities for African Nova Scotians to learn a trade and establish long-term careers in shipbuilding, an industry in which these groups have been under-represented.

I invite all members of this House to join me in congratulating the 19 students, as well as the people who are involved in this special program.

* * *

ONTARIO BY-ELECTIONS

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in this House today to speak about the provincial by-elections held yesterday in Ottawa—Vanier and Orléans.

Voters in both ridings sent a resounding message to Doug Ford and elected two strong Liberal community champions in Stephen Blais and Lucille Collard.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

Stephen and Lucille ran outstanding campaigns focused on education, health care and the Conservatives' failure in Ontario. I know that they will proudly represent their community and the city of Ottawa. I am eager to start working with them to move forward on issues affecting the region.

[English]

Congratulations to Stephen and Lucille, and to their outstanding team of volunteers in a hard-fought campaign and an impressive victory.

* * *

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, National Volunteer Week is still a few weeks away, but it is never too early to appreciate the work and impact volunteers have in our communities.

During National Volunteer Week, I will once again be hosting the 2020 Barrie-Innisfil Volunteer Awards on Friday, April 24, at 12:30 in the afternoon. This is the fifth year that Barrie—Innisfil residents and organizations will be recognized for their kindness, generosity and compassion to youth, families and seniors.

Very soon, if they haven't already, residents in Barrie—Innisfil will be receiving in their mailboxes a form that they can complete to tell me how volunteerism has impacted their lives. They can also nominate someone they know or an organization doing amazing things to help others in our communities. Nomination forms are also available on my website at johnbrassard.com or in my Barrie—Innisfil office. Nominations must be received by Friday, April 3, at 5 p.m.

I thank every volunteer in Barrie—Innisfil and across Canada for all that they do to help the most vulnerable in our society.

* * *

● (1110)

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR WALK

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I proudly grew up in community housing, with my brother Luke and my mother Beata, at Chautauqua Co-op. My mom is the community coordinator at Briarview Co-op, and I join her in championing co-op housing as a solution for poverty and housing insecurity in Canada.

This past weekend in Milton I joined my neighbours for the Coldest Night of the Year walk. Miltonians walked two, five and 10 kilometres in support of Milton Transitional Housing, raising almost \$60,000. I want to make special mention of Bob and Mary Walker, the original organizers of this event in Milton. They are both in their nineties now, and they have walked every single year, true champions of this cause.

Our government introduced Canada's first-ever poverty reduction strategy, and the recent Canadian income survey indicates that over one million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty since 2015.

Collectively, we have achieved Canada's lowest rate of poverty ever.

Our plan is working, but better is always possible. I am thrilled to support that work on behalf of my neighbours in Milton and across Canada.

* * *

VISUALLY IMPAIRED CANADIANS

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, like many of my colleagues, one of my favourite aspects of this career is connecting with people across my riding by door knocking.

During the last campaign, I met a family at the door in Kenora. They have an amazing five-year-old daughter named Jo-Hannah. She is intelligent. She is full of character. I have no doubt in my mind that she will find a way to accomplish her greatest dreams.

Jo-Hannah was rendered completely blind from birth. Diagnosed at the age of four months, she has been learning throughout her life how to deal with the challenges that presents.

A simple task such as distinguishing between a harmful cleaning product or a bottle of juice can prove to be a barrier to Jo-Hannah's independence.

That is why I want to take this opportunity to remind all members of the House that we must do more to ensure that people like Jo-Hannah, the other 1.5 million visually impaired Canadians, have a safer and more accessible life. After all, it is up to all of us to work toward building a more inclusive society.

* * *

CANADA

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have found myself reflective on the promise of Canada, a country few want to leave and many want to call home.

I have walked past “shut down Canada” signs, and been sworn at in the street by people holding those signs.

It is my daughter Donna's birthday today. She is a compassionate law student who fiercely defends the rights of women. What is this Canada she is inheriting?

I think on sacrifices of our ancestors, including first nations. I think of their deprivations and their fierce belief that this was a home worth fighting and dying for. I also think of how, in modern times, our freedoms in Canada are precious and too easily lost, freedoms such as peaceful protest, the dignity and self-worth that comes from work well done, the ability to provide for one's family, and the hopeful joy of a new parent.

However, I confess that I am worried for my country right now. We are having trouble finding our balance and finding our rhythm.

Helping others is a tried and true way to put our own egos aside and do good works from the heart out. Let us all embrace that challenge.

Believe in Canada.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the theme for Black History Month is “Canadians of African Descent: Going Forward, Guided by the Past”.

I believe all of us, regardless of ethnicity, can find inspiration and guidance in the stories of trail-blazing African Canadians, people like Windsor resident James L. Dunn, a 19th-century Black businessman who sued the Windsor Board of Education for its segregationist practices in 1883.

He lost the case, but continued the fight by being elected as a school board trustee and desegregating all of the city's schools. He went on to be elected as a town councillor and continued changing policies from the inside. It is fitting that Windsor's newest school be named after him.

However, one does not have to look into the past to find inspiration. In my riding of Windsor West we lost four outstanding individuals of African descent in 2019: Daphne Clarke, one of the founders of Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women; Brian Kersey, a long-time labour and human rights activist; Freida Steele, one of Windsor's first Black nurses who co-founded the Windsor and District Black Coalition; and Shelley Harding-Smith, Canada's first Black female master electrician, a long-time school board trustee and a personal mentor of mine.

Let us all learn from their examples.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, on March 8, we will celebrate International Women's Day.

Current events regularly remind us that the battle has not yet been won and that we need to continue to promote feminism for as long as it takes.

March 8 is not only a day to show how proud we are to be women, but also a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the feminist struggle here and around the world.

There are still far too many cases of femicide. In 2020, far too many women are still being killed simply because they are women, and the number of cases of discrimination and violence against women is growing. What is more, some rights that we took for granted are under attack now more than ever. That is not to mention the still significant inequality between men and women. We are still not treated the same way, because of our gender.

Let us make our voices heard on social, political, economic and cultural issues. We must stand together in solidarity. Let us stand up for women's rights—

Statements by Members

• (1115)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Lethbridge.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, on March 8 we celebrate International Women's Day. We celebrate women from all countries, all ethnicities and all faiths. We celebrate that all women are valuable and have incredible contributions to make to society.

Every woman is full of potential and able to positively impact the world. Every woman deserves an equal opportunity to do so. Many women, unfortunately, get up each day and face discrimination, harassment and perhaps even violence. This is unacceptable in a country as great as ours.

Today, we renew our commitment to creating a world where women and men exist as equals, people of equal value, equal worth and equal dignity.

Today, we celebrate the greatness in each and every woman across this country and around the globe. Today, we commit to being her champion. She is strong. She is capable. She is intelligent. She is talented. She is inspiring. She is a grandmother, mother, spouse, daughter, sister, niece, friend and co-worker.

Today, we commit to empowering women everywhere.

* * *

REAL ACTS OF CARING

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam has been a little extra kind lately. From February 9 to 15, students and teachers in my riding spread the word of committing kind and caring acts.

Real Acts of Caring began at Central Community School in Port Coquitlam in 2005. Students from across the riding have since supported this idea in their own schools and around our community. This year, Real Acts of Caring Week again had our community members doing something kind for one another and not expecting anything in return.

I would like to thank all those who participated and encourage everyone to continue caring about being kind.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***THE ECONOMY**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, we learned today that in the last three months of 2019 our economy ground to a halt with a pathetic 0.3% growth rate and big declines, again, in business investment in machinery. Last year the U.S. economy grew almost 50% faster than here in Canada. By the way, this is all before the impacts of the coronavirus and the illegal blockades. Who knew that when they shut down major projects, raise taxes and wrap business in red tape, the economy stops moving?

When will the government realize that a weak leader equals a weak economy?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect, the hon. member seems to be ignoring the enormous success the Canadian economy has experienced over the past number of years.

I will remind him we are at record low levels of unemployment. We have added more than one million new jobs to the Canadian economy. We have more women working in the Canadian economy than at any point in our history to date.

If the hon. member would take a break from running down the Canadian economy, he might actually realize that foreign direct investment is up, more people are working and we are experiencing an economic growth record that the Conservatives would blush at.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before it gets any worse, I just want to remind members to hold their comments and questions. There are opportunities to ask questions during question period, but there is also an opportunity to hear the answer. I would ask that the heckling stop.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right, Conservatives would blush if we were presiding over these terrible numbers.

Here we have the economy grinding down to a rate of 0.3%, and a third consecutive quarter in which business investment in machinery has collapsed. The economy is grinding to a halt, and that is even before the blockades started to take effect.

When will the government realize that “don't worry, be happy” is not an economic plan?

• (1120)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has completely misconstrued the plan that has actually led to over one million jobs being created in the Canadian economy.

I will remind him of some of the measures we put in place to help this development become a reality. We have invested by reducing the small business tax from 11% to 9%. We have created a new

and more effective regulatory regime that will help projects move forward more effectively. We have engaged in international trade negotiations, and we are now the only G7 economy that has a free trade agreement with every other G7 economy.

We have a million new jobs, more people working and growth that would make the Conservatives jealous.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I reiterate that these terrible numbers are from before the new illegal blockades took effect.

This quarter we are going to experience the repercussions of illegal protesters blocking the full functioning of our economy, something that the Prime Minister encouraged when he stood in the House of Commons and celebrated them as great defenders of human rights.

The reality is that this illegal blockade of our economy represents a war on working people. When will the government stand up and fight back?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is working on a peaceful resolution to the conflict. There has been progress in the past week. There is now one blockade remaining on a Canadian railway near Montreal. We are working very hard. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is currently in British Columbia, where she met with the hereditary chiefs to discuss a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Trains are once again running in the Belleville area on a line that is crucial to the Canadian economy. We have made progress.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, the truth is that we are in the fourth week of a major crisis for the Canadian economy. This crisis is entirely a product of this government's inertia and lack of leadership. That is the truth. Yesterday, Quebec's natural resources minister sounded the alarm. Quebec is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There seems to be a problem hearing the interpretation.

I would ask the hon. member to start over, now that everything is working again.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, this is week four of the rail crisis in Canada, a crisis that was entirely created by the inaction of this government, which has shown mediocre leadership these past few months. Unfortunately, this is harming the economy in Canada and Quebec. Yesterday, Quebec's natural resources minister said that we are days away from a major propane crisis. Propane is very important to the economy. We know that Quebec already went through a propane crisis in November.

Oral Questions

What does the government plan to do to respond to this very worrisome problem for Quebec's economy?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I share the public's concern and impatience for finding a peaceful resolution to this conflict. That has been our goal from the start. Our priority is dialogue, which is what the provincial premiers also asked for when they met the Prime Minister last week.

There is now just one remaining rail blockade in Canada. Two days ago, rail traffic resumed on the Belleville rail line, which is critical to Canada's economy and the shipping of propane to Quebec and eastern Canada.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, during all this time, containers piled up, ports were blocked and the trains that were not running were lined up one after the other.

Perhaps the Minister of Transport meant to reassure Canadians yesterday, but he did exactly the opposite. He said it was going to take months for the Canadian economy to get back to normal for the movement of goods in Canada.

Is there anyone in this government who can set the record straight for Canadians and tell them when the economy might finally get back to normal after three weeks of government inaction?

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government fully understands the impacts that these blockades are having across the country. I would like to remind the hon. member that the Minister of Transport and his department helped facilitate an agreement between CN and CP to get rail traffic going and that up to 70% of CN's goods were flowing down the tracks.

Exaggerating the shortages does not benefit Canadians. There is some backup. We hope to get everything back moving and we are moving in the right direction.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has been saying from day one that the Prime Minister needs to do something about the rail crisis. For over two weeks now, since February 13 to be exact, the Bloc has been proposing mediation. For 10 days now, we have been saying that the RCMP must withdraw from the Wet'suwet'en territory and the work must be halted. The government finally woke up in the past 48 hours. The government has completely mismanaged this crisis, despite our proposals.

Now will someone at least manage the aftermath of the crisis?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[English]

Our government has been working around the clock to resolve this issue in a peaceful and lasting way. Our Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is currently in British Columbia along with her B.C. counterpart in Smithers, to have continued discussions with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. We are encouraged that all parties have worked together to create the necessary conditions to meet.

I want to quote the hereditary chiefs who made it clear to their supporters yesterday that they now "need time to have discussions...in an atmosphere of" respect. We look forward to those discussions.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, that was not what I was asking. I was talking about the aftermath of the crisis, even if it is not quite over. It is difficult to assess the cost of the rail crisis because it has not been resolved yet. Even the Minister of Transport believes that it could take months for rail transportation to return to normal.

At this point, we may well be talking about billions of dollars in losses for our businesses, not to mention what the families of laid-off workers have lost. Quebec even made a commitment to provide emergency assistance to businesses.

Will the government provide financial support to the businesses and workers affected?

