



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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CANADA

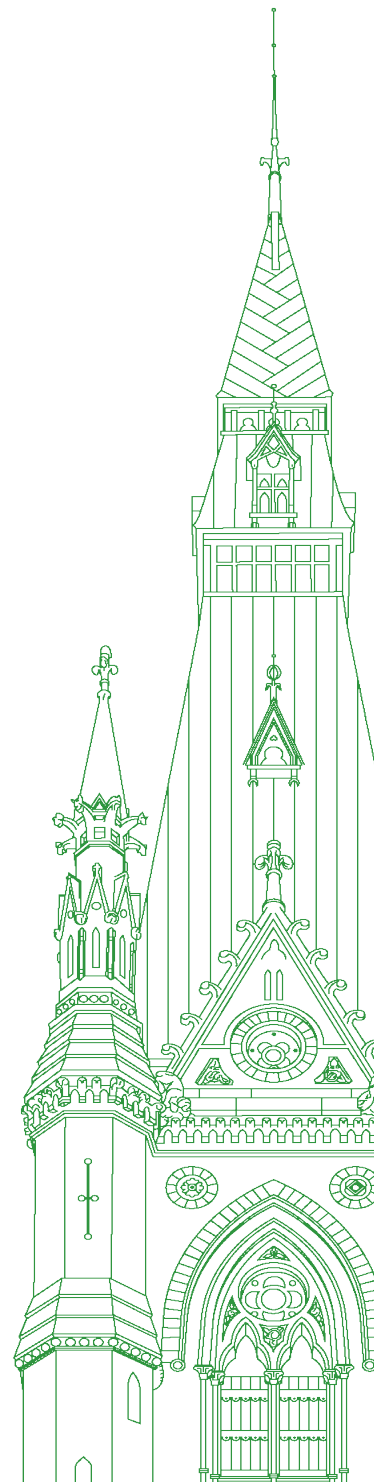
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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 16, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[English]

EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE CHARITIES ACT

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC) moved that Bill S-216, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (use of resources of a registered charity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great joy and pleasure to rise in this House to talk about a very important piece of legislation, Bill S-216.

I do, at the outset, want to talk about the budget implementation act, as well as the budget, because it claims to want to have the spirit of Bill S-216 within the budget and the eventual budget implementation act. Unfortunately, it has fallen a bit short. It is too prescriptive by nature, but as is my nature, I want to be positive. I am going to talk about Bill S-216 and the positives it has.

Perhaps members of the government are listening and they can look to amending the BIA to encourage and enlist some of the great, positive characteristics of Bill S-216, such as a focus and responsibility on accountability, transparency and support for our charitable sectors. Instead of depending on form, as the BIA currently does, why not focus on substance, as Bill S-216 does? I am an eternal optimist, and I am hoping members of the government will listen to my speech and hear some of the positive characteristics of Bill S-216, and perhaps amend the BIA to include some of those positive characteristics.

Before I get into the substance of my speech, I want to say a big thanks. This legislation, being Bill S-216, comes from the upper House, the Senate, and it is brought by Senator Ratna Omidvar. Senator Omidvar is a tremendous asset for Canada. She is working night and day, tirelessly, trying to help the people of Canada. Bill S-216 is the latest work product of her tireless efforts. I want to give a big tip of the cap to the senator for her fabulous work in helping charities and non-profits across Canada. I thank the senator for drafting this bill and allowing me to present it.

Let us get into the legislation and the context around it. Currently, the Income Tax Act is over 3,000 pages. Anyone who has heard my speeches before knows that I do believe it is due for an entire overhaul and review. In terms of the particular legislation that we are going to talk about, the Income Tax Act mentions that charities have to do their own work. It says, “carried on by the organization itself”. This, in itself, is not a bad thing. Obviously, we want to make sure that charities are accountable and responsible for their resources, because they get benefits from the Canadian taxpayer. When people write a cheque or make a deposit for a donation to a charity, and I just dated myself there by saying “cheque”, they get a receipt and the coffers of the Government of Canada are reduced.

The language of having their own activities is a challenge because it creates operational decision-making, not in the hands of a non-profit, but in a charity. Let me explain what that means. It talks about direction and control. Let us say a charity gives money to something called a non-qualified donee. No one outside of the charitable sector probably knows what a non-qualified donee means. It means anyone the charity is giving money to other than a charity itself. What this legislation says is that if, in fact, a charity wants to give resources to a non-profit organization, it has to have direction and operational control.

Let us put that into real terms. If a large charity, such as the Canadian Red Cross, wants to give proceeds to an organization, a non-profit, perhaps helping build schools in Haiti or something fabulous like that, it is subject to an incredible amount of legislation and bureaucracy, which makes it extremely difficult for those organizations to do work. This is in contrast to what happens around the world. It is actually referred to in international development circles as “the Canadian problem”. It inhibits and limits the ability of Canadian charities to do great work and to help folks around the world.

Private Members' Business

● (1105)

In contrast, other jurisdictions have taken a very different approach. While we want operational control in the domestic charity and are still putting form over substance, other jurisdictions look at it in a reasonable and rational way. Of course, they want those charitable dollars to go where they are supposed to go, to help people around the world or domestically, but they are focusing on substance, not just form and bureaucracy.

In the United States, for example, foundations can give grants to foreign entities, provided those foundations maintain what they call “expenditure responsibility.” In the United Kingdom, charities may transfer funds to foreign partners, provided those funds are used exclusively for the charitable purpose. Therefore, we can have pre-grant due diligence. To put this back into the example, instead of a Canadian charity basically having to take over a non-profit or an NGO around the world, meaning it has to approve the smallest of decisions, it could require a contract up front to make sure that the non-profit is legally required to stay within the charitable purpose. Then there is a certain due diligence. It is accountable, but there is no takeover.

Right now, Canadian charities are required to educate their project partners and stand in the position of telling this to their project partners. We can imagine a Canadian charity that wants to work or partner with a non-profit or an NGO around the world saying, “We want to help your organization, but to do so, you will have to be subordinate to us.” This consumes time and resources that could otherwise go directly to the charitable project. It also invites errors and increases the compliance risk to the Canadian charity. An overseas partner communicating with a charity from the grant-ing program could create evidence for the CRA to question it as a non-qualified donee. In other words, in layman's terms, it creates more bureaucracy and paperwork, which takes away from what the charity is starting to do and what we want those charities to do, which is to help people in Canada and indeed around the world.

What does Bill S-216 do? It creates the concept of resource accountability. Once again, it is substance over form. We want to make sure that charities are partnering with non-profits and NGOs, both at home and around the world, in a transparent and accountable way, to ensure that the end-users, the recipients, are the beneficiaries of these great actions. Right now, unfortunately, way too many of those dollars are not going to vulnerable people across the world and in Canada. They are going to lawyers, accountants and professionals who are there to try to administer this, because currently our charitable structure for allowing partnerships, both internationally and at home, is way too bureaucratic. Bill S-216 has that resource accountability, rather than putting form over substance. There has to be that due diligence, that accountability and transparency, but instead of a morass of paperwork, instead of a takeover of Canadian charities and organizations, it allows a true partnership to occur.

With respect to restraints, as we can imagine, there are specific communities where this could be even more challenging. I would point to indigenous communities. We all know about the troubled history the Canadian government has had with indigenous communities. The way the Income Tax Act works right now, if a foundation or a Canadian charity wants to work with an indigenous group

or a first nation, it would have to put the indigenous group in a subordinate position. Given the history we have as a country, one can more than understand the issues that indigenous communities would have with that. This legislation would help vulnerable people and those in challenging situations, economic or otherwise, specifically indigenous peoples and members of the LGBTQ and BIPOC communities, as well as Canadian overseas charities.

● (1110)

There is nearly unanimous support for this legislation across the charitable sectors, and stakeholders have been very outspoken in talking to us.

I would like to give a specific example, if I could, with respect to a group and how the current state of the Income Tax Act is disadvantaging charities and non-profit organizations. This group is called MakeWay. Its shared platform provides operational support, governance and charitable expertise for change-makers so they have more time to do what they do best, which is, of course, to help people.

The Income Tax Act, the way it is currently structured, requires that MakeWay undertake only projects that are its own, as evidenced by its continued direction and control. Operationally, this means that all project teams are MakeWay Charitable Society employees or contractors; that MakeWay retains all ownership of work product; that all projects adhere to MakeWay policies and procedures; that MakeWay has to be a signatory to every legally binding document, which means that leases, contracts, funding agreements and proposals are all signed by the MakeWay shared platform director; and that MakeWay approves every press release and every social media post. To understand the legal direction and control it creates, if these non-profits want to go on Twitter to talk about something, they need to get approval from the Canadian charity. This may be worse than the Liberal Party, in terms of its control. That is a little bit of humour there.

Every single contract has to be approved. As a result, MakeWay Charitable Society holds all fiduciary, governance and human resource responsibilities, at its own liability and risk. We could understand the pressure and the barriers there. That is one significant example.

There is another great example. Tanya from Black Moms Connection came into my office, and I was so thoroughly impressed. To give a little of Black Moms Connection and Tanya's story, she saw that there was an issue, that there were some Black moms out there who were struggling to get by. She started a Facebook group that grew from 400 to 4,000 people. She recognized that in this community there was a tremendous need and vulnerability.