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have said, the government understands the significant impacts that these blockades have had across the country. I know we are working hard to resolve the issues that are outstanding and focusing on negotiation as the best way to solve this in a lasting and meaningful way. We will continue to do that. We hope to hear progress from the meetings with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and look forward to hearing from her from British Columbia.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister's failure of leadership has forced another 1,500 auto workers in Windsor Essex out of their jobs. The Liberals have given up on the auto sector. They cancelled the automotive investment fund, they ignored the "auto czar", and, like the Conservatives, have refused to bring in a national auto strategy to support the assembly and supply chain.

What will it take? How many jobs have to be lost? How many communities have to be devastated before the Liberals realize that this industry and the Canadians who work for it are worth fighting for?

Oral Questions

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are very concerned about jobs and understand the anxiety in the Windsor area. Our government understands the path to economic prosperity varies from region to region. As a member from southwestern Ontario, I know how important the auto industry is to the region.

I was with the minister just two weeks ago when we met with local businesses and the mayor of Windsor. We are hearing their concerns.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals promised they were going to move to on-land, closed containment salmon farms on the B.C. coast by 2025. It was even in the minister's mandate letter. Now they are saying they will not even have a plan until 2025.

B.C. wild salmon workers cannot wait five years. The transition needs to get started now to save Pacific wild salmon. The Liberals already know that open-net salmon farming is impacting wild salmon stocks, so why are they delaying?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on this issue I think it is important that we are incredibly clear. When it comes to finfish open-net pen aquaculture specific to the B.C. coast, we are moving forward on our commitment to transition away, completely independent, from anything happening on the east coast. This is a tricky issue. It is going to mean working with the province. It is going to mean working with indigenous people. It is going to mean making sure we take care of the economic opportunities that coastal communities are depending on. We are going to do that work.

* * *

• (1130)

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General appeared before the public accounts committee and said that his office does not have the financial resources required to fulfill his mandate to properly audit the government. He is forced to conduct fewer audits, and his IT system is completely out of date. He is still running on the old DOS system. He has made several unsuccessful requests for more funding.

Why is the Prime Minister hampering the Auditor General's office and restricting him from conducting more audits into his government?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, taking a question from the Conservatives on officers of Parliament is like taking a question about the well-being of chickens from Colonel Sanders. When it comes to the Office of the Auditor General, I will

point out to the hon. member that the Conservatives cut \$6.5 million from its budget and removed 60 employees.

As part of budget 2018, during the past Parliament we committed to investing more than \$41 million in additional funding for the Office of the Auditor General.

I will start taking these questions seriously when the Conservatives step up with actions, not just words.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that we were doing really well. I would again ask members to not heckle when we get the answers.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Auditor General has launched an investigation into the Liberals' \$186-billion infrastructure plan. He has said again and again that he does not have the resources to do his job.

Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Infrastructure if cabinet is going to support this request, to ensure that the Auditor General has the money he needs to conduct his investigation. She answered that they want to be held accountable for what they are doing.

Will the Minister of Finance also act responsibly and give the Auditor General the funds he has requested to conduct his audits?

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, again I find it rich to take questions on the adequacy of funding to officers of Parliament, given the Conservatives' track record of cutting those resources in order to avoid scrutiny of the government when they were in power.

In budget 2018, our government beefed up the funding for the Office of the Auditor General by \$41 million, which represents a 16% increase relative to the 2015-16 fiscal year. When it comes to ensuring that officers of Parliament have the resources they need, we are going to work with them to ensure they benefit not only our government but all Canadians.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the answers we have received to those two questions are ridiculous.

In 2011, the Auditor General voluntarily participated in a deficit reduction action plan. He told the NDP committee chair he had enough money then to do his job, but now he is saying he does not. The main estimates reveal the Liberals have cut \$300,000 from the budget. When will the minister do the right thing and fully fund the Auditor General, like the former Liberal co-chair advised in the letter that went to him in June?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have already given a detailed answer on both Conservative cuts to officers of Parliament by the Conservatives and the investments we made in budget 2018.

The fact of the matter is we remain committed to supporting the work of the Auditor General and other officers of Parliament. We are going to ensure they are able to have the tools they need to do their job to ensure Canadians benefit from their advice and Parliament can work to its greatest capacity.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, our country's economy is chugging along at the same speed as freight trains. After more than 23 days, the rail blockades are causing huge losses for our economy. These losses will be felt for a very long time.

Unlike the Prime Minister, Canadians are running out of patience and tolerance. There are limits. Enough is enough.

Will the Prime Minister show some backbone and get Canada's locomotive back on track?

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we understand the impacts that these blockades are having across the country, but it is important we proceed with a negotiated settlement of these disputes, because we want a lasting settlement. We do not want to see these blockades happening again.

The government is engaged in those negotiations, and we are doing what we can to ensure a lasting settlement going forward.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, all week the Liberals have been spinning Teck's decision to cancel their project as the company's decision. It is the same spin they used when TransCanada cancelled Energy East.

The systematic destruction of Canada's energy sector is what the Prime Minister and the Liberals have always wanted. Here is the truth: Liberals have politicized the process to the point where these companies and others have decided not to invest further in Canada while the Liberals are in power.

Why will Liberals not stop the spin and acknowledge that billions of dollars in lost opportunity and the jobs that go with them lie directly at their feet?

• (1135)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me just state very clearly for members of this House and for all Canadians that our government absolutely understands the importance of

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natural resources to the Canadian economy, and in particular, of the oil and gas sectors.

Canada is one of the world's leading oil and gas producers, one of the world's leading oil and gas exporters, and that sector provides hundreds of thousands of high-paying jobs, including blue-collar jobs across the country. That is of great value and that is something our government supports.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, also this week, we found who is really in charge of Canada. As Global News showed us, the Prime Minister is taking his cues from the granola-crunching, Castro-loving, VW bus-driving, anti-resource, anti-government, anti-everything professional protesters with absolutely no connections to first nations groups.

Across the country this week, including in Union Station in Toronto, illegal blockades affected not just commuters, but also communities.

Why are the Liberals supporting wealth-funded eco-radicals more than hard-working Canadians and the businesses that employ them?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand, representing residents who use GO rail to get to work in Toronto, the impacts this is having and that rail blockades in the past have had across the country over the last few weeks.

We are working hard toward a negotiated peace and settlement. The tone by the Conservatives to exaggerate the impact is not appropriate. The tone to call in the army and to order the police is inappropriate and is not helping anything. He is only exacerbating the situation.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, businesses' use of facial recognition technology is worrisome. Canadians have the right to go about their business, enter stores and work without being constantly spied on. This brings up some serious questions about how these companies can use our biometric data.

The Quebec government and the federal government do not yet have a legal framework to regulate the use of facial recognition technology or to protect the data obtained through this technology.

Will the government temporarily ban the sale of facial recognition software to businesses?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her question. I agree that this is a worrisome issue.

Oral Questions

We must always strive to balance privacy against, in the case of the RCMP, which was also involved with Clearview, the duty to protect Canadians. That is why the RCMP will be working with the Privacy Commissioner to make sure it finds that balance.

As for my colleague's broader question, I will note that the privacy commissioners of Quebec, British Columbia and Canada will be examining this issue.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, Clearview AI, a leader in facial recognition technology whose services are used by police, has revealed that it suffered a data breach. That is our personal biometric data.

Companies today are hoping to sell this kind of technology to private corporations so they can target the right clients, spy on their behaviour and profile them. In addition to raising major ethical concerns, this is simply not safe. We cannot just wait until a problem crops up. We need a ban.

Is the government prepared to introduce one?

[English]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians are understandably anxious about how their data is being used in an increasingly digital world. Allow me to assure my colleague that the privacy commissioners of Canada, B.C., Quebec and Alberta are jointly investigating whether the organization's practices are in full compliance with Canadian privacy law. As this is an active investigation, no additional details are available at this time.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, the new CRTC guidelines in the Yale report that the minister is reviewing are deeply flawed. I have strong concerns about the journalists being licensed and registered.

I am also very frustrated about Yale report recommendation number four, which would have nine board members live or move to Ottawa for seven years. That is discriminatory to western Canada and just plain wrong.

Will the government commit to rejecting recommendation number four of the Yale report or will the government continue to alienate western Canada?

● (1140)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government thanks the members of the Yale report for the work they did. The panel has undertaken a wonderful final report, and we are looking at the recommendations in the report and plan to take action as swiftly as possible.

The report recommendations that are proposed are all being considered, and we support a strong, competitive broadcasting media sector. We intend to move swiftly to ensure all players, including web giants, support Canadian culture. We are reviewing them and are looking at them right now.

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister announced a \$600-billion media bailout before the last election, and then he directed his minister to create new regulations that control social media platforms. January's Yale report states, "accurate, reliable, and trusted news content is in peril", and "The CRTC must be able to monitor and address issues concerning news content...regardless of format."

The Prime Minister has been priming his way to control what Canadians have to say. When will the Prime Minister stop attacking freedom of speech and expression?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government believes in a strong, free and independent press. The report we received from an independent panel proposes to exempt news media from licensing requirements. I want to be clear on our intentions. Our government will not impose licensing requirements on news organizations, nor will we regulate news content. Our focus is to ensure Canadians have strong access to diverse, high-quality and credible news.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, we already knew that the Liberals have been ignoring our community radio stations and regional newspapers, but now we have learned that they are giving web giants five times more money than they are giving our Canadian media. What? The government is giving \$52 million to foreign companies that do not pay taxes in Canada. Why not invest in the Ricardo site, which has 3.8 million online viewers, or in *VÉRO* magazine, which has a readership of 800,000? They pay taxes here in Canada.

[English]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as my friend from across the way knows, we are reviewing all of the regulations and are committed to ensuring that Canadian creators are paid their fair share. That is something we are continuing to work on, and I look forward to working with the member from across the way as we work on those proposals.

FINANCE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, despite the federal government ignoring the scourge of money laundering, a provincial inquiry into the practice has started in B.C. BMW told the inquiry that the lack of port police has allowed a massive increase in illegal exports to China. This is a huge problem because the federal government has rejected calls to subject luxury car purchases to FINTRAC reporting.

Either these Liberals are ignorant to what is happening in my home province, which, despite its distance, is still part of this country, or they just do not care. Which is it?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when it comes to money laundering, our government put in place a strong regime to make sure that we are watching out for this kind of irresponsible and, frankly, illegal behaviour.

We are working with the provinces so we can highlight the information for beneficial owners. We are going to continue to work with all parties of the House to ensure we are taking care of Canadians. I look forward to a follow-up conversation with the member to discuss this in more detail.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs have been asking for weeks for a meeting with the Prime Minister, but he just cannot seem to find the time. When wealthy and powerful corporations like Enbridge and Suncor ask for a meeting, he does not hesitate.

Canadians are waiting on the Prime Minister to show some leadership and take real action to de-escalate this situation. Why does the Prime Minister have time for big oil and gas but not for indigenous leaders?

• (1145)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by rejecting the premise of that question.

I want to reiterate that, as we speak right now, our Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is in British Columbia, along with her B.C. counterpart, in meetings with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. We are encouraged by the recent developments, and we are encouraged that all parties have come together to create the necessary conditions for this meeting.

It is a positive first step and discussions will continue. As the hereditary chiefs made clear to their supporters yesterday, they now "need time to have discussions...in an atmosphere of" respect.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, this morning on the radio, our friend Romeo Saganash reminded us that every crisis is an opportunity to achieve great things. Right now, there are two convergent battles being waged: the fight for indigenous rights and the fight against

Oral Questions

climate change. However, the Prime Minister seems incapable of seizing this opportunity. What is worse, he does not even seem to care. He is sending his ministers to try to resolve the problem, while he keeps a comfortable distance.

Does he realize that he is the Prime Minister and that he is the one responsible, or does he really not want to be Prime Minister anymore because things are getting complicated?

[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging the tremendous work of our Prime Minister and the leadership he has shown over the past five weeks in extreme resolve to ensure that we move forward in a manner that respects reconciliation. I know that as I speak right now, our Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is in British Columbia with her B.C. counterpart, meeting with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs.

We will continue to engage in a manner that respects indigenous rights and ensures that we move forward on the very important work of reconciliation that involves each and every Canadian.

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HEALTH

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I recently met with the Canadian Cancer Society and I was told that one in two Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in his or her lifetime. Although investments in research, early detection and treatment have resulted in more people surviving cancer than ever before, there is more to be done.

Too many Canadians and too many people in Newmarket—Aurora have been impacted by cancer. Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health please tell my constituents what we are doing to prevent and treat this disease that has touched so many of us?

[Translation]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora for his question.

[English]

Almost every Canadian knows someone who has battled cancer. That is why we support prevention and treatment with over \$50 million annually to organizations like the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and to cancer research, with \$150 million from budget 2019. We are also working to reduce cancer risk factors like unhealthy eating, physical inactivity and smoking.

I want to thank the member for his work as a new member of the health committee and for his advocacy.

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, farmers in Saskatchewan and across Canada just cannot catch a break this year. Whether it is the weather, illegal rail blockades or a carbon tax, this past year has been a costly one for farmers, and now they do not have the cash flow to put in this year's crop. However, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food can actually do something. The question is, will she?