Tanya did not just sit around or write a letter; she got right into the action. She formed a non-profit. Since then, her online village has grown to almost 30,000. It has helped hundreds of Black families across Canada, from emergency grants to buy formula, to providing emergency support for rent and mortgages, providing COVID protection and providing financial literacy programs. She is responsible for helping literally thousands in the Black community come up through society, from clinging on to that first rung of the ladder of economic success. She is doing an absolutely tremendous job, working around the clock to help members of her community. I was so thoroughly impressed.

With the challenges in the way the Income Tax Act is currently structured, she cannot receive money, because it is overly burdensome for charities. Her funding streams are greatly restricted. This story is out there a thousand different times.

We need to have sensible legislation, like Bill S-216, which puts respect back to our charitable sectors so that we could empower them to do their great work, not limit them by needless bureaucracy. Let us put substance over form. Let us put right over wrong. Let us come together as a House and pass this legislation.

• (1115)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe all members of this House, no matter what political party they are affiliated with, identify with how important charities are and the incredible work of those who volunteer their time and others, whether executive assistants or directors. It is incredible work, not only here in Canada but around the world.

That is one of the reasons why, in the budget implementation bill, we see some action to try to improve and do more enabling. Could the member provide his thoughts, as precisely as he can, on how he believes this bill would complement or enhance what is being proposed in the budget implementation bill?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I thank the government for its initial efforts. However, in multiple consultations with some of the leading stakeholders, their concerns are that the legislation is overly prescriptive. There are specific legislative requirements that will be extremely burdensome for organizations such as Black Moms Connection and others that simply do not have the infrastructure to respond to that. The resource accountability gives a broader term, and we can then put the rest of it in guidance, so we can have more flexibility and so we are not overwhelming small non-profits at the cost of their great work not being doing.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a very simple question.

Private Members' Business

First I would like to say that I am happy to see this bill back after a year. In addition to having had to face the pandemic in the past two years, non-profit and charitable organizations have been letting us know for decades that they need money to ensure the viability of community services. This bill is only the tip of the iceberg. These organizations exist because public services are inadequate.

Does my colleague agree that the budget planned to help the community after the pandemic should be enhanced by direct aid to our non-profit organizations?

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I would agree with the premise of the question that charities have been in a difficult situation because of COVID-19. There is certainly no doubt about it. I would also agree that we need to look at charitable law and the charitable sector in a greater context. I believe this is a great first step. One of the things the government could do that would not cost the taxpayers anything would be to enable a reduction of bureaucracy, which would allow charities to do more good work. If the question is whether charities have too few resources, then I agree with that.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear the thoughts of my colleague on how Bill C-19 ought to be amended to better reflect what has been put forward in Bill S-216 and how important it is to make sure that good work can be done in this sector.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, I must say it is great that all the questions have been extremely respectful, and I look forward to working with all parties in the House to potentially amend the BIA. The overall theme of what I have heard from stakeholder after stakeholder from the charitable organizations is that it is far too prescriptive.

What does prescriptive mean? It means that there are too many written requirements. Often these situations require flexibility. Of course we want to make sure there is accountability and transparency, and that all parties are agreeing to helping within a validated charitable purpose, but we can do that through guidance as opposed to creating another morass of public paperwork that puts form over substance.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this particular issue. As I said in my question earlier, there is absolutely no doubt whatsoever in my mind of the good work done by charities. After discussions with many of my colleagues within the Liberal caucus, and I am sure this is true of MPs on all sides belonging to all political parties, I can share endless examples of the good work and the deeds of charities not only here in Canada but also around the world.

If we were to look at it, what we would find is that Canadians on a per capita basis have to be one of the most generous groups of people in the world. I really believe that. I would like to cite a couple of examples. However, before I do that, I would like to recognize Bill S-216 and thank the senator for the fine work she has done in ensuring that it comes for debate in this chamber.

What we are debating today is in good part being discussed in one of our standing committees. The Prime Minister and the government recognized a while back that we wanted to make some modifications, believing that the charitable legislation in place for Revenue Canada for income tax is a fairly comprehensive system of taxation and the need for modifications in certain areas has been well demonstrated. During the pandemic, the Prime Minister, in particular, and other members of this chamber have talked about what we can learn from the pandemic so we can continue to build a better system. One of the things that has come out of that is the need to look at ways in which we can enable more power to our charitable organizations.

Today, Bill C-19, the budget implementation bill, happens to be in a committee, which provides opposition members and all members, through House leadership teams and their colleagues, the ability to contribute to the debate on how we can make some changes to the legislation that will better enable charities going forward. An opportunity for this has been made available for us because the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance brought forward a budget document through the budget implementation legislation. I would encourage members of all political stripes to contribute. As we have seen in the past, and as we will no doubt continue to see in the future, the government is open to changes and modifications to improve legislation. In fact, I understand some charitable organizations are having that dialogue now to see if there are ways in which we can improve it.

One of the charities I want to highlight concerns Ukraine. When Russia invaded Ukraine, the reaction around the world was fairly profound in the sense that Ukrainian solidarity, if I can put it that way, went well beyond the borders of Ukraine. In fact, Canada's population of Ukrainian heritage is estimated at over 1.3 million people. It captured the imagination of people from coast to coast, even those who are not of Ukrainian heritage, in what we can do as a community here in Canada to support our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, the war heroes in Ukraine. We have organizations, such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress or Canadian Red Cross, which have charitable tax receipts.

• (1125)

Canadians turn to those organizations by the thousands, and they have contributed millions of dollars. Those charitable organizations are providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine. In fact, the federal government matched funds for donations to the Red Cross. I think initially the cap was \$10 million for matching donations, which was quickly used up, so we increased the cap to \$30 million, and I believe it hit that also.

This demonstrates a couple of things for me, personally, as I know it does for my colleagues. One is that the fine work our charitable organizations is doing, in this case, for Ukrainian people in Ukraine and the bordering countries, where Ukrainians are fleeing for a safe haven, has absolutely been astounding. Arguably, it is second to very few others. That is one of the reasons Canadians have opened their hearts, wallets and purses, and that is done through charitable organizations.

I understand what the debate is today. What about those who want to be able to contribute? Staying on the topic of Ukraine, there is a new organization recently established in Manitoba called Manitoba Operation Blue Skies. My understanding is that it is 80 volunteers who have all come to the table in the last number of weeks, saying they want to participate and help the people who are looking to relocate and possibly come to Canada, at least for the short term and possibly even the long term.

Manitoba Operation Blue Skies does not have a charitable tax number, so it goes to the Canadian Ukrainian Institute Prosvita, an organization that has been there for many years and given a great deal of support in many different ways. Through the co-operation and indirect support of that organization, and there is a high sense of accountability, Prosvita is able to support Manitoba Operation Blue Skies in some of its initiatives. I do not think there is anyone inside this chamber who would not recognize the value of that.

The idea that there are organizations out there, and I use Ukraine as an example, but it is just one example of many, shows that there are a lot of people who want to do good work, whether here in Canada or internationally. They have demonstrated that, both financially and by providing resources.

The Canadian government does have a role to play, and we recognize that role. That is why it was so important that we incorporated the idea we are talking about today in the budget implementation bill, which will pass. With support, both from opposition members and from government members, the budget implementation bill, I believe, will pass.

We will see some changes, and we are going to see changes because members on all sides of this House recognize the true value and contributions made by the charitable organizations that are rooted here in Canada. Those who want to support those organizations want to be able to continue to play a vital, critical role, not only here in Canada, but also throughout the world.

• (1130)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-216, which seeks to amend the Income Tax Act.

I will begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill, which eases the fiscal framework for non-profit organizations, or NPOs. For the benefit of those listening in today, I will say that the bill relaxes certain fiscal measures for charitable organizations. Essentially, it amends the Income Tax Act to allow charities to provide their resources to a person who is not a qualified donee, provided that they take reasonable steps to ensure those resources are used exclusively for a charitable purpose.

This will enable them to enter into fairer and more effective partnerships with non-charitable organizations while maintaining accountability and transparency. Introduced a year ago, Bill S-216 is meant to resolve certain issues charities face within the current tax framework. I sincerely hope that it will be passed to help service providers in need.

Before I was elected in 2019, I worked for several years at the Corporation de développement communautaire des Hautes-Laurentides, an umbrella organization for most non-profits in the Antoine-Laurentides RCM. Many of them called themselves charities, non-profit organizations or social economy organizations, but they all had a common goal: to improve the quality of life of the less fortunate. Unfortunately, depending on their sources of income from fundraisers, donations or grants, they were concerned about the quality of their own services because of a shortage of workers. These organizations are obviously also affected by the labour shortage.

I witnessed a situation where an NPO needed a full-time employee simply to fill out applications for assistance for various programs and to report and ensure accountability, which I think is a little counterproductive when the real needs are on the intervention and response front. These organizations are constantly required to review their services. As I mentioned earlier, we need to remember that the services provided by these NPOs are offered precisely because public services are inadequate. That makes them invaluable.

As long as poverty exists, as long as governments fail to invest enough in our more vulnerable citizens, and as long as these invaluable responders are committed to helping the most vulnerable under conditions that are far from competitive, we will need to help them.