Will the minister commit to pushing back the repayment date for the advance payments program to help our farmers get back on their feet?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we understand the pressure and stress that our farmers are facing following a tough 2019 year. We made changes to the advance payments program last year to help address cash flow issues by increasing the maximum loan limit to \$1 million. We have the authority to give farmers more time to repay their loans if an APP administrator requests it and if the situation warrants it.

We are in close contact with our third party program administrators to monitor the evolving needs of the farmers and will duly evaluate any request for a stay of default.

• (1150)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, spring is supposed to be a time of hope and renewal for Canadian farmers. Unfortunately, our railways have been shackled by the government due to the lack of action in removing illegal blockades. Farmers are about to experience payment deadlines from creditors next month. With no hope of getting their grain to market, farmers will be hit with an interest rate of approximately 20%.

Our farmers need action. When will the government commit to modifying the cash advance program to address this current crisis?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said before, we understand the pressures and the stress of the 2019 season. We made changes to the advance payments program last year to address cash flows by increasing maximum loan limits to \$1 million. We have the authority to give farmers more time to repay their loans if the APP administrator requests it and if the situation warrants it.

We are in close contact with our third party program administrators to monitor the needs of farmers and will evaluate the requests for a stay of default.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, in January, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers for justice and public safety met in Victoria and agreed to examine the impacts of rural crime and how to reduce it through a pan-Canadian working group on rural crime. It has been over a month, and we have not heard a peep from the Minister of Justice.

Crime is ravaging rural communities. People do not feel safe in their homes. They are losing faith in the justice system.

When will the minister announce the details of this pan-Canadian working group?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this subject did come up at our last meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers of justice. I have committed to working with that group moving forward. We have assigned our deputy ministers the task of moving forward. Indeed, I have committed to my counterpart in Alberta to visit rural parts of northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan in order to see it first-hand.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, last Friday, the GTA was shaken by a horrific attack. In Scarborough, a woman was murdered by a stranger with a hammer, right on the sidewalk. The police have now charged the attacker with terrorism. These types of lone-actor terror attacks are common in Europe and elsewhere, but not here.

Could the Minister of Public Safety tell the House what the government is doing to make sure this does not happen again?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I want to offer my sympathies to the family and friends of the victim.

While I cannot comment on this specific case, I can tell the House that we trust law enforcement and prosecutors to apply the law to its full extent. We have invested significant resources in law enforcement and intelligence agencies in this country over the last four years and will continue to do so.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, all workers contribute to employment insurance, so they should all be able to access it, and the program should meet their needs. Employment insurance leaves seasonal workers out in the cold every year by subjecting them to weeks of misery during which they receive no income. The Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses, which advocates for the unemployed, was in Ottawa this week calling on the government to make the pilot project permanent and improve it by reducing the eligibility threshold to 420 hours, for starters.

Are the minister and the government ready to go ahead and do that?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are committed to making this initiative permanent for seasonal workers. We recognize the unique challenges they face. That is why, in 2018, we announced \$230 million to better support seasonal workers. We will continue to support Canadians who work in seasonal industries and help them cope with their off-season challenges.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, the work is seasonal, but the workers' needs are not.

EI needs to become a true insurance plan for the families in Quebec's regions that depend on seasonal industries. It is also important that the eligibility criteria reflect the reality in those regions. Workers should qualify after 420 hours of work, and benefits should be based on the workers' 12 best weeks. This would improve the pilot project.

Will the government make its project permanent and adapt it to people's reality?

• (1155)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said, we are committed to making this pilot project permanent. We will, of course, work with all members of the House to improve all our EI programs and ensure that all workers get the benefits they need.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity makes over \$264,000 a year. Despite her riding being within walking distance of Parliament Hill, and despite making over five times the average Canadian, she is now asking for \$2,000 more for a motor car allowance.

Does the minister think a taxpayer-funded car allowance is a reality for middle-class Canadians, or is the reality another thing she cannot define?

[Translation]

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reality is that the middle class is very important to this country. We understand the challenges that middle-class Canadians face. The cost of living changes based on where you live in the country or whether you live in a large city. Some families have two incomes, while others are single-parent families.

What matters to Canadians is having an affordable home, a good-paying job and a secure retirement. That is why we are examining this issue. We want to ensure that life is good and affordable for the middle class.

[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, how does one become a judge in Canada? Well, under the Liberal government, one had better be a Liberal. Donating helps applicants, too. This government's use of its political database, Liberalist, in judicial appointments directly contradicts the PMO line, "All judicial appointments follow our new, open, independent, transparent and merit-based process."

They will always put their Liberal friends first. When will the Prime Minister stop rewarding Liberals and start appointing judges based on their merit?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I completely reject the premise of that question.

Our government has put into place a process for selecting judges that is transparent and based on merit. Judges are evaluated by judicial appointment committees across Canada. Those committees work hard, and they are completely apolitical. We then use the recommended and highly recommended candidates from those lists on the basis of merit moving forward as the basis for our judicial appointments.

We are proud of our record in this matter.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, Hong Kong's much-loved pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai, or Lai Chee-Ying, was just arrested for illegal assembly along with many other very prominent political figures. The promised freedoms of Hong Kongers are being crushed, and this government must take a stand against these violations of human rights and international law.

Hong Kong's basic law says that its chief executive should be chosen by universal suffrage. Will this government, in keeping up with the basic law and the one country, two systems agreement, finally express support for universal suffrage in Hong Kong?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his concern about Hong Kong, which is shared equally I think by every member in the House. It is an important issue. We are watching these developments closely, as we have been doing for many months.

Human rights, freedom of expression, the freedom of the press and the freedom of parliamentarians and elected politicians needs to be absolutely protected by our government. We are monitoring the situation. We have issued several statements. We are working bilaterally and multilaterally with partners. We continue to recognize the policy that there is one China with two governments and two systems.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Benjamin Bwamiki is a young graphic artist from Scarborough who has taken a hobby and turned it into his business.

His client list includes the Raptors' Fred VanVleet, the Lakers' Danny Green and a number of rappers. The 16-year-old baccalaureate student juggles a heavy study schedule while supporting his family. He is a fantastic example of the talent found in Scarborough.

As we come to the end of Black History Month, would the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion update the House on efforts to support the Black community in Canada?

• (1200)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood for his work in promoting diversity and inclusion in his community for over 20 years.

This past month, Canadians have been celebrating the contributions of Black Canadians to the country that we love. Our government was proud to support Black History Month cultural and community events across Canada. We have invested \$44 million to support Black communities.

We have also launched an anti-racism strategy to address anti-Black racism in Canada. Canadians have heard us say it before: Diversity is our strength. Black Canadians have added so much to our country, and celebrating Black history does not end in February.

I encourage everyone to champion Black Canadians like Benjamin throughout the entire year.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, manufacturers in southern Ontario are losing millions of dollars because of the Prime Minister's weak leadership.

Montreal Gateway Terminals will be charging fees to manufacturers who cannot move their product from ship to rail. Businesses in the GTA that rely on rail to deliver raw materials are having to pay huge fees for a problem the Prime Minister created.

Will the Prime Minister compensate businesses that are being held hostage, instead of appeasing radical protesters trying to derail cargo trains?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as an MP representing a manufacturing area like Oshawa, I understand the concerns his constituents are facing. We understand the impacts these blockades are having across the country on small businesses, manufacturers and farmers.

As the Prime Minister stated last week, it is time for the remaining blockades to come down. We are hopeful for a swift resolution

on all remaining blockades to ensure that Canadians affected by these blockades can return to work.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, respect for first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples should underpin all of the discussions in the House. Further, it is also important that all Canadians are equal before the law and enjoy the same rights and freedoms.

That being said, is it the Prime Minister's intent to take firearms that are legally owned and bought in good faith away from our law-abiding, indigenous fellow Canadians who require these tools for their hunting and trapping rights?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend for his comments with respect to respecting indigenous rights.

I want to start by assuring the House that our government is working to renew Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples, building one based on the affirmation of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership, which is why we will fully implement UN-DRIP. We are working collaboratively through constructive rights recognition tables with real co-development of policy as we speak.

We are also working to ensure Canada is fully implementing indigenous treaties, agreements and other arrangements. Reconciliation is not only an indigenous issue, it is a Canadian imperative, one I hope our—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, the national revenue minister brought in changes to the disability tax credit in 2017. The government said this was to improve accessibility.

Three years later, constituents from my riding with lifelong mental disabilities are still waiting for access. They are still denied eligibility even after providing legitimate medical documentation. One family was even forced to go to tax court before the government conceded that mental health issues are eligible.

When will the government stop discriminating against Canadians with mental health disabilities so they can receive this tax credit?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is introducing measures to help ensure the long-term financial security and independence of people with disabilities. In 2017, our government reinstated the disability advisory committee, which was dismantled by the Harper Conservatives in 2006. We thank the members of the committee for working hard to make recommendations to the Canada Revenue Agency concerning better support for people with disabilities. Our government is working on implementing most of the recommendations. The report released last spring will inform our future discussions.

* * *

● (1205)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when our government was elected in 2015, we committed to one of the boldest and most ambitious federal initiatives in the history of Canada: reducing poverty among Canadians by 50%. I am very proud of the progress made to date.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development in charge of housing give the House an update on the various initiatives in New Brunswick and across Canada?

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to announce that since 2015, our government has lifted more than a million Canadians out of poverty with investments we have made across the country. In fact, in New Brunswick alone, more than half of the children who were living in poverty when we took office have been lifted out of poverty and two-thirds of the seniors have been lifted out of poverty as well.

The results of the Canadian Income Survey are crystal clear: The investments we are making from coast to coast to coast are having a tremendous impact on alleviating poverty. We have more work to do, particularly in racialized and indigenous communities. We will get that work done. We hope the rest of Parliament works with us to achieve these great results.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, since 2015, New Democrats have been pressing the Liberal government to create a path to safety in Canada for those whose lives are at risk because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or SOGI. So far, all we have is a pilot program for just 50 SOGI refugees, just 50, when Rainbow Refugee organizations in Canada receive more than 1,000 requests for urgent assistance each month.

Given the rising tide of violence against SOGI communities, will the government now recognize the grave threat to SOGI refugees and quickly implement a comprehensive and substantial program for those fleeing violence for who they love or who they are?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, like countries around the world, Canada has been seeing an increasing number of asylum seekers. With the investment in the budget in 2019, once again we are leading the way in building an immigration system that is compassionate and respectful of the rules of law. We are making the necessary investments to allow the IRB to process 50,000 claims a year so that those who are found to need protection can start their lives in Canada sooner and failed claims can be removed.

As the UNHCR said, the investments will allow us to uphold the highest standards and processes for asylum claims.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to raise the urgent matter of the climate emergency. Under the terms of the Paris Agreement, 2020 is the year in which Canada must improve its climate target. We agreed to do so in 2015. We are now delinquent, in that the COP decision in Paris called for the new targets to be tabled by February 9 of this year. We need to table our new target. It needs to meet the IPCC imperative.

Can the minister update the House on progress to deliver a climate accountability act and a new target?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her work on this issue.

We took a leadership role in 2015 when we signed the Paris Agreement and encouraged other countries to do the same. Through the record investments, plans and programs we have put in place, projections show we have been able to bring us to 75% of the way there.

We know there is more work to do, which is why we are committing to not only meeting that target but exceeding it and putting in place, in the coming months, the expert panel that will show the House and all Canadians how we plan on being carbon neutral by 2050. It is something we need to do for all of us and for our children and grandchildren.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, the members opposite made the claim that under their government, they had encouraged workforce participation among all people in Canada. That is not true.

According to the Library research, workforce participation for women has actually dropped as a percentage, since reaching its highest mark under the Harper government and the Conservative Party of Canada. I would like to table this document in the House.

Routine Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent to table the report?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

• (1210)

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in light of an apology from the member for Markham—Unionville with respect to the premature disclosure of his bill, I too, would like to apologize unreservedly for the premature disclosure of the contents of Bill C-7, medical assistance in dying.

I would like to state categorically that no one from the government was authorized to speak publicly on this bill prior to its introduction.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the additional information. The comments from the parliamentary secretary will certainly be taken into consideration as we bring the decision before the House.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled: "Amendments to Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade"; "Annex VII of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade: Procedures and Mechanisms on Compliance with the Rotterdam Convention"; "Amendments to Annexes I and II to the 1998 Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution"; "Amendments to Annexes A and C to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants"; "Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas on Air Transport"; and last, "Audiovisual Coproduction Treaty between the Government of Canada and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine".

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of

the Standing Committee on Finance entitled "Canadian Ideas: Leveraging our Strengths", the pre-budget consultations report prior to the 2020 budget, as ordered by the House.

I first want to thank members of all parties who presented witnesses and who worked strenuously to get this report prepared on time. The report contains some 92 recommendations, and it shows that a minority Parliament can work, with all parties working together.

I also want to thank those who presented submissions prior to the August 2019 deadline and also those who appeared as witnesses in February, presenting their ideas.

I also want to thank the clerk, David Gagnon, and the analysts with the Library of Parliament, who worked long hours and extra hours, Andrew Barton, Brett Capwell, Michaël Lambert-Racine and Sylvain Fleury, for all the work they did.