The management of the crisis made these organizations even more vulnerable. The demand for additional services increased during the pandemic, and NPOs had a very difficult time handling the situation. Their own volunteers were impacted by the lockdowns. I am thinking in particular of people aged 70 and over who had to isolate rather than provide community services. More than 73% of organizations saw their number of volunteers drop. I was there with them every week, at crisis cell meetings on Zoom. I am very grateful for Zoom, which enabled me to watch them perform miracles with so few resources. I would like to thank them. They played a key role in raising awareness about the harmful effects of the measures put in place for certain groups of people and in pointing out the blind spots in the government's response to the crisis.

The role of these organizations, which was already essential, became even more important during the pandemic. According to the Réseau québécois de l'action communautaire autonome, or RQ-ACA, three-quarters of all community organizations in Quebec witnessed a significant increase in the need for psychological support

and assistance, basic needs such as food and housing, and the need for referral to other resources.

● (1135)

It is difficult for me to hear from my former colleagues in the Quebec network of community development corporations that no fewer than 3,000 organizations are facing this challenge. Workers in the sector are on the verge of burnout. A vast majority of these organizations are beset by fatigue and burnout, like all of us, with the few resources they have. Three-quarters of these organizations are still having trouble retaining staff right now, while four out of five have difficulty filling vacant positions. The needs have not changed, people are still obviously vulnerable.

We can agree that non-profit organizations, or NPOs, are an extremely important component of our social safety net. Governments must support them and facilitate their work, while ensuring they are accountable. That is what I was saying earlier. I extend my sincerest gratitude to these organizations, in particular those in the riding of Laurentides—Labelle. I thank them for their kindness, their generosity and their love.

I would like to point out that, by the end of 2020, barely half of these organizations had been able to obtain public financial assistance. While several of them benefited from programs, this bill will help ease the administrative burden caused by the programs' complexity, as I alluded to earlier.

I must mention that, fortunately, certain programs were implemented, such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy. There are also sources of funding such as emergency federal support for organizations working with the homeless and the emergency community support fund available through the United Way, the Red Cross and community foundations.

However, according to survey data from the Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques, by late 2020, half of these organizations had not received any of the subsidies intended to support the economy during the first wave.

Having seen and experienced the challenges of poverty from the inside, before I became a member of Parliament, I can say that our organizations have difficulty getting funding because their mission requires their workers to fill out forms and ensure accountability. All of the motions introduced in the House to ease, better define or facilitate mutual financial assistance among organizations will be gratefully welcomed by us.

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Lastly, I would like to take a moment to explain to people what Bill S-216 is. It seeks to modify the definitions of “charitable activities” and to remove the requirement that activities must be related to the charitable organization’s purpose, allowing an organization to transfer funds to other organizations not recognized as charities. This is a much more flexible framework, and we are pleased with it. In order to ensure accountability, the bill requires that a charitable organization show reasonable diligence with respect to the organizations it plans to collaborate with.

In short, the Bloc Québécois believes that this modernization of the current framework will facilitate the work of NPOs, which can then provide their services more efficiently. Ultimately, Bill S-216 could make it possible to support more people in need.

● (1140)

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House to speak to Bill S-216, an important bill supporting the good work in the charitable sector.

I will begin by expressing what we have seen over the last few years, particularly during this pandemic, and how important the work of so many has been, including the many who have gone above and beyond in the charitable sector in our communities to support people in this very difficult time. We saw during this pandemic that many were forced to turn to food banks and soup kitchens and needed help during this crisis. We know that thanks to the volunteering and contributions of many, Canadian charities across various sectors were able to step up.

I recognize the important work that has been done in northern Manitoba and across the country during this very difficult time. Many charities in our communities share values, such as the importance of community, justice and partnership, and the sense of solidarity that is critical to us moving forward during times of crisis.

I also want to talk about how the government, especially over the last two or more decades, has turned to charities to take over the work that government should be doing. The government should be foremost responsible for the social well-being of all in our country. It is clear that government must be doing its part to ensure the collective good, rather than overly relying on charities to do its work. The reality is that inequality in Canada has increased over the last number of years in significant ways. Instead of the government stepping in to address that shocking inequality and the rise in inequality, it has often turned to philanthropy and the charitable sector to try to fill in the gaps, and that is not okay.

The charitable sector cannot and should not replace the government’s social mission. It should have effective tools to be able to accomplish its work. The charitable sector should not be seen as the solution to government programs, particularly government programs targeted at closing the inequality gap in our country. If social justice were fully realized through effective government policies, particularly at the national level, we would not need to rely on charities to do the critical work of feeding people, clothing people and supporting people who are on the margins. Charity is relied on by government and is not a substitute for social justice policy.

As Paul Taylor, a great activist in Toronto fighting back against food insecurity, has said, “The most effective remedy for food insecurity is also the simplest: provide people with income to purchase food”. This shows clearly that the federal government is not doing enough for people. Food banks, for example, are helping so many, not because food is unavailable in many communities, but because poverty is so high in so many places that people cannot afford to get the food they need. We must recognize that food is a right, not a privilege, and beyond food security, social well-being is also a right, not a privilege.

Because of inadequate social assistance rates provided by governments and because our social safety net has been cut and privatized, many more people in Canada in recent decades have been pushed into poverty, forced to choose between dangerous housing conditions and homelessness and between paying basic bills and the groceries they need. As we have seen during the pandemic and now with the rise in inflation and the increased cost of living, the reality is that people are suffering and families are crying out for help.

● (1145)

While charities help and do important work, we cannot rely on them to replace our collective responsibility in government. It is the federal government that should be stepping in to eradicate poverty in our country and close the growing inequality gap here in Canada.

The solution is clear: Give more to those who have less. I urge the government to take responsibility for helping those in greatest need and to help the most vulnerable with direct support. We saw that take place during the pandemic. I am proud of the work that we did in the NDP to push the government to invest in CERB and to expand supports to students, to seniors and to people living with disabilities. Unfortunately, those supports were only temporary. The reality is that Canadians are suffering and need direct income support now.

I want to acknowledge the important work of my colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who has pushed for a guaranteed livable income, and the support of many in this regard. I also want to acknowledge the important work of many in pushing for tax fairness and recognizing that the richest among us in our country are not paying their fair share. The rich and corporations ought to be paying their fair share so that money can be reinvested in the social programs that are necessary to close the growing inequality gap in our country.

Let us turn to the charitable sector as well. It has been clear, in consultations undertaken by the government and the House of Commons, that charities are subjected to outdated, restrictive and onerous rules. Their funds come from donations that are tax-deductible. However, as the rules are now, charities can spend their charitable dollars only on activities that they undertake themselves. In short, a charity must maintain a “direction and control” role in the activities carried out on its behalf and in the use of its resources by the intermediary.

These restrictions were implemented during the 1950s to ensure that these tax deductions were not diverted to other means than the charitable ones, but it is necessary to recognize that the “own activities” requirement is inefficient and unrealistic. Canadian charities must expend significant time and money to provide their direction and control requirements when they deal with what are known as non-qualified donees.

As a result, charities do not have flexibility. They have limited resources to fulfill their missions, and they are restricted in entering partnerships with other non-profits as a result. As a consequence, charities cannot fully focus on the essential mission that they have defined for themselves.

Bill S-216 addresses these shortcomings. It is a step forward in reforming the charitable sector and it should significantly improve the legislative framework for public and social well-being. It would give charities the flexibility they need on how they can enter into partnership to accomplish their charitable purpose.

Bill S-216 would eliminate the “direction and control” requirement, which would allow charities to transfer their resources to non-qualified donees as long as required measures are taken to ensure that these resources will be used only to fulfill a charitable purpose. This includes the collection of information on the identity, experience and activities of third party recipients before providing resources.

We believe that this bill can address the challenges that the charitable sector is facing. I want to acknowledge those who have come forward to support this proactive solution.

Let us be clear: The federal government has failed to meet charitable organizations' needs with what has been proposed in Bill C-19. We believe that Bill S-216 is a step in the right direction. Let us also be clear that the government's work must remain primary, and we must catch up on the gaps we have created that are pushing so many Canadians through the cracks. It is up to the government to act to address inequality and end poverty in our country.

• (1150)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be able to speak in support of Bill S-216, a bill that would do away with the direction and control requirements currently in Canadian charities law.

As I speak to this bill, I would like to recognize the excellent work of the sponsor in this place, the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South, and also to recognize the great work of Senator Omidvar, who has put this bill forward in the other place and championed it multiple times. I was very pleased to see at the beginning of this Parliament how the Senate worked very quickly

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to get a number of private members' bills that had already passed in the last Parliament quickly into this House, so that we could move them forward. I was very pleased to see the work of Senator Omidvar and the whole Senate, as well as my colleague in this place, on this important issue.

Direction and control requirements: What are we talking about? Canadians, I think, are familiar with the concept of charitable status, the fact that organizations that have been identified and qualified as charities have certain privileges in terms of being able to issue tax receipts. We broadly recognize that it is in the public interest to provide charitable status to organizations that are doing charitable work to try to support the most vulnerable, to try to support international development and to provide various kinds of services to individuals.

I see great value in charitable work, not only because of the benefits that are provided to communities through the provision of that charitable service but also through the way in which charitable organizations draw individuals into the provision of those services directly, that they create a bond within communities between those who are working to provide services and those who are benefiting from the services that are provided.