Finally, I have a point that is beyond the recommendations themselves. I would refer Canadians to appendix A, which includes the many proposals put forward by organizations and individuals across Canada, which is food for thought for future discussions.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member for Carleton have any dissenting opinions he wishes to present?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the clerk, the analysts, and all the other employees of the House of Commons, including our assistants who helped us prepare this report and the dissenting report that I will now talk about.

• (1215)

[English]

Unfortunately, we will not support the majority report. The majority report gives licence to the government to continue piling up unsustainable debt, to continue blocking key private sector investments that would create opportunity and jobs for people, to continue overtaxing our workers and entrepreneurs.

As an alternative, our dissenting report provides a way forward to unleash the power of free enterprise, so anyone who works hard can achieve his or her dreams. Our proposal puts forward a "pay as you go" model, whereby any government wishing to increase spending beyond what is already budgeted would have to reduce spending by an equal amount somewhere else, thus containing the size and cost of government. We would require the government to reduce two regulations for every new regulation it institutes.

We propose also to create a trust savings vehicle so oil and gas enterprises can set aside dollars for the future decommissioning and environmental remediation of their sites, so we do not end up with thousands of untreated and un-remediated oil and gas wells in the future.

In this dissenting report, we have real proposals to get the government to live within its means, leave more in people's pockets and let them get ahead. Our purpose, again, is to unleash the incredible and unmatched power of the free enterprise system so anyone who works hard can achieve his or her dreams.

* * *

PETITIONS

HERRING FISHERY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to table a petition on behalf of residents who live along the Salish Sea. The importance of the petition and the timing of it is on the eve of the opening of the herring roe fishery in the Salish Sea, and residents are deeply concerned.

The petitioners cite that the Pacific herring is the basis for the food web that supports Pacific wild salmon, killer and humpback whales cod, halibut, seabirds and other independent species on the Pacific coast. They also cite that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced that the Pacific herring population had dropped by approximately one-third, from 2016 to 2019. We know that the department recommended to the minister to cut the herring catch in the Salish Sea, from 20% to 10%, and deem it a high-risk fishery.

The petitioners call on the government to suspend the herring fishery until a whole-of-ecosystem plan is developed and to fairly compensate local fishers for any economic losses and ensure that decisions are made with the full participation of first nations and local communities.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today in support of Bill S-204, combatting forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

OPIOIDS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today that has been brought forward by a number of concerned Canadians. Unfortunately, with the new formatting, it is not possible to see in what ridings these petitioners reside.

The petitioners call for the Government of Canada to pay attention to the experience in other countries, particularly Portugal, where incarceration of people suffering from drug and addiction problems has been ended. Instead, effective rehabilitation programs are in place to ensure that people suffering from drug dependency are able to again participate in a meaningful way in society.

The petitioners ask for the end of incarceration and a commitment to treatment programs.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1220)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ADDITIONAL ALLOTTED DAYS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport had one minute left for questions and comments. We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned net zero in his speech, and I thought that described the contributions he made to the debate.

We face a situation where the government is attacking the rights and privileges of parliamentarians. We have tried to stand up against that. At certain times, we have tried to extend hours. The member complains about extending hours and then he complains about reducing hours; wildly inconsistent and inaccurate comments by the member.

Would he like to take the opportunity to apologize for his speech?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what the member is talking about is the 30 hours the opposition said that members had to sit here, to be away from their families, to be away from their constituents. That is a serious matter, and to make light of it is ridiculous. Let us get to work.

I know those members do not think Friday is an important day, but we are ready to get to work and pass legislation, like the new NAFTA.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Portage—Lisgar for the speech she gave earlier.

I would like to reiterate from the outset that the government has a minority, which means quite frankly, clearly and objectively that it does not have the support of the House that it might like to have. That should be reflected in the way it works with the opposition.

Business of Supply

I would also invite the House to revisit the mandate letter of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. The first thing he is asked to do would seem like a priority. He is asked to:

Lead the House Leadership team to bring a collaborative and effective approach to the minority Parliament, placing a priority on transparency and communicating with Canadians on the work of their Parliament.

I would like to make a few remarks about what has been asked of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. To that end, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Saint-Jean.

The first requirement in the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is leadership. I remind members that leadership involves leading people. To lead people, you need a place, an objective and a destination. That is the first thing. Of course, a minority government's first step should be to collaborate, as was mentioned earlier.

Beyond having a place and an objective, beyond collaborating and listening, leadership involves inspiring those around you. You need to be a source of inspiration, an influence, and I would even say a model, an example. A leader is a positive person whom people trust and want to follow through the battle. Trust is also an important component of leadership.

Naturally, all of this remains an essential condition to what is referred to in the mandate letter as a collaborative approach. Collaboration cannot be done alone, of course. We collaborate with the people around us, which means opening a space or sharing a common space with others. For this to happen, you have to reach out to others. You cannot stay in your own corner of the House of Commons. You have to listen to others.

When we listen to what other people are telling us on, say, an opposition day, we can make connections. Connecting can mean taking risks, but taking those risks and listening to others is one of the only ways to build relationships with them and earn their trust. That is the only way collaboration can happen.

I am sure everyone expects me to talk about the effective approach. We want leadership, we want to collaborate, we want to be effective. Effectiveness requires respect above all, respect and walking the talk. On many occasions, I have read and heard, here in the House and elsewhere, that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons wants to collaborate and do every single thing in his mandate letter.

Why hold an opposition day on a Friday, then? I think that shows a lack of respect and a failure to walk the talk. In no way does it support collaboration or consistency. Trust, respect, collaboration and leadership have to be consistent too. People cannot say and do something one day and the opposite the next.

There are two things that are extremely important to me as a parliamentarian who answers to her constituents. The whole issue of transparency matters to me. I want my constituents to be able to know what is going on in the House. There are multiple discourses, from the government in power and from the opposition. The government cannot muzzle the House or claim that a single version of the facts is the only one that should be heard.

• (1225)

This is about transparency. We need to let the whole discourse unfold, because this is a debate. It is not an affirmation or a diktat. It is a debate. This is a space for ideological diversity, a space for establishing the various measures that must be put in place. That is why it is important for the whole discourse to be heard. It is not up to the government to decide what is going to happen.

A debate is a dialectical exchange. The goal is not to see who is right and make everyone else shut up. No, that is not the goal. Dialectics involves taking one idea and a contradictory or contrasting idea in order to arrive at something different. Naturally, the goal of every member of the House is to work for their constituents and find the best compromises. Compromises are also part of a debate.

As an MP, I said that I was concerned about transparency because I believe in our obligation to be accountable. I believe that we need to be accountable and that we are responsible for the decisions we make in the House. Canadians and Quebeckers need to be aware of what is happening in the House and they must have access to all speeches. That way they can make up their own minds and take action. Ultimately, we are working for them.

Communication is important to ensure that people are aware of what is happening in the House. The debates in the House reveal the hidden side of some subjects. We want to give voters all the information they need to make up their own minds and judge for themselves what to do. That is the very essence of democracy, the conditions necessary to exercising democracy. Opposition days are extremely valuable to voters and are part of this broad definition.

I will close by simply reminding members of the mandate letter of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, which reads as follows:

Lead the House Leadership team to bring a collaborative and effective approach to the minority Parliament, placing a priority on transparency and communicating with Canadians on the work of their Parliament.

I would like to ask the government House leader two rhetorical questions to give all members something to think about. By doing this, namely holding opposition days on Friday, does he think that he is fulfilling the responsibilities he was given in his mandate letter with respect to leadership, a collaborative and effective approach, transparency and communication? I have an answer for him. In my opinion, today, it is the opposition that acted as a House leader.

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the last Parliament there was a debate at committee on getting around the Standing Orders, but the Bloc was not involved in it.

I would like to provide a couple of quotes.

On March 21, a Conservative member said, with respect to an amendment that was put forward, that it, “would require that all parties agree to any changes...made to the Standing Orders. That’s what’s been done in the past...That’s what’s been done in a proper functioning way of going about this.” The person who said that was the member for Perth—Wellington.

In the same debate, an NDP member stated, “the only way to proceed on major changes to Standing Orders is through all-party agreement.”

Those cases were passionately made by those two parties during that debate, which went several months out, if I remember correctly. I wonder what the member thinks about those two parties changing their view on that.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, I believe that leadership has been assumed. Naturally, the House is sovereign. I think that with an approach based on leadership, collaboration, effectiveness, transparency and communication, we can move beyond our entrenched positions. We have to be able to reach out to the other side to determine whether something can be done to help us continue improving.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member for Manicouagan’s speech. She made a tremendously good argument for a better way of proceeding in this Parliament.

The member joined us here in 2015. I wonder whether she shares my view that the basic problem here is that the Liberal government and caucus have failed to understand what it means to work together with other people in a minority Parliament. The Liberals still seem to be acting as if they had a majority. They do not seem to recognize the results of the last election, and that necessity at a very basic level to work with others in this House.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. That is what I am seeing at present. I do not see a willingness to work together. That was obvious from what the government members said earlier. They practically accused the opposition of wanting to hold opposition days as a means of obstructing the work of the House.

In my view—I am trying to be very objective when I say this—that is an arrogant refusal to recognize the work of the opposition. That is not the way to behave.

Finally, no government should be arrogant, and that applies to any government. In a minority situation, the government should make sure not to show arrogance.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her comments.

Business of Supply

I think Canadians sent us a very strong message in 2019 when they elected us to lead a minority government. They want all parties to work closely together to make life easier for Canadians.

As I am sure my colleague knows, the parliamentary calendar provides enough time for all parties to be able to debate their priorities. The priorities people talk to me about in my home region are things like NAFTA and job creation. I doubt that today’s motion is the most important issue of the day for her constituents.

Once again, does my colleague not think we should be debating legislation that would improve the lives of Canadians?

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question, which has two parts. I will address both.

With regard to the fact that we already have opposition days, I will say that, indeed, opposition days do exist. However, the government also knows that these days exist and it should recognize that Fridays and Wednesdays are not good options for us. We want to debate, but we want to debate for the maximum amount of time allowed, because we have a lot of things to say.

As for the second part of my colleague’s question, yes, some people in my riding may have similar needs. However, that does not prevent us from continuing to work. During the Bloc Québécois’s opposition day, we proposed increasing employment insurance to 50 weeks, and every opposition member voted in favour of that motion. That addresses what my constituents want. I do not think we wasted our time standing up for people struggling with illness and hoping to improve the EI program, which, in my opinion and in the opinion of the constructive opposition, is unfair.

• (1235)

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to set the tone for my speech by reading two quotes.

The first is something that the Prime Minister said on October 23, 2019, just after the election. He said, “Canadians have sent a clear message that they want their parliamentarians to work together, and I am committed to doing that”.

The second quote is a response the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier, the government House leader, gave to a statement in the House on December 6, 2019. He said, “...the government is under scrutiny. Well, all parliamentarians are under scrutiny by Canadians. On October 21, Canadians sent us a very clear message. They want us to work together and try to move forward together on matters of common interest.”

The Liberals have a minority government, and I think that they are losing sight of the fact that the term “political opponent” does not mean exactly the same thing as it does in a majority context. In a minority situation, today’s opponents may be tomorrow’s allies. From this perspective, I believe that the government did not really understand the message sent by Canadians. Canadians were saying that the government needs to work with us because progress will only be made if the entire House works together.

Business of Supply

Opposition members, in contrast, truly understand the importance of working together and collaborating, as we have seen on opposition days. I would like to go over a few of the topics we have addressed on opposition days since this Parliament began, which was not that long ago. The House began its work in early December. Several things have emerged from opposition days.

On the first opposition day, the goal was to create a special committee on Canada-China Relations. The Conservatives' motion reminded us that it is important to review the government's conduct to ensure that the diplomatic crises we have experienced in recent months and years, some involving China, do not happen again.

That opposition day reminded the government that it is on notice, that the opposition will make sure the government conducts itself impeccably, that the House is accountable to the people and that all the government's actions must be transparent. We reminded the government that we are keeping a close eye on it, that we are ready to intervene and that we will make sure Canada has good diplomatic relations. That probably would not have happened if the government had a majority.

The second opposition day motion to be voted on called for an audit of the government's investing in Canada plan. It had come to parliamentarians' attention that the Parliamentary Budget Officer posted that budget 2018 provided an incomplete account of the changes to the government's \$186.7-billion infrastructure spending plan.

Parliamentarians seized upon the opportunity provided by a Conservative proposal that would give the Parliamentary Budget Officer more powers, authorize him to immediately conduct an audit of spending under the government's investing in Canada plan and ask him to report to the House. Again, in this context, the opposition took a watchdog role, keeping an eye on what is happening in the House. The opposition fully understood its importance, and, above all, it understood the importance of collaboration, because the opposition voted as a bloc—no pun intended.

On the third opposition day, we debated a motion to instruct the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to conduct hearings into the death of Marylène Levesque. Parliamentarians studied the question on a Conservative opposition day. The Conservatives highlighted the importance of reviewing certain procedures, including the provision of training to Parole Board officers.