The government has to have rules around who qualifies for charitable status and who does not. That much is fairly obvious, but the government should seek to make these rules as reasonable and accessible as possible, and to minimize red tape in the application of these rules. I was very proud of the fact that, while in government, the Conservatives had a strategy around reducing red tape in the private sector. We recognized that for private business, red tape was a major impediment, and we worked to measure and reduce the overall level of red tape.

Canada needs an intentional red tape reduction strategy for not-for-profit organizations as well. We need to recognize that not-for-profit organizations that are partnering with the government, trying to access government funding, provide services or simply benefit from charitable status, often have similar concerns about the level of red tape they face and how it limits their ability to do good work, helping to strengthen and fortify our communities.

Direction and control is one example of the kind of onerous red tape that charitable organizations have to deal with. I know the member who is putting forward this bill came to it as the shadow minister for revenue for our party in the last Parliament. My point in accessing this was as the shadow minister for international development. Direction and control, in particular, is a major concern for international development organizations.

Private Members' Business

How does direction and control work? It is simply the requirement that charitable organizations have direction and control over charitable activities, that they cannot disperse money to other organizations that are not charitable organizations if the activity that is under that provision is not fully under the direction and control of that organization. It creates administrative challenges when different organizations are trying to partner together to do good work that is clearly aligned with the charitable purpose of the organization that is doing the work, because it requires the charitable organization to be fully directing and controlling that activity. That creates administrative challenges. In particular, though, it is an issue in international development or when charitable organizations are trying to work with vulnerable communities.

The best practices in international development are really focused on empowerment. It is not about having donor countries controlling the activity that is happening in another country. Rather, it is about that donor coming alongside, partnering with but seeking to support, empower and give control to the organization that is on the ground, the people who are responsible for their own development. Too often, the discourse around international development has been about the external saviour coming in and providing the solutions, when, in reality, we should be thinking in terms of people in developing countries, those who are in the act of trying to strengthen their position economically and in other ways. They are the heroes of the story. Those who are coming alongside to help and support are merely providing an assist, a supporting function, for the central role held by the people who are involved in the struggle to pursue their own development.

• (1155)

When we have policies like direction and control, which say the control has to be in the hands of a Canadian charitable organization, this perpetuates a kind of colonial structure around development, whereby the control cannot be with people on the ground; the control is with the external organization providing assistance. A problem in international development is something that I have heard repeatedly from Canadian international development sectors, who say they want to see us address the issue of direction and control.

However, it is not just a problem with international development. We can think of this as being a particular problem with charitable organizations that are partnering with minority communities, indigenous communities and others. The requirement for direction and control is also colonial in that context, because it requires that the charitable organization be directing and controlling in some sense the work of organizations that may be coming from communities themselves. Unless those communities have an actual organization that has charitable status, their ability to take control of the process is limited. There is an administrative problem, but in particular, in this sense, there is a problem with the colonial message that is sent through the structures in place in terms of direction and control.

We have been working on this issue for a number of years. I have asked questions on it in the House. I have raised the issue, and many other members have done the same. One of the points of frustration is that we talk about the importance of charities, but there does not seem to be a home in government for charities. We do not have a minister responsible for charities, so when these questions

come up there is sometimes a bit of back and forth. There is the engagement of the international development, revenue and finance departments, but we do not have a real hub in government for charitable activities.

That is an issue that needs to be addressed as well. To have a broader strategy around reducing red tape for charitable organizations, we need a structure within government that is a hub for policy and strategy around promoting and empowering charitable organizations and addressing the challenges they face. Notwithstanding those issues, we were very pleased to see that the government at least took a step in the last budget, which actually mentioned Bill S-216 and acknowledged the problem with direction and control. The foreign affairs committee in the last Parliament unanimously endorsed a direct recommendation asking the government to do away with the direction and control requirements and replace them with a new accountability structure. The foreign affairs committee specifically used the word “colonial” to describe the existing requirements.

Finally, for the first time in this budget, we have acknowledgement by the government that yes, we do have a problem with direction and control, and it has to be remedied. The budget said that the remedy the government would put forward would be in the spirit of Bill S-216, but there continues to be concern about that language, the spirit of S-216 instead of the text of S-216. Effectively, the text of S-216, in terms of replacing direction and control with an alternative accountability framework, was built up through extensive engagement and consultation with the charitable sector. It involves a strong structure of accountability whereby charities are accountable for the activities they fund but do not have to provide that direction and control.

There are continuing concerns among many in the charitable sector about the approach being taken by the government. They say the government has acknowledged the problem, but they ask whether it has actually brought forward the solution we need to see and whether it is prepared to solve the problem. To do so could and should have involved the full adoption of the text of Bill S-216 into the budget implementation act. We did not see that, so there continue to be concerns about whether the new framework will introduce a substantial level of red tape, so that we are replacing one flawed framework with another flawed framework.

The debate on Bill S-216 will continue and, in the absence of complete action by the government, the bill can and should go forward. I am hopeful that the government will take further steps from the budget, recognize that the charitable sector needs to be continuously consulted throughout this process, recognize that there is more work to do to ensure that not just the spirit but the letter and the fullest of the ideas that are present in S-216 are reflected in government policy going forward in order to empower charitable organizations, and address these problems of residual colonialism in our charitable laws.

• (1200)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

PRESERVING PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT

The House resumed from April 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (electoral representation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased today to share my time with my hon. colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

When I was asked to come to the House today to talk about Quebec's political weight, I wondered if I would be here for 10 minutes, because it is so simple; we take Quebec's weight and we maintain it. On reflection, though, I thought that if it had not been understood by now, I might have more to say than I thought in the end.

I thought I would use a bit of an educational approach. Let us go back in time to 2006. That year, the Harper government recognized Quebec as a nation in the House. After that, however, not much happened until 2021, except for the decrease in health transfers.

Last June, the House passed a motion that gave Quebec the right to amend its constitution to enshrine in it that Quebec is a nation and that its only official language is French. This meant that the Quebec nation, as well as its history and specificity, were once again recognized.

However, recognizing a nation means recognizing that it has the right to express itself in the House of Commons. It means walking the talk. The House cannot recognize a nation the way it recognizes that it is a nice day outside, that it is a beautiful Monday and that it is humid. When the House recognizes a nation, it has to act accordingly.

Now the government has introduced Bill C-14. At first, I thought that there was hope and that this bill seemed to be a step in the right direction. Still, it is a bill seeking to protect Quebec that was introduced by the Liberals and that may be supported by the NDP, so based on my experience, I had some doubts.

I opened Bill C-14, and I read that it would guarantee Quebec a certain number of seats, specifically 78, compared to the 77 seats provided for in the last electoral boundary readjustment, which reduced the number of seats for Quebec.

I would like to mention that, without the repeated interventions of the Bloc Québécois, we would not be debating this in the House today. The Liberal government would not have woken up one morning and decided that it was going to protect Quebec's weight.

Government Orders

It took the Bloc Québécois to convince it to take a step in that direction.

The problem with Bill C-14 is that it states an intention, but does nothing to accomplish it. It does not meet its own objective.

Let us continue the lesson. March 2 was a Bloc opposition day. The government knows we use these days wisely. That day, by a vote of 261 to 66, which is decidedly not a close result, since almost everyone voted in favour, apart from a certain pocket of resistance, the House adopted a motion saying the following:

That, in the opinion of the House:

(a) any scenario for redrawing the federal electoral map that would result in Quebec losing one or more electoral districts or that would reduce Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons must be rejected;

I want to point out that number of seats and political weight are not the same thing. The motion also states that the formula for apportioning seats in the House must be amended in accordance with the spirit of the motion, which was adopted by the vast majority of duly elected members.

However, we have before us a bill that does not achieve this goal. The bill does not protect Quebec's political weight because it protects the number of seats, not the proportion of seats reserved for Quebec.

I figured that either the government was acting in bad faith or it did not understand what the word "proportion" meant. My colleague from Beauport—Limoilou used to be an elementary school teacher, so I called her to ask what grade kids start learning fractions and division. She told me that it was usually in grade 3, but if the members of Parliament went to a good school, they might have learned about fractions in grade 2. I do not know whether the government is acting in bad faith or whether it does not understand.

I began listening to the Minister of Finance, thinking she must understand, because she has talked about the debt-to-GDP ratio, saying that she does not want to reduce debt, but rather the debt-to-GDP ratio. She understands that there are two components to a ratio. The Minister of Finance understands that. The same applies to per capita GDP: The ratio of per capita wealth can differ based on wealth and the number of people.

• (1205)

It is the same when the NDP talks about fuel-efficient vehicles. What they care about is how much fuel a vehicle uses to travel 100 kilometres, which provides its fuel efficiency. The NDP understands that concept when it comes to winning votes in their riding and for their base, but not when it comes to the issue of Quebec's weight.

When they are talking about hourly wages, the NDP does not tell people to earn \$5 an hour and work 70 hours a week. They say that what is important is the wages that a person earns for each hour worked. The NDP understands ratios, logic, elementary school concepts. With this bill, however, all of a sudden, the NDP members have forgotten what they learned in elementary school. They say that Quebec's political weight is not calculated as a given number of seats divided by a total number of seats, but simply as the numerator, the number of seats. I have trouble understanding that.

Government Orders

I see the hon. member for Winnipeg North. The Liberals know how much I appreciate them and their intelligence. Since I cannot believe that they do not understand, I figure they may just be doing half a job. I will give them an even more concrete example.