As we mentioned then, although the Bloc did not fully agree with the proposed wording, it supported the motion nonetheless. The opposition used a full day of debate to clarify the nuances and important subtleties. Bloc members explained why it was important to support the Conservative motion, even though it was not perfect.

• (1240)

A full day of debate allowed us to leave no stone unturned so that everyone, both in the House and in our ridings when we return to speak with our constituents, clearly understood what was at play with that proposal.

The last proposal I want to talk about is the one from the Bloc Québécois; I would really be remiss if I let it go unmentioned. It

dealt with the issue of special employment insurance sickness benefits. The opposition day served to shed light not only on an important issue, an issue of compassion that affects people in every riding, but also on the unfairness that exists between workers who are laid off when a business closes and those who stop working because of a serious illness. Together with the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP called on the government to increase the benefit period to 50 weeks to ensure fairness between the different categories of workers. Again, it was an opposition day that produced results and allowed the parties to collaborate well together.

Unfortunately, while the decision to set the Conservatives' opposition day for a Friday was clearly intended to punish that party first and foremost, the government does not seem to realize that it punishes the entire population. It deprives them of their right to share ideas from all walks of life, ideas that advance our society and days that give everyone the opportunity to understand the issues of the day.

On the other hand, it is never too late to do the right thing; I think this is what we must keep in mind this week. We saw this with the rail blockade crisis. It seems that the government has finally implemented what the Bloc has been proposing from day one, from the very beginning of the crisis. Apparently, we might finally be approaching a way out of this crisis. Similarly, I would suggest to the government that, once again, it is not too late to do the right thing.

At the beginning of the parliamentary session, there seemed to be a real desire to work together, to advance issues collaboratively. However, it feels like things are going sideways. Once again, it is not too late to change course, to get things back on track and make sure that parliamentarians work together.

If people are already having a hard time getting along, just a few months into this Parliament, and if people already have bad attitudes when we have just barely started our work, then I cannot even imagine what the future holds if we do not fix this situation.

We are being told that more opposition days would mean losing some time to debate other key issues. However, if we do not fix things right now, and if we get caught up in never-ending procedural arguments in the long term, then I fear that we will lose even more days of work. If we are arguing amongst ourselves, starting with little shots at each other and moving up to an eye for an eye, then will all end up blind. That is not what we want.

This is why the Bloc Québécois commends the Conservatives for moving this motion, which I believe is a level-headed response to a slap in their face. This motion sends a message by creating the least amount of collateral damage possible. This motion serves as a reminder to the government that, although it has acknowledged it in the past, it does not seem to understand that it is a minority government.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate my colleague's comment that it is a measured response. Hopefully we can move forward in a more positive way after this.

I want to point out for those who might be watching that on an opposition day, we only get four people to give short speeches. We have 121 members, and certainly the Bloc has a significant caucus, so one can imagine that when members have something important they want to talk to, they treasure these days.

I would ask the member to talk about how important it is that our colleagues have the opportunity to talk to the issues that are so important to them.

• (1245)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, although I spoke a little about this in my speech, I would like to reiterate the importance of opposition days. Above all, these days must provide the maximum amount of speaking time so that no aspect is overlooked.

We have to ensure that we listen to everyone's point of view. In fact, even when discussing amongst ourselves the position we will take for an opposition day, several ideas are raised that are not all consistent. Some of us see things from a different perspective. With a larger number of people speaking, we can rest assured that we will hear the full range of positions and, in some cases, the measures to be implemented.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think communication is really important when we talk about what takes place on the floor of the House of Commons. Some might try to give the impression of punishment with regard to why this matter is before us today. That is really a false impression.

Yesterday, I stood right here and asked if we could debate the free trade agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico. I stood here and asked to have that debate today. Had everyone agreed, we would have been debating it today. We would not be debating the opposition day motion.

How do you figure it is punishment, given the particular comment I just provided?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary has been here long enough to know that he is to address all questions and comments to the Chair.

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[Translation]

The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, parliamentary tradition dictates that opposition days do not fall on a Wednesday or a Friday. I believe my colleague is aware of that.

In that regard, we have not been given any explanation as to why the Conservative opposition day is being held today. The explanation might have been acceptable. In the context of an emergency, the Conservatives might have agreed to having their opposition day today, on Friday. That is not the case. For lack of a real and plausible explanation, the only reason I can find is that it is a punishment.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for her intervention, which I enjoyed very much.

I think that over the past four years, the Liberal government has gotten in the habit of systematically muzzling and showing contempt for Parliament. Today, the Liberals are learning a lesson. They have a minority government. Not only does their party hold a minority of seats, but it did not win the popular vote in the last election.

Would my colleague agree that the government needs to come to terms with the position it is in now?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for giving me another chance to hammer home the fact that the government does not seem to understand the position it is in.

I would not want anyone to interpret my remarks as permission for a future majority government, of any party, to do as it pleases, secure in the knowledge that it cannot be overthrown by the opposition. Everyone in the House needs to realize that parliamentarians must collaborate, whatever the context.

[English]

We have to agree to disagree.

[Translation]

While we will sometimes have to agree to disagree, we must be able to discuss issues and get things done in an atmosphere that is conducive to an intelligent debate of ideas.

[English]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will say at the outset that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I am very happy to do so because I think he has a significant contribution to make to the debate, as has been noticed in the past.

I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak in this debate because I think it is an important one. It is an opportunity to add three more opposition debate days to the calendar. That may be technical and require a change to the statutory rules, the instruments of the House, the Standing Orders. However, it is an addition that is very valid and welcome in this minority Parliament.

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There is a special reason for that. I will not go into the reasons why the Conservatives were prompted to do this in this particular instance, but I will say that we are dealing with a government that is acting in a manner that is not in keeping with the expectations of Canadians to co-operate with other parties to deliver a good government. There are many examples of that.

I will go over some of the valid and excellent motions that were brought forward by our party on opposition days over the last number of years. These motions were extremely important to the future of the country and to the people of Canada. I hope that those listening will agree that in the last election no party was given a majority. We had had four years of a Liberal majority, and people said they did not want that. They wanted the parties to work together to deliver good government.

What we are getting from the government is that its agenda is the only agenda that matters. That is all it wants to do. The government wants to run the House as if it had a majority, and it is not really prepared to listen to what the opposition has to say.

Here is an opportunity for the Liberals to agree that we need to hear more from the opposition. We might ask the opposition to be more constructive sometimes, but the opposition is here to provide an alternative and to hold the government to account. We have tried over many years, including in this Parliament, to provide constructive opposition day motions.

The first example is the most recent, which occurred on February 26. It was a motion calling on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those families earning less than \$90,000 a year. The savings could then be used to add a dental care program for those who do not have a dental program. That was an important debate. The government did not listen to it, but that is its prerogative.

Canadians were able to listen to the proposal to use part of the \$6.85 billion per year that the government proposes to spend on a so-called middle-class tax cut, of which at least \$1.6 billion is going to those who are making in excess of \$90,000 a year, to create a dental plan.

The tax cut will give those who are making in excess of \$90,000 a year a \$340 break on their taxes, while people who make less than \$15,000 will save \$1. That is the middle-class tax cut for them.

We said take the top part of that, the \$1.6 billion from those making more than \$90,000 a year, and use a portion of it, not even all of it, to ensure that those who do not have dental care plans, like every member in the House has, would get an opportunity to have access to dental care.

That is a very important motion, a very important provision and a very important proposal to compromise with the government's stated aim to have what it calls a middle-class tax cut.

That is only one example, and examples are repeated time and again in a review of NDP motions in the past. In May 2019, there was a motion by our leader, the member for Burnaby South, for a declaration of an environment and climate emergency. We have had considerable motions over the last number of years on the importance of the climate and concerns about climate change.

• (1250)

We had a motion in February of last year addressing Canada's housing crisis, which is still a significant issue and one that the government is struggling to have credibility on. This keeps the issue on the table and it gives an opportunity to the government to see where to go if it wants co-operation in the House, which is what Canadians want.

In November of the previous year we had a motion on service standards for Canadian veterans. We have still not seen the results of that, but it was brought to the House by an opposition day motion. Members had a full day to debate the importance of veterans getting the services they need, getting the attention they need, and getting beyond this continuous and long-standing wait-list, which is depriving them of the services they need and are entitled to. It is still going on, regardless of the fact that this was brought in during a majority government. Maybe in a minority government with more opposition days these issues would actually get dealt with, because the government will be told by parliamentarians elected by all Canadians what the priorities are.

This is certainly a big priority for me, for our party and for the people of my province. Indeed, it is a big priority for the whole country, which has the important issue of support for veterans on their minds.

We have discussed other issues that are of world importance, such as our debate in June 2017 on nuclear disarmament. What could be more important, in terms of making the world a safer place for our children and the future, than moving forward on the motion of nuclear disarmament in a world that is getting a bit more uncertain as time goes on?

We introduced a bill on a universal pharmacare program. That was debated in the House in October 2017, thanks to the New Democratic Party, and we now have legislation before the House. It is a matter that at least has the attention of the Liberals, but I have not seen any sign that we are going to have a public system that Canadians want, similar to what is contained in the Canada Health Act.

Issues that keep coming back again and again were sometimes brought to the House by New Democrats, not necessarily for the first time, but in a forceful and positive way looking for solutions.

A motion on care for first nations children was brought forward by the member for Timmins—James Bay in November 2016.

I could go on but I will go back to one issue that comes up again and again, and I am talking about the motions brought forward by the New Democratic Party on climate change. We can go as far back as February 2007, with a motion on the Kyoto protocol, which the previous government got rid of.

In 2007, a climate change action plan was brought forward by former leader Jack Layton of the New Democratic Party. That was more than 12 years ago. Climate change action has been on the NDP agenda for more than a decade. Climate change has now reached a crisis point. We recognized that crisis many years ago. The government is now at least listening, but where are we in terms of enforceable standards? Where is the plan? Where are the timetables? Where is the reporting back to the House?

These issues are still there, but they were brought to the House in important opposition day motions.

I have one minute left and I am happy to devote it to a motion brought forward by my former colleague Romeo Saganash on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, also known as UNDRIP. This is an extremely important resolution from the United Nations supported by the Government of Canada but not yet brought into force. It was adopted by the Government of British Columbia. It is extremely important in terms of what we are dealing with these days with the Wet'suwet'en in British Columbia.

Opposition day motions are so important for Canadians and for this House of Parliament. We should have more of them.

• (1255)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for St. John's East for raising those points. He has laid out a list of activities and initiatives that have been identified as important by the people who elected him and his NDP colleagues.

All of us in this place can agree that Canadians elected 338 members to do the very best for all Canadians. While we do not necessarily agree on all the ways to get there, he has described for us how the NDP would like to make a better Canada. We do want a better Canada. I think we can agree, however, that Canadians in electing a minority government were looking for more collaboration in the House among all parties and they expect debate on issues led not just by the government but by members of all parties.

I would like to hear his comment on that.

• (1300)

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with the member's comments about what Canadians did. His party received more votes than the Liberal Party, so clearly there is a division among Canadians as to what kind of government they want and who they want to lead it. Canadians have decided that there should be a minority Parliament with representation from five parties in this House. The mantra from the date of the election has been that Canadians want these parties to work together. We have not seen a lot of evidence of that to date.

I am hoping that perhaps the Liberals will support this resolution and give an indication that they do want to work together, and

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maybe we will have fewer partisan debates and more co-operation and collaboration.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's always thoughtful speech. He is welcome to criticize the government, though hopefully he will do it the proper way.

I mentioned earlier how the NDP, in a debate in 2017, passionately opposed getting around the Standing Orders like this. I gave a quote.

In another quote the former member for Hamilton Centre referred to the report of the special committee on modernization, of which Bob Kilger was the chair, and said:

The Committee's order of reference—like that of the predecessor—required that...any report be adopted by unanimous agreement of all the members.

Further on he said:

...parliamentary reform is best achieved where there is consensus and all-party agreement.

The NDP passionately spoke for many weeks of debate against the changes to the Standing Orders like this without any unanimous support.

Does the member agree that some of his members might vote for this motion and go against the principles they so strongly stated during that debate, which I do not think the member was here for?

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, I am not sure it is important to refer back to a debate that took place in a majority Parliament.

We are talking about a motion before the House to adapt to the minority situation that we have. We need mechanisms to be able to demonstrate the kind of co-operation required to identify the important issues and hopefully seek, if not unanimous consent, the majority consent in this House, as we did, for example, in establishing the Canada-China committee just a few weeks ago.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am new to the House. I came here with a clear willingness to work and collaborate to advance the interests of the people of Shefford and Quebec.

I wonder if my colleague has any advice to give me on how I might hang on to this democratic ideal on this sad day.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question.

I will tell the hon. member that I was elected for the first time to this House in 1987, and I am back again. I have to say that I have not lost my political idealism. I am here for the same reason now that I was here in 1987, and that was to build on the ideas of creating a better world.

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That is why I debated the dental care motion the other day. I was very disappointed the member and her colleagues chose not to support it for some other reason, but I think they agreed with the principle that everyone should have dental care.