The number of seats for Quebec rose from 65 in 1867 to 73 in 1947, to 75 in 1976, to 78 in 2015. The number of seats increased, which is a good thing. During that time, however, the size of the House of Commons also increased, and the percentage of seats belonging to Quebec dropped from 36% to 28.6% to 26.6% to 24.9% to 23.1%.

My colleagues can surely see that the number of seats is irrelevant if the size of the House of Commons is increasing. This shows that the bill does not achieve its goal and that it does not live up to its title.

There are special clauses that provide some protection for the weight of the provinces. I have here the Canada Elections Act, and I see that New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have a senatorial clause. Nova Scotia also has a grandfather clause, as does Manitoba. Even Newfoundland and Labrador has a grandfather clause, after deciding very late in the game to become a member of the federation, and after three referendums that yielded three different answers to the question.

It is therefore not unheard of for the government to protect the political weight of a nation. Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and Yukon have constitutional protection. We are not reinventing the wheel.

This is the government's idea of protecting Quebec. The same thing always happens, and the Liberal members say nothing. Maybe they are too busy protesting Bill 96 to have time to think about this bill.

The federal government's idea of protecting Quebec is to introduce a law on bilingualism that gives equal weight to English and French in Quebec. We know that when given the option, companies choose English. It is the same thing with Roxham Road. Quebec is told no. It is the same thing for health transfers. The federal government is unreliable. We cannot depend on it.

Our seniors needed money before the election. They got a \$500 cheque before the election. However, when it comes time to protect our seniors after the election, what do they get? They get zero, zip, nada, just a pretty graph in the budget that shows that they are not doing so bad. They are drowning in inflation, but all the government will say is that it hopes they know how to swim. The Liberals are unreliable when it comes time to protect Quebec in any way whatsoever.

It is the same story with the Synergie Mirabel seniors' home project in my riding. Sixty people with diminishing abilities are waiting for the Minister of Transport to give them the right to housing. We are still awaiting an answer. The Liberals are still mucking about.

When it comes time to protect Quebec, the federal government is always unreliable. The Liberals' and the federal government's efforts to protect Quebec make me think of a saying:

Put a fox in charge of the henhouse

and you'll have chicken for dinner every time.

Well, we will not allow ourselves to end up on the dinner table. Quebec's history in the federation is a history of declining political power. That is enshrined in this bill, which is incomplete and does not do what it is supposed to. Quebec needs 25% of the seats in the House, but that is only a temporary measure.

What we ultimately want is for Quebec, as a nation, to have the right to all the tools that a nation should have. Once Quebec is independent, it will have 100% of the seats and will not be reduced to crossing the border to beg Ottawa for scraps.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, listening the member reminded me of a discussion that was held in the Prairies a number of years ago when I had a western separatist tell me that western Canada should leave the rest of Canada.

I believe we have a healthy federation with people who understand the true value of a united Canada in all regions of our country. The legislation we have before us today is there to protect the interests of the people of Quebec, just as other changes have taken place for the other provinces the member made reference to in his comments.

At times there is a need for constitutional changes, as we have seen in the past with other changes, whether they were in the territories, P.E.I. or Nova Scotia, and adjustments have been made to ensure regional interests. That is, in fact, what is happening today. We are seeing a minimum number of seats established for the province of Quebec, and that is a good thing.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, what a Monday. Only the member for Winnipeg North could tell us that the federation is healthy and he hangs out with separatists. I find that hilarious.

He voted to recognize the nation. It is not my fault that the Quebec nation belongs to Quebec and that the Canadian nation decided to have nine provinces. There are other places where nations are recognized, such as the UN General Assembly, where each one has a seat, but I can understand him not liking that. That may be why Canada has not been able to get a seat on the UN Security Council.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy hearing from my colleague from Mirabel.

I am very familiar with his part of the country, which, as we all know, is experiencing a housing crisis.

What I find harder to understand is the Bloc Québécois's attitude toward Bill C-14, which establishes a minimum number of seats for Quebec in the House of Commons. That is an important aspect.

I almost get the sense that he opposes the bill even though it will guarantee a minimum number of seats, which is something that was extremely important to Quebec.

I have lived in several parts of Québec, including Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, the Eastern Townships, Montreal and the Outaouais. I feel there is a consensus, including in the National Assembly of Quebec, that Bill C-14 on the minimum number of seats should be passed.

• (1215)

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I used to work as an educator. I taught for many years.

As I explained to the House, we still have work to do, and Bill C-14 does not meet its objectives, because political weight means a certain number of seats as a proportion of the total. Kids learn that in grade two or three.

The only thing the member's comments convince me of is that we need to ensure that education is properly funded.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

The commissioners need to work on boundary redistribution in Quebec. The bill is going to set the number of ridings at 77 or 78.

Does my colleague think it is important to set this number as soon as possible?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière, who is also my office neighbour. He knows how much I like him.

The Liberals enjoy making us sit until two o'clock in the morning. They say they like to debate and move things forward. If we work quickly and effectively, we will be able to determine exactly the right thing in time.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, of course I really liked the speech given by my colleague, who is always very passionate and very engaged.

He talked about the different areas that Quebec has to constantly fight for, such as seniors, health and language.

When it comes down to it, would the Bloc Québécois and Quebec not be better off with just a single seat, but one at the UN? He mentioned that at the end of his speech.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, spending a weekend in Charlevoix does not make one an expert on Quebec.

Quebeckers know that we can do two things at once, and they support our efforts to defend Quebec's political weight. The correct weight would be 100%, and we would no longer be here.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I obviously really enjoyed my colleague's answer.

I am pleased to be discussing this issue. I will start by making a connection with Bill C-14. The connection may be a little hard to understand at first, but my colleagues will see where I am going with this.

I am deeply outraged right now. Usually, when I am outraged, I tend to get excited and raise my voice in the House. I will try to remain calm while discussing a fundamental matter, something that happened this weekend.

Government Orders

I have been a member of the House for two years now, and I have heard many of our Liberal friends tell us that they are aware of the decline of the French language in Quebec and that its survival is a priority for them. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was the minister of official languages in the last Parliament, tried to win us over here in the House by saying that French was in danger, that her government was aware of that, and that it was going to do something about it and table a bill with teeth.

Suddenly, the Liberals called an election and everything stopped, even though they had told us that it was a very important issue for them. They called an election, and it cost \$600 million to go back to square one.

Now here we are. We have a new Minister of Official Languages who also spoke about how important the issue is and said that her government was aware of that. The Prime Minister and all of the members across the aisle said the same thing. As my colleague mentioned earlier, the vast majority of members in the House even voted to recognize Quebec as a nation whose sole official language is French.

That was a few months before the election. Obviously, they were going after seats in Quebec, in particular those held by the Bloc Québécois. They had to make a show of being interested.

For two years, the government buddied up to us, saying that it understood that French was in decline in Quebec and across Canada, and that it was going to introduce legislation to fix that. However, the federal government is not the only government that can pass legislation on French. Right now, Quebec is preparing to pass legislation on French. Quebec is trying to give teeth to Bill 101, to make French the language of instruction. Bill 101 has been undercut 200 times by the Supreme Court of Canada based on a charter that Quebec never signed.

This weekend, we saw seven Liberal members of the federal government protest in Montreal against Bill 96. By chance, although there is no such thing as chance, the members protesting in Montreal on the weekend were among the nine Liberal members who had abstained from the vote to recognize Quebec as a nation. Most of them represent Montreal ridings.

The hon. member for Vimy even posted the following on Twitter: "Today I stood with my colleagues for the Bill 96 protest."

That is something. We are working to improve the fate of French, and the government says that it is aware of the problem, but then government members go to Quebec to protest against legislation that would put some teeth back into Bill 101, teeth that it lost because of the charter.

What the member said next is particularly interesting. She said, and I quote, "Students, regardless of their background, should have access to an education in the language of their choice."

Government Orders

Bill 101 is likely the most important piece of legislation that has ever been voted on in the history of Quebec. The great Camille Laurin, René Lévesque, Jacques Parizeau and all of the MNAs and ministers that made up the first Lévesque government led one of the first reforms to Bill 101, because even René Lévesque had a problem with that. I will explain why. Before Bill 101, 90% of immigrants who came to Quebec went to school in English. People settled here and chose to learn English. We were losing the battle, and so legislation was needed.

● (1220)

Earlier, I mentioned René Lévesque. It was humiliating for him to have to legislate on an issue that is taken for granted everywhere else on earth. If someone goes to Germany, they do not ask whether they need to learn German. If someone goes to Spain, they do not ask whether they need to learn Spanish. If someone goes to Poland, they do not ask whether they need to learn Polish. In Quebec, however, the language issue was a problem, so legislation had to be passed. That is what we did.

Our Liberal friends, those who do not recognize the Quebec nation, those who have a problem with the fact that there is a common language in Quebec, are attacking one of the core principles of Bill 101, after 50 years of struggle of strife.

There are children of Bill 101 everywhere. There have been television shows on the subject. People come from around the world and learn French. Our Liberal friends want to tear that down. Personally, I think it is shameful. I am outraged. The Liberals are talking out both sides of their mouth.

Does the Minister of Official Languages agree? Does she take responsibility for members of her own government going to protest in Montreal against one of the most important laws ever passed by Quebec? I am eager to hear what the hon. Minister of Official Languages has to say.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister gave speeches with his hand on his heart. He visited my riding, Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, three times. He really wanted the Liberals to win the riding. I took them on, and I am the one proudly representing the riding of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

When the Prime Minister came to my riding, he spoke of language and culture. He said that these were two subjects that were important to the Liberals. He said that they were going to protect the language and culture. However, on the weekend, we witnessed an absolutely appalling spectacle. I am totally outraged, but I must contain myself. I am eager to hear what the Minister of Official Languages and the Prime Minister have to say about this.

This brings me to Bill C-14. In fact, the two are connected. What does the bill say? It talks about “minoritizing” Quebec. In fact, Bill C-14 institutionalizes the minoritization of Quebec.

I am certain my hon. colleague is better at math than I am, since he is an economist, but this equation is easy. Quebec has 78 out of 338 members; with this bill, it would have 78 out of 343. We would have less weight, which means that Quebec would have less clout to defend its language.

The logical corollary is that we should have more members from Quebec. It is obvious that there must be more Bloc Québécois members in the House to stand up for language and culture.

Last week we discussed Bill C-11. We heard our Conservative friends quote one single academic—St. Michael Geist, pray for us—saying that Canada was going to become a dictatorship where freedom of speech would be abolished. That is what they said. Heaven help me. I was so sick of hearing it that I was nearly ready to sign something so that they would stop repeating it. I was very close to saying yes, that is right, I agree.

It is chilling to realize that we have to fight constantly to protect culture in Quebec.

When we spoke about Bill C-11, we mentioned how Quebec artists are at a disadvantage on the major platforms. Two years ago, at the ADISQ gala, Pierre Lapointe said he had launched a successful song on social media. It was streamed one million times, but he was paid only \$500. That is outrageous.

Quebec is home to artists who are known the world over. We have filmmakers, musicians, actors and directors, including Robert Lepage, yet all this culture is wasting away because the web giants are taking up all the space.

In conclusion, Bill C-14 aims to minoritize Quebec. In its current version, it is difficult to accept. We will see how we are going to fight it.

● (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I trust that the member is familiar with Bill C-14, the bill he is debating today. In anticipation that the Bloc will be supporting the legislation, my question for him is related to whether or not he will be voting for it. Does he agree there is a need to see the bill pass so that the people of Quebec are able to see a redistribution of the boundaries?

With regard to the content of his speech, I can assure the member that our current Prime Minister, as well as Liberal prime ministers throughout the ages, has been there not only to protect the important identity and French distinctness of the province of Quebec, but also to ensure that the beautiful French language continues to grow and prosper throughout our great country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, my colleague tells me that the Prime Minister will work to preserve culture.

I hope that he will say so to the hon. member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges, the hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, the hon. member for Mont-Royal, the hon. member for Vimy, the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent and the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis, who were all present at the protest against Bill 96 in Montreal this past weekend.

Government Orders

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. He did not say much about the substance of Bill C-14, but I have one question for him.

What advice should we be giving the commissioners who will be redrawing Quebec's boundaries, in order to avoid mistakes? I am certain they are watching right now.

Could my colleague point the commissioners in the right direction?

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, my colleague asks a good question, but the essence of my speech is that we do not want to lose our political weight.

Who would want to lose political weight? Who would want to lose representation? Who would want to lose a presence here, where decisions are made that affect people's everyday lives? That is what we want to maintain. We want to maintain Quebec's political weight. Numbers are one thing. We can always discuss them, but what is essential for us is to maintain our political weight so that we can fight for the issues I mentioned.

There are about a hundred of them. The hon. member for Mirabel named several earlier. If we were not here, nothing would be done about these issues.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, the reality is that the French language is in decline in Canada. We believe this bill is essential, not only out of respect for Quebec, but for French across Canada.

Does my colleague believe that this is part of the solution for reversing the decline of the French language in Canada?

• (1230)

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, to answer my hon. colleague, I will quote Pierre Bourgault, who said in his day that to fight for French in Quebec—but this is also true for Canada—is to fight for all the languages of the world against the hegemony of one. In this case we are talking about English.

Obviously it is a problem across the country. The numbers on French outside Quebec attest to the failure of the Official Languages Act that was introduced in 1969. We have to work on strengthening it. We have to work for French outside Quebec, but working for French in Quebec is just as important.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the speech by my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, but I have a question for him.

He would like there to be more Bloc Québécois MPs, but the Bloc is already overrepresented if we are talking about proportional representation in Quebec. Under proportional representation, there would be seven fewer members for the Bloc Québécois and seven more members for the NDP.

My question is simple. Does my colleague agree with implementing proportional representation in order to have every Quebecer's vote count?

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I will answer by asking another question.

In the 20 years I spent fighting for French in Quebec, there was one thing that I found very fascinating: There were never any federalists at the protests. My hon. colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île can attest to that.

It is odd. That should be a given. Preserving culture should also be important to Quebecers who believe in Canada, but that is not the case at present. That is something that has always somewhat bothered me. I hope it will be different in the future.

[English]

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time this afternoon with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

I am glad and honoured to offer comments on Bill C-14, an act to amend the Constitution Act with respect to electoral representation. I will start by talking a bit about what is in the bill, followed by what I am disappointed to see is not in it.

As has been shared in this place, the bill focuses on ensuring that when the number of members of the House of Commons is readjusted every 10 years, provinces will not have a fewer number of representatives than were assigned in the 43rd Parliament. As their populations might grow, some might be assigned more.

This is very reasonable and has been done before, 1985 being one recent example that has been shared quite a few times in this place. In fact, a province has not lost a seat since 1966. It is reasonable that we continue to build on the principle of representation by population, while also being sensitive to regional representation issues and the size of ridings to ensure that MPs can best support their constituents.

My only question on the core substance of what is in the bill is that it refers to the 43rd Parliament specifically. My question for the governing party is this: Why not create an evergreen version of the bill? If we want the most amount of time in this place focused on the greatest issues facing Canadians, why continue every 10 years to do this process for the census review? I would expect to see parliamentarians in 10 years' time probably having a similar conversation. It seems more efficient to simply say that we would ensure no province's allocation is ever reduced. Of course, as the review is done, some allocations might be increased based on population.

Government Orders

I will now move to what is not in the bill, and I will start with promises made just a few weeks ago in the Liberal-NDP supply and confidence agreement. It included three additional promises to make elections more democratic and more accessible. I wish these promises made so recently were included. What a wonderful opportunity to follow through on these very recent promises made: expanding election day to three days of voting to make sure that more folks can get out to vote, allowing folks to vote at any polling place in their electoral district and improving the process of mail-in ballots knowing that so many Canadians across the country are looking to that process.

I have heard the governing party say that this last piece was really important and that it wanted to move more quickly on it. Well, in my view, all four of them are really important, and I would encourage the governing party to look into how quickly it can move forward on following through with the promises made just a few weeks ago.

More than that, let us recognize that the bill is really just working within an existing winner-take-all system that leads here: Millions of Canadians' votes are not reflected in the makeup of the elected parliamentarians in this place. For my part, I spent the last number of years knocking on door after door in my community, and one of the most difficult conversations I had was with neighbours of mine who told me, "You know what? I'm not planning to vote at all. My vote doesn't count. It hasn't counted before, and I have given up on the partisan, toxic nature of that place. Move on."

It was a sad moment to recognize that so many, not only in Kitchener but across the country, have just given up on our democracy. I recognize that they are looking for our parliamentarians to say that every single vote should count. Addressing this means bringing in legislation for proportional representation in the way that so many other democracies around the world have, and recognizing that the percentage of seats in this place should recognize the percentage of people who voted for a party.

The good news here is that this promise has been made before. However, in this case, the promise dates back over 100 years. It was first promised by a Liberal government in 1921. It is a promise that was repeated over 1,800 times in 2015 by the governing party, which said it would make sure that every vote counted.

• (1235)

Many Canadians are familiar with the line that 2015 would be the last first-past-the-post election. There was so much excitement. I know there are some members in this place today who have also been pushing for this over the last seven years, from all parties. In fact, a member of the Conservative Party fairly recently publicly shared her support for moving toward proportional representation.

This is why I am disappointed that seven years later, there is still no mention of proportional representation in this bill or any others, recognizing that in other parliaments around the world, moving to proportional representation has led to more diversity among elected representatives. It has led to a more stable governance. It has led to more collaborative approaches, wherein parliamentarians are incentivized to work together to get things done on behalf of constituents across the country.

Of course, it provides more power to the elector. What do I mean by that? As one example, some members of this place will know that it is a real priority for neighbours of mine in Kitchener Centre to see more ambitious action on climate. We should be addressing the climate crisis as the existential threat that it is. A recent poll showed that 66% of Canadians across the country want to see more ambition from the federal government when it comes to action on the climate crisis. Of course, that 66% looking for more ambitious action on climate is not fully represented in this place. Why? It is because we do not have seats in this place that represent Canadians across the country.

I will again put a call out to the governing party to follow through on this promise. Whether it is from seven years ago or 100 years ago, I encourage the governing party to follow through on it.