We should be finding reasons to support these things and finding solutions as opposed to reasons not to vote for something. That way members will maintain their idealism. Hopefully we will be back here to talk about that in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity today to express my disgust and profound outrage at the decal produced by oil company X-Site Energy Services. This decal shows an explicit representation of young environmentalist Greta Thunberg being sexually assaulted.

This is disgraceful and likely warrants an investigation. There are limits to how people can challenge someone they disagree with. This decal blatantly encourages the assault and rape of a young girl. I am calling on the government and all parliamentarians in the House to strongly condemn such declarations and actions.

I will get back to the motion we are debating. This debate is a very important one, and I thank my colleagues in the official opposition for moving this motion. It reminds us that as parliamentarians, we are here to serve the Canadians who elected us to come to the House to talk, make suggestions, introduce bills and build a fairer society and a better world, as my colleague from Newfoundland said.

In 2015, the Liberals repeated ad nauseam that they wanted to do politics differently, that they wanted to respect the work of MPs, that they wanted to respect the parliamentary institution that is the House of Commons.

Unfortunately, what we saw was a Liberal government that invoked closure more times than Stephen Harper's Conservatives. Once again, the Liberals say one thing and do the opposite. This arrogance has a limit, and it was reached on October 21 when Quebeckers and Canadians gave a mandate to all parliamentarians to work together for the good of the country.

The Liberals did find themselves back in power—with fewer votes than the official opposition, as we know—and they must now work with different parties in the House to advance various files and find solutions. Today and for the second time since the beginning of the 43rd Parliament, the Liberals are being given a lesson in humility to let them know that they cannot do whatever they want in the House and that they must respect parliamentarians and the institution.

It is important to know the purpose of these opposition days, which give a voice to the political parties that legitimately represent the will of the people and the interests of their constituents.

Opposition days are an opportunity to bring to the House, here in Parliament, issues and topics that the government of the day might not want to talk about much, but are important to the people we represent and to Canadians across the country. They advance debate because it is not just the government's policies that are always put

on the agenda and always being discussed. This creates greater diversity and better representation of the concerns and needs of the citizens of this country.

I will provide a few recent examples and some older ones of motions moved by the NDP that I believe addressed critical issues. This month, my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby introduced the idea that dental care should be provided in this country. We explained very clearly to all Canadians how this could be done at no extra cost.

The Liberals came up with some other tax cut scheme that mainly benefits the wealthy and the most fortunate in society and does not amount to much for the less fortunate or low-income workers.

The maximum amount one can save in a year with this tax cut is \$600. That is what this plan is about. Only people who earn over \$143,000 a year will be eligible for this gift worth \$600. I really do not think those are the people who need it the most, when there are people living in poverty and who are struggling to make ends meet.

We in the NDP are saying that anyone who earns more than \$90,000 a year should not have access to tax cuts above that threshold.

● (1305)

Let us take all that money that we are going to save and invest it in a new public service, a new social program that would give everyone access to dental care. By implementing the tax measure proposed by the NDP, we would save approximately \$1.6 billion, which would enable us to provide care to 4.3 million Canadians, who often do not even dare go to the dentist because they cannot afford it.

This is the type of concern that an opposition party can raise here to force a debate and see what positions the government and the other parties will take. That is what opposition days are for. I am pleased that we can debate the need for more opposition days in the House so that we can share more points of view and concerns about issues that are not necessarily part of the current government's priorities.

Last June, at the end of the 42nd Parliament, one of my colleagues from British Columbia moved a motion about the fact that Quebeckers and Canadians pay more for cellular telecommunications services than people in other countries and in the OECD.

We in the NDP proposed mechanisms to help Canadians save money and access affordable Internet and cellular services. Our goal was really to save them money, because the profits going to big telecom are frankly obscene.

Of course, the current government is not always keen to discuss these issues, but we opposition members can raise these concerns, start a debate and force everyone to take a side and vote, so they will then report back to their constituents and explain why they accepted or rejected whatever the proposal was.

That is why I think the motion moved today by the official opposition is so interesting. It gives us a chance to list all these examples.

Back in May, the leader of the NDP, the member for Burnaby South, moved a motion calling for a climate emergency to be declared. Here is a subject we have to come back to again and again so we can take the Liberal government to task, since it seems to be incapable of meeting the targets set by the previous Conservative government. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned, based on scientific evidence, that we have 10 years to reverse course, take action and drastically lower our greenhouse gas emissions.

Unfortunately, not only will we fail to reach the Conservatives' targets, but, according to reports by a series of commissioners of the environment and sustainable development, we are falling further behind with each passing year. In 2018, they said we would fail to hit the target by 66 megatonnes. In 2019, they said we would fail to hit the target by 79 megatonnes. On the one hand, the Liberal government dragged its feet for three and a half years before putting a price on pollution, and even that has had no impact so far.

On the other hand, the Liberal government bought the Trans Mountain pipeline with taxpayers' money. That project makes no sense from an environmental point of view, let alone an economic or financial point of view, as we can already see from the pipeline's ballooning costs. It cost us \$4.5 billion to buy that 65-year-old pipe, and building a new pipeline alongside it was supposed to cost \$7.4 billion, but now that has gone up to \$12 billion.

The Liberal government has no idea how high that number could go. Will there come a time when we stop wasting our money by investing in something that has no future? Not only is it an outdated energy source, but it is also the first type of oil global markets will stop buying.

We could take that money and massively invest in renewable energy to help the western provinces, such as Alberta, make a fair energy transition in a way that respects workers. Alberta has incredible solar and wind energy potential that has not yet been tapped. Let us turn toward those energy resources to help us make the transition.

That is what opposition motions are for and that is why it is important to have more of them.

• (1310)

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, since we are working in a minority government, it is even more important to ensure the voices of those of us who are in opposition are brought forth. It is important to hold the government to account and to advocate for what is important to our communities.

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Has the member opposite seen that opposition day motions have already functioned well in this Parliament, how they have been collaborative, even if we do not always agree, and how we need more of these to ensure that everyone's voices are heard?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I could continue to give examples of subjects that we could raise in the House as parliamentarians and that would give us an opportunity to better represent our constituents.

One of my NDP colleagues from Winnipeg moved a motion on the influence of major corporations on the government. No government would want to talk about that.

My former colleague from Saskatchewan also moved a motion on the housing crisis. Sometimes we get these motions adopted by the House. That was the case with a motion moved by one of my colleagues from British Columbia on the minimum standards necessary to ensure good services for our country's veterans. The members of the House managed to come to a consensus on this extremely important issue.

My colleague from Timmins—James Bay moved a motion asking the Pope to apologize to residential school survivors. That is an important issue that we were able to raise.

• (1315)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy the member's speeches.

I do not think it will be lost on the media that sat in on the many weeks of discussion on the changing of the Standing Orders, where the Conservatives and NDP passionately voted and spoke against doing it without the consensus of all parties. Now, in a few hours, they want to go totally against that.

I have already given a couple of quotes from the NDP. On the morning of March 21, 2017, the member for Hamilton Centre said that anything you might call a comprehensive or systemic review of the Standing Orders, that report, as other reports have told us, was always done with all-party support.

I am very interested to see on Monday which NDP members vote against their principles and vote for this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which has been coming up since earlier today.

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I would simply say to him that if all parliamentarians had his attitude, collaboration would be generally easier in the House. I think it is important to put things in context and keep track of what is happening. Balance is being restored today, which is necessary in a minority government.

The government has sufficient means to advance its agenda. We only have to look at gag orders and the extension of sitting hours until midnight, which has happened systematically every June for the past four years. Opposition days allow us to raise issues that are important to our constituents.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

Like him, I would like to do politics differently. We need to put ideas and a positive, constructive attitude front and centre.

I would like to know if he has any useful suggestions for this minority government context. He and I won seats in a minority Parliament, and our constituents would like to hear what suggestions we might have for the government to help us all work together constructively. Those suggestions might even be valid in a majority context too.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I think this gives us an opportunity to improve ourselves and engage in healthier, more rational and more reasonable discussions. I hope that will be the case, especially in committees, where we will have opportunities to propose amendments and find ways for all parties to compromise.

I would like to mention one thing that is very important to me. A proportional voting system would really help us get into the habit of engaging in dialogue among the parties. Our democracy would be healthier. I hope we will adopt some good habits that a future majority government, perhaps an NDP government, will maintain.

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada needs more democracy. Better yet, Canada needs better democracy.

The frustrations of the opposition over the government's decisions and its policies can be seen in the streets, on the rails and online, but the Prime Minister is not getting the message. Our country needs more debate and more opposition days if Canada is to be saved.

Our economy and large sectors of our job creators are on their knees. Canada is tearing itself apart. I love our country, but I do not think the Liberals love my province or my people. The Liberals should want to enter into more debate on how we can fix Canada. Our country is at a crossroads.

This week, we witnessed massive nation-building projects shut down. The government is ignoring the pleas for help and support from the 20 elected band chiefs who want the Coastal GasLink and the 14 reserves that support the Teck mine. These are projects that support good-paying jobs, are environmentally friendly and can help Canada grow and get us off our knees, but the government is ignoring them. Instead, the Liberal government is listening to the pollsters, the UN and the elites. The Liberals need to start listening

to the majority of MPs who were sent here with an agenda that is different from theirs.

Before being elected federally by the good people of Saskatoon—University, I was honoured to serve two terms in the Saskatchewan legislative assembly. I was lucky enough that my colleagues elected me the 25th Speaker of our assembly. I know what it is like to work in consensus with government, the opposition and the NDP to find ways forward. I believe we can do that in this Parliament, and it is with this experience of reference that I enter the 43rd Parliament.

I have seen first-hand how an effective opposition can challenge a government for the betterment of all. I have sat in government, I have sat in the Speaker's chair, and now I sit in opposition. I bring a unique viewpoint on how our democracy does or does not work. It is not a zero-sum game, as some would have us believe. My experience is that when governments grant time and availability to opposition, ultimately it is democracy, the governing party and the people themselves who benefit.

I would say this to the Liberal members who are here today: When governments fight against transparency and scrutiny, it is their public support that hurts. We have seen in recent polling that the government is failing our country. I challenge the Liberals not to fight for less debate. Now more than ever, I believe debate is needed in Canada. Too many important issues are at stake. If the government truly values transparency, it will champion motions such as this one.

I am fearful that the Liberal government will desire to stay in the shadows and hide from debate. Some Liberals will want other opposition parties to join them, but I believe the human spirit and a desire to fulfill our honourable work as members of Parliament will overcome this darkness.

Our Westminster-based democracy works best only when we witness vigorous debate in this chamber. This chamber was set up for that reason, with the government to the right of the Speaker proposing an agenda, opposition parties across the aisle vigorously debating what is at stake, and independent media watching over the top. That is how Westminster democracies properly work. This configuration has been our tradition for over 150 years in this country.

I believe everyone in this chamber is honourable and wants a better nation. We need more debate on the big issues we face today. Through these debates and honest dialogue, we will get the best solutions for Canadians.

I propose that liquefied natural gas exported from Canada will lower the use of coal and greenhouse gases around the world and provide jobs and wealth to Canada. I ask fellow parliamentarians to change my view if they disagree with that statement, and that is the debate we need to have.

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• (1320)

This is the forum to have that debate. We should be encouraging more debates, not less. I might be new here, but I still believe my arguments can change the direction of the country. However, I have been here long enough to know that others can change my opinions. It is how democracy should work. It is how we should get the best decisions for all of Canada.

If the Liberal government is so sure that it is correct, then providing more opportunity to debate its policy should be welcomed. On October 21 of last year, the Liberal government was punished and lost its majority, because, in part, it could not defend its agenda.

This motion today would grant the Liberals this forum to defend their agenda. If the Liberals believe in their agenda, democracy and this country, I hope they will vote in favour of the motion.

For the other non-government members of the House, why were we sent here? We have the honour to sit in this chamber because the majority of people in our home ridings wanted a new and different direction for our country, a different direction than what the Liberals were proposing. We won the right to be called members of Parliament, because people wanted their voices in Ottawa, a voice different from the Liberals. Today, we have the opportunity to let that voices be heard. Granting more debate will result in more real democracy.

Another important part of the Westminster democracy that needs attention and could benefit from more debate is the press.

I find it shocking that during most question periods, we have a handful of press members watching the proceedings. I know other people watch electronically, but that is a sad state when we compare the press we had 10 to 20 years ago. That decline is seriously jeopardizing our democracy and needs to be addressed if we are going to be a successful country.

We only have a strong democracy if we have a strong independent press. I along with many in Canada are concerned with the direction of media in our nation. We should be welcoming new media platforms, new stories, new sources and new reporting of our debates. If this motion to increase debate in the House of Commons is successful, it could encourage more media coverage, more attention and itself help save independent press. The alternative is more taxpayer dollars subsidizing the slowing of the decline of media in Canada. We can change that.

If we are successful, more debates will happen, democracy will be enhanced and Canada can be saved. Opposition days for other parties will welcome new and different motions to be debated. Who would not want to hear different views and beliefs from different ridings across Canada? The Liberals believe only their views are to be heard and thought.