The last piece of disappointment is with respect to a private member's bill that the governing party has not yet promised to support, but I hope it does. It is Bill C-210, from the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He is putting forward legislation that other members of this place have previously put forward, including the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I believe the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

The bill calls on us to reduce the voting age to 16 years old. It is calling for this place to engage young people in their future and recognize that so much of what is discussed here, whether it is with respect to the housing crisis, the climate crisis or many of our priorities, is going to affect young people more than anyone else. Not only is it the right thing to do to align the voting age alongside so many other powerful marks we offer for young people to recognize as they grow into adulthood, but what a meaningful change it would be to ingrain voting habits at a younger age, recognizing that it is young people who are often heading off to post-secondary education.

In our current structure of allowing young people to vote at 18, often the first time to vote is soon after they have moved out into a community they might not know as well. Would it not be more advantageous for a young person to vote for their first time in their home community, where they have grown up, with a parent to have that kind of support and to ingrain good voting habits at a young age?

I will continue to encourage all members of this place to support Bill C-210. Knowing it is not included in the government's legislation, there is another opportunity for members in this place to support voting at a younger age.

I will summarize by saying again that I will be supporting Bill C-14 because it is a reasonable piece of legislation, recognizing it does have wide support from many parties in this place. I would encourage the governing party to go further and recognize there is so much more we could do specifically when it comes to ensuring that this place better reflects the interests of Canadians across the country.

• (1240)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Madam Speaker, having sat on the Special Committee on Electoral Reform with his colleague, I can assure the member that in what we heard during testimony throughout that six months, we did hear a lot about the voting age. We heard a lot about civics engagement. We heard about people wanting people to work together.

Over the last couple of weeks, I have noticed a shift. For instance, my own PMB has the support of four parties, which actually jointly seconded it. We have an agreement with the NDP on supply and confidence motions. This is what Canadians want us to do. They want us to work together.

Could the member elaborate a bit on how Bill C-14 would help reinforce the belief Canadians have that parliamentarians are here for them to work together to do what is in their best interests?

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I could not agree more with how important it is to see more respectful discourse in this place.

To the member's point, when this bill was last debated on April 7, I read some of the Hansard record on it, given that on that particular day there was another major event happening with respect to the federal budget. I recognize that for this piece of legislation there was more respectful discourse in this place. I also recognize that for private members' bills, including her own, I see opportunities for that.

I celebrate that while first past the post will never get us far enough, the supply and confidence agreement is an example of parliamentarians recognizing that this is what Canadians have voted for within first past the post. Let us see more parliamentarians working together to get things done. That is exactly what we should see here and it is what Canadians expect of all parliamentarians. For my part, that is exactly what I am committed to continuing to do.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member referenced the electoral reform committee and the study that was done. I know that the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands was on that committee. The hon. member was not here, but there was a consensus among opposition parties to bring proportional representation to the House, with the caveat that a referendum be put to Canadians with an understanding, of course, that it is not parliamentarians who own the voting system in this country; it is Canadians. It was a reasonable proposal on the part of the opposition members, yet the Liberal government voted against it at the time because ranked ballots were not its preferred choice.

I am wondering if the member could comment on his disappointment, which we all had, that we did not get to that point because of the government.

• (1245)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, while the House leader for the official opposition is right that I was not in this place, I deeply share in his disappointment over that broken promise from back in 2017.

The opportunity for moving toward proportional representation, in my view, was stated pretty plainly, as I mentioned, over 1,800

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times. In my view, we saw wide consensus from the committee and saw how clearly the Prime Minister put forward that commitment in the 2015 campaign. I note that the need for consensus was only added after the campaign; it was not one of the commitments made. The commitment made was to make sure that every vote counted and that this was the last of first past the post.

On the subject of a referendum, many across the country have been calling for a citizens' assembly, recognizing that this is a way for it to be non-partisan, to be independent, to take political interests out and to put the interests of Canadians first and foremost.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is not happy because Bill C-14 does not maintain Quebec's political weight. We would like Quebec to have a proportion of the seats, for example 25%. Instead, Quebec will keep the same number of MPs, whereas other areas will get more, which is equivalent to reducing Quebec's political weight.

Does my colleague acknowledge that Quebec forms a nation? Does he believe that we should maintain our political weight?

[English]

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I will answer in English so that I get my words exactly right.

I do recognize that Quebec is a nation within Canada. I recognize that the Bloc is concerned with this. I recognize what the Bloc shares in terms of the political weight. I also think it is important to ensure we have proportional representation across the country.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in the House of Commons. We are here today to continue the debate at second reading for Bill C-14, an act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867. Since our democratic process is the focus of this legislation, I will mention that it is always great to represent the great people back home.

It is also worth mentioning the Canadians of all ages and backgrounds from across the country who watch and follow the proceedings here in Parliament or who participate in our political system in countless other ways. This chamber truly belongs to the people, and we should keep in mind that we are discussing their business particularly today as it relates to each and every voting citizen of Canada.

They are the ones who sent us here. They begin at the age of 18, which we hope reflects a suitable level of maturity. At the point when we treat people, at least in many respects, as legal adults, they have the right to vote in this country. Each of us is supposed to have a say in our future direction as a nation. With that in mind, it remains as important as it has ever been to make sure this ability to vote is effectively and fairly represented.

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I am sure members already know, today's debate on the bill to amend the Constitution Act of 1867 does not mean at all that we are reopening the contentious constitutional debates over the last few decades. I will discuss something else related to that in a moment. Although there is no controversial amendment to the written part of our Constitution itself, that should not keep us from appreciating the fact that we are carrying out a task given under our Constitution, which is essential to it.

The year of Canada's Confederation, 1867, is referenced right there in the title of the same act, which created the federal dominion as we know it today. As Canadians who are alive now, we are continuing and developing this democratic representation, which goes all the way back to that time and even before then.

Sometimes we take this democratic institution for granted. That can be true in different ways, such as not fully appreciating that we live in a country where we have the right to vote in the first place, or when some of us do not take the opportunities to exercise the rights we have.

Here, again, we have a new example in front of us. Do we consider, realize or even wonder about how the decisions are made to create our ridings? It is fundamental to know how our system works. It determines where we vote based on where we live, and it can make quite a difference for organizing our lives as citizens at different levels.

Every 10 years, there is a redistribution of ridings. After the most recent census, there is a process carried out by an electoral boundaries commission in each province, which includes seeking feedback from the public. As with any other part of our political system, it can always be good to see our fellow citizens participate however they can. Afterwards, in some cases, there are significant changes where ridings go in or out of existence. Getting the right boundaries for each riding matters because it has to reflect a geography in a given area where local communities exist, along with any other practical realities that they have to deal with.

For example, I will never get tired of saying that life in rural ridings is quite different from life in urban ridings. There is a completely different way of life, which deserves recognition and creates unique conditions for them to be represented as well.

The riding of Cypress Hills—Grasslands, which I am proud to call home and to represent, is a perfect example of this. It has officially existed since 1997, with some variation over those 25 years. Overall, the basic structure of it has worked fairly well for our area as a whole. Covering all of southwest Saskatchewan, along the borders of Alberta and the United States, it is overwhelmingly rural.

There is a lot of farm land and many smaller communities spread out over the 78,000 square kilometres. Driving from one end to the other going across the riding takes three hours, and going diagonally, it takes closer to five hours. Commuting long distances is a fact of life for doing politics, but also for many other activities in every day life.

The city of Swift Current is the largest population centre for a wide radius, and it falls nicely right in the middle, with different parts of the riding in each direction. While meeting the people across Cypress Hills—Grasslands and working to represent them,

there has been a clear advantage of averaging the travel time out to every corner of the riding. This has allowed me to more easily move around and have town halls with constituents in all areas of the riding.

In this particular case, it is more than a practical benefit. For this one part of our province, the federal riding more or less matches a region that we just generally call the southwest. It largely captures an area that shares a common way of life and experience, which is distinct from places closer to the bigger cities. I can always go on and on about where I come from, but for now I will move on.

Getting the right number of seats matters too because we need to make sure there is fair representation among the provinces and regions, as well as for all Canadians as equal citizens. That is the concern addressed by the grandfather clause in Bill C-14, which has already received a lot of attention. From what I understand, this is, in principle, an update of a grandfather clause introduced under a previous Conservative government.

• (1250)

As I am sure we all agree, Canadians should be represented fairly in the final outcome of their vote. Balancing seats per province is another important way of making sure this happens. There certainly should be fair representation between regions, so I support Saskatchewan maintaining its 14 seats and no fewer.

However, I will note that Bill C-14 is not following the regular process of redistribution on its own. In fact, the Chief Electoral Officer's most recent allocation of seats would result in Quebec losing one seat. Coming from a province that previously lost four seats, I think it was back in 1966, I can understand their angst at the idea of losing just one seat.

What Bill C-14 is trying to do is prevent that from happening in Quebec. I acknowledge that the House already passed an opposition motion for this to happen, but I do not think that we should ignore this specific context. Coming from Saskatchewan, I understand, again, why they do not want to lose their seat, but this goes to show that there are all kinds of social factors at play when considering the issue of representation. There are many ways to look at how it works in Canada.

One of the most underrated is economic. During the town halls I mentioned earlier, and in my conversations at coffee shops, one of the most common things I hear from constituents is that riding distributions should fix the discrepancies between not only eastern and western Canada, but also urban and rural Canada. When I ask how this should happen, one of the more interesting proposals I have heard from people is to factor in GDP production to reflect the benefit of rural areas. That might be something worth considering. They are getting at something beyond total numbers of population. I come from an area with great economic output, from the agricultural and resource sectors.