I cannot say that I will vote in favour of the motions of other parties in future days, but I do welcome that debate. We as Parliamentarians have the honour to be that voice in that debate.

If the solutions to the problems our country is facing are to be found, this motion needs to be passed.

All of us will be returning to our ridings next week. Many of us will be hearing directly from Canadians. We hopefully will hear about solutions, what real people are facing and hopefully exchange ideas on what we can do better in our great country. We need the ability to bring those new ideas forward. The motion would allow for that: more opposition days, more debate and more ideas to be shared. It is what well-functioning democracies should be like.

Motions such as this one highlight how a minority Parliament can and should work. Opposition members have shown Canadians how we can work. Let us continue this work.

• (1325)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the recurring themes in the hon. member's speech was encouraging debate in this place.

A week ago today, the members of the House were debating Bill C-3. I participated in the debate on the Thursday, a debate that was going to make significant changes and improvements to Canada's border agency.

As we recall, a Conservative member moved a motion to shut down the House for the day at 12:30 in the afternoon. We had a lot more to debate, yet the Conservatives wanted to shut down the House for the day, so they could go home or go to Niagara. They failed to get the votes they needed and MPs from other parties wanted to continue debate on the bill, but it did not matter. The Conservatives tied up the House over and over with votes that took attention away from debating this important legislation.

It is part of their pattern. The Conservatives have done this many times before to try to delay a passage of legislation in this place and to get in the way of debate in this place.

Why does the member's party continually play political tactics to prevent members of Parliament in the House from doing their jobs to debate important legislation?

• (1330)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, it is not the opposition's role to pass the government's agenda. It is up to the government to manage the passage of the government's agenda.

I believe the hon. member was incorrect and it was on Friday, not Thursday, that this occurred. On that day, once again it was up to the government to make sure that it properly proceeded to get its agenda across. I was lucky to be in the chamber that Friday and was ready to sit until the end.

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[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his presentation. I appreciate the tone he used during his intervention. I am encouraged to see that we can have calm and reasoned exchanges in the House.

Does he think his colleagues might exercise self-control from now on?

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the translation was not working for the first part of the member's question, but I believe it was about civility and respect of fellow members. I concur that this place works best when we respect each other as honourable colleagues.

There is a part, though, of our Westminster democracy where we need to highlight the inaccuracy of other members. Sometimes that takes the form of heckling or excessive motion, and that is to draw attention to maybe a partial or incomplete answer in question period. That also has the important role of drawing attention of the media to that minister's response, so that if there is a scrum afterward, the minister would be held to account for the questions asked in here.

I do respect all members in here and we should show respect as much as possible, but let us understand our traditions in here and that there is going to be some give-and-take.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I certainly hope the member is not saying that heckling should be allowed in the House.

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

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think the Liberals do not realize that they do not have a majority government and that this is a minority government. It is an opportunity to enhance democracy further and to make this Parliament work better.

Does my hon. colleague agree that the government should support this motion because it is wiser under a minority government?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I will not challenge the Speaker, but I do believe heckling should be allowed in this chamber as one of the key traditions of our Westminster democracy.

To the comment about the minority Liberal government's fighting against the importance of transparency and increased debate, I believe that it should be coming on board. We will see what happens when the vote takes place.

Next week, Liberal members will go back to their ridings and will probably hear from Canadians how frustrated they are about the state of affairs in our country. They will come back here and say that we are going to need to hold more debates and exchange more ideas on how to get our economy back working for everybody and how to get our goods to market. I believe those are the conversations Liberal members are going to have over the break. When we come back two Mondays from now, we will have an opportunity to

hopefully come together and vote for democracy, clarity and the transparency that this motion would provide the people of Canada.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned that he thought the media was not present, but I do not think it is going to be lost on the media, with the many weeks they spent hearing Conservatives and NDP members saying that a change like this around the Standing Orders should not be made without all-party consensus.

I have already given some quotes from both those parties, but I will just give one more short one. On March 23, 2017, near 6 p.m., the member for Calgary Shepard from the Conservatives said, "I think they need more time, but we shouldn't change them without unanimous agreement."

I know this was before the member's time in Parliament, but hopefully some members who are here will stick to their principles and vote against this motion.

● (1335)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, I mean Madam Speaker, I am not used to having a female Speaker. We are very lucky federally to have female Speakers. I think having more females in roles such as that is encouraging. It encourages better decisions. It encouraged better debates, and the civility that we are lucky enough to have in this chamber has probably a lot to do with the good work that you bring forward.

To the member's comments about the 42nd Parliament, I have not reviewed all of my PROC Hansard. I will go back and start reading them over, from the last couple of years, over the week, and I will endeavour to come back and report what I have read over the week.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, given the member was a speaker of the Saskatchewan legislature, I am sure he can appreciate more than most how important it is to make a major change to a Standing Order or change a rule substantially.

My colleague raises the issue that virtually all opposition members can be cited. I can recall so many incidents in the House where the Conservative members were jumping out of their seats when we tried to make changes to the Standing Orders. The argument then was that if we were going to make substantial changes, we should have a consensus from all the parties.

Given his role as a speaker before, would he not agree that having a consensus on a rule change of this nature should be something achievable, and if it is not achievable, then maybe it is not a good rule change or there needs to be a compromise of some sort?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I am new here.

I am not sure how many terms you have served, sir, but—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member has been in a legislature and should know that he is to address his questions and comments to the Chair.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the member should know that this does not change the Standing Orders at all.

This member, who has been here for many terms, does not realize that this does not change the Standing Order whatsoever.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, in British Columbia, we have a forestry crisis. We also have deep-seated issues with money laundering. There are many things that I would like to see us debate that are not getting any attention from the government.

I am sure that there are other examples this member could give right now. Could he please share some of these examples?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I will give a brief answer. “What went wrong with the Roughriders last year?” would be one of the debate questions I would like to put forward in the future. It was a terrible second half and I believe the Roughriders should have been playing better in the western final.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I rise on a very short point of order, but an important one.

The member made a comment on heckling, which is a comment on a point of order. I would like to ask, it is a very important thing these days, if the Speaker could get back at a later time, not to shorten this, to their position on that suggested change to a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would consider that more of a debate than a point of order, and I think that all members know full well that it is very difficult to hear members when there is heckling, and it is a form of disrespect. I would hope that members will respect other members when they are speaking, whether it is through debates or questions and comments or question period.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, generally speaking, whenever I have the opportunity to share some thoughts with members of the chamber, I am quite delighted to do so.

I am very disappointed in the Conservatives and their approach to what they wanted to debate today. There are all sorts of misrepresentations and false impressions that I believe they are trying to give to Canadians.

Let us bring it back to the last federal election. It was very clear that Canadians from coast to coast to coast wanted to see political parties work better together in order to deliver more for Canadians. That was the request of Canadians, and we have taken that request very seriously.

It is not just the governing party that has a responsibility to listen to what Canadians said back in the last federal election; so does the official opposition. However, I have not witnessed that reformed behaviour coming from the Conservative Party. What I have seen is Conservatives doing whatever they can, such as a filibuster, to dis-

rupt the House of Commons from things that are taking place in the chamber. They know what sort of spin to put on different issues to try to come across as if they are doing it for so-called good reasons.

I have served many years as a parliamentarian and I have been involved in minority governments at both the national level and the provincial level. At the end of the day, yes, there is a responsibility for the government, and we take that responsibility seriously, but there is also a particular responsibility for the official opposition, and I wish they would take that role seriously.

Let us take a flashback to last Friday. The Conservative opposition always says that we never provide enough debate on important legislation, and we have indeed had very important legislation, including medical assistance in dying; a trade agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico; and changes to the Canada Border Services Agency, as well as throne speech debates. There have been all sorts of debates of real consequence to Canadians throughout our nation, and time and time again we have seen the Conservatives say that they want more time to debate things. They want to have more time to debate on anything and everything.

Last Friday, we were debating legislation to make changes to the Canada Border Services Agency. From what I understand, every member in this House actually supports this legislation and is going to be voting in favour of it.

Last Friday, what did the Conservatives do? They actually moved to adjourn the House for the day, saying to Canadians that they did not want to have debate that day and they wanted to shut it down. The Liberal caucus was here in numbers and wanted to continue debating government bills, but the Conservatives wanted to take the afternoon off. Then they realized that the Liberals were not the only ones who were prepared to work; so were the Bloc and the NDP, and that is the reason they lost that vote.

What did the Conservatives do next? They moved to adjourn debate, not so we could move on to debate another bill but because they wanted to force another vote in order to prevent debate on a bill.

On the one hand, the Conservatives say they want to debate government bills. On the other hand, they say they want to take time off. The Conservative mentality is to say, “Let us be as disruptive as we can for the House of Commons, and then what we will do is blame the Liberals for not having enough time to debate legislation. We are going to say that the Liberals cannot pass legislation.”

• (1340)

Give me a class of grade 6 students in any community in Canada, and I could prevent a government from being able to debate legislation to a final end. Anyone can do that. They do not have to be a genius in order to prevent government legislation from passing. Unlike private members' bills, unless we are prepared to bring in time allocation, we will not be able to get things done because the Conservatives, time and time again will persist in filibustering any government initiative.

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The Conservatives do not want a government that is functional. They will do anything to prevent things from happening inside the House of Commons. That is what I have witnessed as a minority government, and that is why I say shame on them. It is not a message that was just sent to the governing party: There is an expectation from the public that the official opposition has to behave in a responsible manner.

Let us think about the motion they have brought forward today. They say they want to have more opposition days. They want to have four more opposition days. If we look up the word hypocrisy in the dictionary, we might find a lot of similarities between how that is defined and the behaviour, comments and direction that are coming from the Conservative Party.

This is a substantial change or deviation from the rules. The Conservatives would have argued endlessly that we should never do that. I remember the thumping of the desks, the endless questions of privilege and points of order. When I say endless, we are talking about hours and hours. What about the filibuster from the critic of finance, when he consumed virtually the entire budget debate? They are proud of that. They did all of this because the Liberal government attempted to make some changes to the rules, which were nowhere near as profound as what they are trying to do for this session.

The Conservatives now say that they would give the Bloc one of those opposition days, and give the NDP one of those opposition days. Why not give everyone an opposition day, and they will all vote in favour of it?

How does that make our system any better? Why did they not approach the government and ask if there were some things they could do to accommodate the government also? If the Conservatives genuinely believe that they want to see an additional number of opposition days, I am open to that.

I spent most of my years as a parliamentarian in opposition. I see the value of that, but I also see the value of having debate on government legislation. What they are saying is that opposition days are only good on Mondays, Tuesdays and maybe Thursdays. That is what they are saying, because Wednesdays and Fridays are short days. They are saying that on the government agenda, the short days are for debate. By the way, they are complaining because they are not getting enough time to debate. It is hypocrisy.

It is truly amazing. I think of the Standing Orders and the important role that the Standing Orders play for the chamber. I like to consider myself as a parliamentarian first and foremost. It is disrespectful, the type of motion that has been brought forward, with not one word of negotiation taking place with the government members.

I have personal opinions of how we can make this chamber more effective and more functional so that Canadians would benefit. I have even made the offer that I would love to sit down with government members and opposition members in all political parties to talk about some of those rules. I will continue that effort because I believe in that, but what we are witnessing today is wrong. I hope that Canadians will see through what the Conservatives are really trying to do here. It is not in the best interests of Canadians. If there

is a Conservative who has the bravado and is prepared to go to a university and debate this with me, I would welcome that debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Let's do it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have one member who says he is prepared to do it.

• (1345)

I look forward to it. Maybe we could do something in Ottawa or something in Winnipeg, ideally. I would be open to possibly doing something in another location, anywhere.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Carleton.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Carleton? Let us see if we can make that happen. The point is I look forward to that debate. I really do.

I believe in Parliament. I believe in the Standing Orders. I also believe what the opposition is doing today is childish and inappropriate, and of great disservice to Canadians.

Parliamentarians who believe in the importance of our rules should listen and read some of the statements the Conservative Party made two or three years ago. Conservative members should reflect on their behaviour from two or three years ago. They should take a look at what took place in the procedure and House affairs committee. I could cite many examples to demonstrate the amount of hypocrisy we are seeing from the other side.

Ultimately, I hope the motion is defeated. I really do. If it is defeated, I am open to looking at ways we can improve the functionality of this chamber. I believe in this chamber. I think that each and every one of us is blessed in many ways by having a seat here. I am very grateful to the residents of Winnipeg North for entrusting me to be their representative.

I will continue, as much as I possibly can, to ensure that this chamber remains effective in meeting the needs of Canadians in all regions of our country. That allows for debates on private members' business, opposition day motions, government bills and everything else that comes to the floor of the House of Commons.

I am prepared, as the Prime Minister has clearly indicated, to listen to what Canadians want. Canadians want opposition parties and government to work together on the important issues that our country is facing today. We will stand up for that on this side of the House, day in and day out.

With respect to why the Conservatives brought this motion today, I have heard members say that it is a punishment issue. They thought we were absolutely fixated on making today an opposition day. Again, that is just not true. I stood right here in my place yesterday and made the suggestion that we use today to debate the Canada-United States-Mexico trade agreement. I asked the House for support to do that. The opposition chose not to have that debate today.

Now the Conservatives are criticizing us because we are having this debate, because Friday is the opposition day. Again, there is a word that comes to mind. I think they need to reflect on their behaviour and understand the important role that all of us have been asked to fill.

Let us look at the rules with regard to private members' business and government business.

There was a time when time allocation was not used all that often. A number of years ago, time allocation started to become an effective tool for House management. When I sat in opposition, I did not like the use of time allocation. As I said when I was in opposition, unfortunately if there is no sense of co-operation in the passing of government bills, time allocation is needed.

For those following the debate, the reason for this is that it is virtually unlimited. The House of Commons could spend a full year of the chamber's debate time on one bill. The Conservatives could force the government to bring in time allocation by choosing to put up speakers endlessly on pieces of legislation, and they know that.

• (1350)

We have seen in recent years that even when the Conservatives support a piece of legislation they will continue to put up speakers, challenging and baiting the government to bring in time allocation. There have been situations where the NDP has supported the government in bringing in time allocation because it recognized some of the pieces of legislation the members wanted to see passed. The only way they were going to be passed was with time allocation.

Were Conservatives thinking about Canadians then? No. Are they thinking about Canadians today with this motion? I do not believe it for a moment. I look forward to the debate with the member opposite who offered to have that debate. The Conservatives want to talk about private members. The nice thing about private members is that members from all political parties get to bring forward legislation, and sometimes it is very substantial. Other times it is still important and good legislation, and it passes quite easily. Often there are many members who want to speak to a private member's bill, but they cannot speak because it is a very well-defined amount of time.

If a member brings in a private member's bill, there are two hours of debate at second reading. Then it goes to committee and it has a maximum amount of time there. Then it comes back to the House at report stage and third reading for a combined two hours.

That means a very small number of MPs can contribute to the debate. It is one of the ways in which private members' business is allowed to get through. I believe that we need to start looking at how we can ensure that not only private members' business gets through the House, but also how government bills get through the House.

I am an advocate of those types of reforms because I believe there are many issues that we could debate. If we could figure it out, maybe we could have more opposition days, but we need to realize that legislation is important, whether it is from private members or the government. We need to come up with a way. I challenge the opposition Bloc, NDP, the Greens and even my Conservative friends to work with the government. Let us work on behalf of

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Canadians and come up with ways to ensure that legislation, whether it is private members' business or government bills, has a way to proceed through the chamber.

I have ideas I will be happy to share when I have more time to speak. If we can come up with the answer to that in a productive way, then it allows us to have additional debates on some of the issues that members want to talk about. I think coronavirus is a critically important issue for Canadians. There is a legitimate amount of concern that needs to be addressed, whether by the Prime Minister or the Minister of Health. We are doing as much as we can, but maybe we could have more debate if we can nail down the rule changes that are necessary. If we cannot, there are still ways.

In the last two weeks, we have had two emergency debates in the House of Commons. Those were brought forward by opposition members. There are many ways we can deal with the important issues that Canadians face. They are expecting the national government to provide leadership.

I would appeal to all members of the House to look at ways to change our Standing Orders, and work together trying to come up with ways to improve this chamber. That is what is in the best interests of Canadians. That is the reason why my recommendation is that we vote against the motion. My commitment is to work with all members of the House to ensure that we have a more functional House so that all Canadians will benefit from rule changes.

• (1355)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about having a debate off campus about important issues of parliamentary procedure. He also talked about the importance of being willing to work on Friday afternoons.

I took the member up on the challenge of wanting to have a debate. I would love to debate the hon. member on parliamentary procedure in Ottawa at my alma mater of Carleton University and in Winnipeg. I suggest we do the Winnipeg debate closer to the summer, with all due respect, but we can do the one at Carleton right away. My staff has already called the member's staff. Unfortunately, nobody was answering the phone on a Friday afternoon, but we will continue to make those calls and hopefully we will be able to get through and schedule that.

The member made a choice of denying unanimous consent in the House when a proposal was put forward by our party to debate Bill C-4 today, which would have been a show of good faith and allowed us to move forward more quickly. Conservatives at no point rejected moving forward with that. That is what we wanted to be debating today. The government chose to stall the ratification of the new NAFTA instead, because it wanted to give this narrow time slot to the opposition day.

Why is the government stalling NAFTA?

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• (1400)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, first, I would ask my friend to call my constituency office at 204-984-1767. I have between 400 to 600 case files a month and, as a result, my staffing is in my constituency. This is where I put my financial resources to serve the constituents of Winnipeg North, and so I do not have staff in Ottawa. If he has some extra money, I would be happy to use some of it to have some staff here.

In regard to the motion that the member made reference to, what I can tell him is that I stood in this very spot yesterday and I asked for the House to support us to be able to debate the free trade agreement today for Canada, Mexico and the United States. Unfortunately, members of the opposition said no.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, our colleague from Winnipeg North is telling us with a great deal of conviction that choosing Friday as an allotted day for the Conservative Party was not intended as a punishment. However, on this side of the House, we have yet to hear the reason why this Friday was chosen when that is not common practice.

I will ask the question directly to my colleague: If this is not punishment, then what is it?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as members know, there are five days in a week here in the House of Commons. If we take a look, traditionally we will see that there are times when the House has had opposition days on Wednesdays and Fridays. There is a great deal of legislation on it.

However, if the member were right, why then would I have stood up yesterday and asked for us to debate the trade agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico? That is really what we wanted to be debating today. Maybe some in the opposition are giving misinformation. If it was about punishment, why would I have stood up yesterday asking for debate on trade?

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to take up the challenge of having a real debate on how Parliament could function. I know that my colleagues from other parties want to engage in that as well. I look forward to hearing from the member for Winnipeg North in this regard.

The member for Winnipeg North is very eloquent, but in this case he is actually using his eloquence to convince people to vote for the opposition motion, because by belittling members of the opposition and by insulting them, what he is doing is showing that the government has not yet understood that it is a minority government and it needs to be respectful of all members of Parliament.

When we look at all the issues that opposition days have raised in the past that have led to changes in government policy, it is obvious that this will be a benefit. Having this motion adopted would mean more issues get discussed on the floor of the House of Commons.

The history of this government, sadly, in the last Parliament, was not good when it came to respecting Parliament. I remember the

days of Motion No. 6, which was brought forward by the Liberals. It sought, in the most draconian way, going even further than even Mr. Harper would have imagined, to shut down opposition MPs and their rights and privileges in the House of Commons.

Does the member now regret the Liberal government moving forward with Motion No. 6 and seeking to eliminate the rights of opposition MPs?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I reflected a great deal about the last election, recognizing the fact that all of us have an important role, whether in government or in opposition, to be responsible and accountable for the behaviours inside the House of Commons. The Prime Minister has been very clear on this. Canadians from coast to coast to coast want us to co-operate. If a high sense of co-operation takes place on the floor of the House of Commons, we can accomplish a great deal for all Canadians.

We have demonstrated this, and there are several examples that I can refer to, whether it was working with the Bloc on the throne speech, working on the trade agreement where we appeared to have the support of all members or working on Canada border control. There are many examples, and we are committed to continue to do that. I even indicated that, if this motion is defeated, I am happy to work on how we can change the rules so that Canadians will have a more functional House of Commons.

• (1405)

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague and his incredible staff, who are, I am sure, doing wonderful work for the citizens of Winnipeg North this Friday afternoon.

The hon. member is a veteran of the House and the provincial legislature in Manitoba. Given the experience he has had, could the member elaborate on the lessons he has learned about the government's role in advancing our agenda and the constructive role the opposition needs to play in ensuring that we advance the important issues that Canadians want us to advance?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I learned very quickly when I was first elected back in 1988, because it was a minority government and I was part of the House leadership team even back then. Reg Alcock, who might be known to some individuals, became a member of Parliament and was House leader. One thing we took very seriously, because we were in a minority situation, is that we had to be responsible in recognizing that the government is the government and that when we could support legislation, even if we opposed it, it was important to allow it to go through the process.

Here in Ottawa, after a bill goes through second reading, it goes to a standing committee. Standing committees allow Canadians from across the country to participate in what is being put together. Not every member has to speak on every piece of legislation. If we were to do that, we would only be able to pass two or three pieces of legislation maximum in one year.

It takes nothing to prevent legislation from passing. However, it takes a responsible House to ensure that private members' business and government business are properly dealt with for the benefit of all Canadians.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think Liberal members still do not realize they do not have a majority government. I feel the pain they are going through now in not understanding they are in a minority government. No, I do not, by the way.

There is a phrase that goes, "Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind." That is what today's motion is all about, and I hope the member realizes and understands that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, virtually from day one, we have recognized what Canadians' expectations of this government are. It was not that long into the session that we lost a vote because opposition parties came together. I suspect that we will continue at times to lose votes. There is nothing wrong with that. It is part of what has taken place as a direct result of the last federal election.

I challenge members to recognize that not only the government was provided that message. All of us were told there is an expectation that we work together for the betterment of Canadians. That is what I am committed to doing, as is the Prime Minister.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard the member say several things, among them the word "force". He believes that the opposition would force the government to bring in time allocation.

How does he define doing politics differently? The motion before him changes how things are done. Collaboration is a two-way street.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, "differently" would mean, for example, debating this motion today without even attempting to talk to anyone in government or sitting down with government members.

I am making myself available. We can look at how to make rule changes, from which all Canadians would benefit, in dealing with the important issues that Canadians face day in and day out.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, why are we here today, talking about this motion? Let me read the motion one more time. It states:

That, notwithstanding Standing Order 81, for the supply period ending March 26, 2020, three additional allotted days shall be added for a total of 10, provided that one of the additional days is allotted to the Conservative Party, one of the additional days is allotted to the Bloc Québécois, and one of the additional days is allotted to the New Democratic Party, and, if necessary to accommodate these additional days, the supply period may be extended to April 2, 2020, and no allotted days shall fall on a Wednesday or a Friday.

The motion is clear in that we as opposition members feel that our voices have not been heard, but will be heard more clearly due to the dates we have put forward.

I have heard what the member for Winnipeg North and other Liberal MPs have said about this. They do not know why we are

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doing this. How dare we bring up such a procedural issue in the House of Commons?

It really boils down to the fact that the Liberals do not understand it. They still have that tinge of arrogance that they had prior to the last election. They still feel they are completely in charge and that the opposition is just a bother. The Liberals do not want to deal with us. The Liberals say that they want to collaborate with us, that they want to work together, because that is the message they heard from Canadians. That is not real at all. They want to collaborate when it is good for their agenda, when it involves things they want to do. They expect us to say okay. They expect us to collaborate and do as we are told. That is not right. This is about not that. This is about true collaboration on the floor of the House.

Arrogance is one word that we can use, but quite honestly it is just a misunderstanding. Government members have not quite received the message yet. It is a very tough lesson to learn and one I hope today, with this motion going forward, they will learn and understand that we have needs for our communities as well. We have constituents who have issues that need to be brought forward in this Parliament and we need the opportunity to do that. We need to know that the government is listening and that our issues will be moved upon.

I spent 16 years in the Nova Scotia legislature, many of those years as the house leader for the official opposition. There is nothing harder to deal with than a Liberal government, even a provincial one. Provincially it is the same thing. It is hard to believe. It is like déjà vu from one house to this House. I am seeing the same kind of discord happening.

I am new. I expected things to work a little differently here, but we have the same problems. The Liberals think it is all us. They think the Conservatives are against everything the Liberals do. How dare we oppose this or say that? They do not understand, particularly when we do not get the answers we want or they produce written answers to our questions that are incorrect.

We sat here through the Prime Minister's day. What a benefit that was for all of us. What wonderful answers we received from the right hon. Prime Minister.

On Wednesday, when I asked him the question about Trikafta, I have never been more embarrassed for a family to hear the kind of answer I received. I heard the member for Winnipeg North say that the government gave us the opposition day, that the government gave us the Prime Minister's question period, where he would answer all the questions. My goodness, if he actually answered a question, we might have been happy with it. Instead, we get platitudes and non-answers, and we get blamed.

The other part I find truly disheartening on the floor of the House of Commons is that the Liberals blame everyone but themselves. The Liberals have been government for five long, hard, dark years and the country continues to get behind. It continues to fail because of the inaction of the government.

Business of Supply

• (1410)

Look at the blockades. Pick a topic of today: Canadians are unhappy with the way the government is putting things forward. The government is trying to manage an economy it does not understand and issues it does not want to understand, and it will continue to blame everyone else.

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 2:15 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, March 9, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I believe that you will find unanimous consent in the House on the following motion:

That the House condemn the decal that has come out in the news today, promoting violent sexual assault towards a young environmental activist, as well as all other threats, racist and intolerant views, and attacks to which this image opens the door.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous consent to call it 2:30 p.m. at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock at 2:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, March 9, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:19 p.m.)

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