To be clear, I am not saying that this is something that we need to absolutely factor in as we move forward, but it is something that I have heard in feedback from constituents as a way they see of being able to balance out, again, the power that does not exist in rural Canada. If we think about representation based on something like GDP, it paints a different picture. We might have a situation where each region strives to utilize its best potential. Quebec, for example, could keep focusing on their hydrogen potential and their green natural gas. Ontario could bolster their nuclear power and manufacturing, while the Prairies could continue to produce the food and fuel for the world.

The world embraces advancing technology, and everyone is happy. Instead, this is how our rural areas are treated politically or otherwise in return for their strong economic contributions. Way too often they are forgotten, ignored or, sometimes, flat out attacked. Along with Cypress Hills—Grasslands, there are other places with huge economic potential, such as Battlefords—Lloydminster, Battle River—Crowfoot or Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, to name a few, that are being held back by the Liberals' failed impact assessment law, which was recently deemed unconstitutional in Alberta court.

We need to think about how electoral boundaries should promote national unity, rather than worsen rural alienation, especially out west in the Prairies. It negatively affects the whole country, not just those who live there.

I hope everyone can agree on these basic principles behind the work that is going on with redistribution in our ridings. I will finish my speech by raising some points of concern with the debate so far. Right now, confidence in our democratic institutions is getting weaker, but the NDP-Liberal coalition keeps undermining public trust. As the redistribution process unfolds, we have heard an NDP member claim that the grandfather clause for Quebec is a result of their deal with the Liberals. It really does seem like a lot more is going on than just confidence and supply votes.

Canadians can only hope that the NDP, as a minority party in fourth place, does not plan to further exploit their privileged position for political gain. Meanwhile, the Bloc has said the grandfather clause is not enough for them. Instead, one member seemed to even hint that separation would be the only path forward for them.

Redistribution is not the place for pushing ideological agendas at the federal level. As it is, I will support this bill going to committee for study, and look forward to seeing what will happen when we get the bill there and having it return to this place.

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• (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in a minority situation, the government is always looking for opposition members to recognize the importance of passing legislation.

The people of Quebec are in a holding pattern because the commission needs a green light with regard to this particular legislation. Could the member provide his thoughts on how important it is that the House of Commons deals with this legislation in a quick fashion? It would be wonderful to see it pass this week, before the break. Would the member not agree that the House should do whatever it could to get it passed this week?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, when we look at the political balance in this country, where ridings are and where new ridings are going to be popping up, we see there have been a few more seats added to the west.

We need to make sure that we do the due diligence to a bill like this. I am all for working together to get bills passed, to get the bills done, but I do not think we should be rushing through a bill like this. This is a very important bill. I think my colleagues from Quebec would agree that this is a very important bill and a very timely bill. Having seen some provinces get their redistribution maps, and not every province has so far, I think there is a lot more to be done before we rush through passing a bill such as this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know if my colleague agrees that by keeping the number of Quebec MPs the same and increasing the number of MPs elsewhere, Quebec's political weight will not be maintained.

Does he agree that Quebec should maintain its political weight?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I think the decision to do what they have done with adding and subtracting seats has to do with population. I think that is a big factor that goes into it.

The bill seeks to make sure that Quebec does not lose its seats. In effect, it creates a floor of ridings across the country, with redistribution increasing seats in areas where the population has grown at a more rapid rate. I think it was something put in place by the Stephen Harper government. It has a good legacy there, and so I look forward to seeing what the new ridings they come up with would be and how that is going to impact the distribution of seats in the future as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is always great to watch how testy the Conservatives get when they find out that people can actually come to Parliament and get things done. It is a minority Parliament, and one of the principles of minority government is that people work together.

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However, what I see from the Conservatives is relentless opposition, relentless disinformation and relentless attempts to block things. We came here, and we told people that, if we were to be elected, we would get them national dental care, and we got that. While we were at it, for the people of Quebec, we said that we would make sure they would not lose a seat, and we got that. I know that upsets the Bloc because it is now sitting here doing nothing, but this is how Parliament works.

We can either show up to throw rocks, or we can get something done. We came here to get stuff done.

• (1300)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, well, the one thing they have gotten done is they sacrificed their principles on lots of other areas, so that is up to them to decide. Conservatives have supported different government legislation over time. We do not support everything the government does, but it is our job to always rise in this place, go through legislation and point out the flaws, as we have over the last couple of years. There were many times during the pandemic when we pointed out that there were some flaws with some of the support programs coming out. There was a rush to get them approved so they were just approved, but then we had to come back and relegislate, because nobody had bothered to listen to us.

When we actually do due process on legislation, we go through it and provide the scrutiny that Canadians expect the opposition to do. It does not matter what party one belongs to, the opposition's job is to scrutinize what the government is doing, not to hold its hand through the process and make sure its agenda gets through. It is to make sure that the appropriate measures are in place and that Canadians get the best possible outcome in each particular piece of legislation.

That is what I will—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is time to resume debate.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-14. I will start by talking about the principles that have always underpinned the NDP's work in the House. I will then talk about how we could adapt this chamber to reflect the values of Canadians, thereby ensuring that this place is the House of Commons that Canadians across the country truly want.

Let me get back to Bill C-14. Ever since the NDP has held seats in this House, it has fought to ensure that all Canadians are represented. We, of course, agree that Quebec should have a guaranteed level of representation in the House of Commons, and that provision is included in the supply and confidence agreement that the member for Burnaby South signed on behalf of the NDP with the Liberal government. This is why the bill before us today would ensure that Quebec has a guaranteed level of representation in the House of Commons. The NDP believes that 78 seats for Quebec is an important and fundamental principle.

As my colleagues know, when we look at the provinces and territories of Canada, such as Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the provinces of Atlantic Canada, Nunavut, Yukon or the Northwest Territories, we always see this principle of a minimum threshold of representation. It is not a new idea; it has already been implemented. In the agreement between the NDP and the Liberal Party, the NDP forced the government to act, because it is important. Obviously, the NDP will be supporting this bill because it makes sense.

Although we will be voting in favour of this bill, we must also remember that it is missing something, and that is the important notion of proportional representation. I will remind the House that a few years ago, in 2015, our Prime Minister promised that the election that had just taken place would be the last non-proportional election, a promise he was quick to break. However, if proportional representation were applied to Quebec, it would greatly change the composition of the House of Commons.

As it did again a few minutes ago during the speech by the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, for whom I have a great deal of respect, the Bloc claims that there should be more Bloc members in the House of Commons. However, that is precisely where the Bloc is failing Quebecers.

The Bloc Québécois has more members than it would have been entitled to under proportional representation, since it received far fewer votes. The Bloc would have had seven fewer MPs, so those who voted for the Bloc are actually over-represented in the House. Who would have had more MPs with proportional representation? The NDP, which would have a total of eight MPs in Quebec.

The idea of a minimum threshold for Quebec representation is important, but we need to go further. We need to implement proportional representation. If that were the case, there would be fewer Liberal members, fewer Bloc members and more NDP members, because that is what Quebecers decided in the last election.

When we look at representation in the House, we cannot forget this important element. It is not just about the number of seats. At the end of the day, the members who are elected must be elected in a way that respects the voters' choice. The NDP has been advocating for this principle for years.

• (1305)

For Quebecers, the fact that we do not have proportional representation means there are fewer New Democrats and more Bloc members in the House than there should be. Far fewer people voted for the Bloc in Quebec, so the number of Bloc members is not representative.

The same goes for the Liberal Party. There should be fewer Liberal MPs representing Quebec in the House. Here again, because we do not have proportional representation, there are more Liberal MPs in Quebec than the number of votes justifies.

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The NDP will always advocate for an electoral system in which every vote counts. That is an important principle. When we look at what is happening in other countries, where every vote counts, we see that the most progressive and innovative parties are the ones that end up with the most elected members. This extremely important element should be part of every discussion about representation.

Determining who has the right to vote is another very important element. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, British Columbia, has introduced a bill related to this issue. People 16 and 17 years of age must be allowed to vote. In a few weeks, all members of the House of Commons will be tested for cynicism. Will they say that the right to vote should be extended to 16- and 17-year-olds?

We already know that these young people are very concerned and that the decisions we make in the House will affect their whole lives. Personally, I have been active within the NDP since I was 14, and I do not accept the argument by some hon. members that 16- and 17-year-olds should not be allowed to vote because they are too young. They are already working, learning to drive and paying taxes, yet they are not allowed to vote. It is strange. It should not be this way.

That is why I fully support Bill C-210. All NDP MPs support it. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has already noted that 16- and 17-year-olds have been asking members to vote in favour of this bill. We must expand the right to vote to these people who are already fully contributing to our society.

This is an extremely important part of representation. I hope that every MP will hear the message that young people are sending and give these young Canadians the chance to vote in the next election. Since these young people will be affected the most by the decisions we make or do not make in the House of Commons, it is extremely important that they have the opportunity to have a say in their own future.

• (1310)

[*English*]

This is the fundamental question, when we go beyond the idea that certain regions of our country have minimum representation in the House of Commons. This is something that has already been granted to Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the Atlantic provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, as well as the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, an extraordinary region of our country, and the Yukon. In those regions of the country, we already have a minimum level of representation. What this bill does is simply extend that to Quebec.

It is for that reason, and for historic reasons as well. There is no doubt that Quebec represents a nation in Canada. We voted on this in the House of Commons, and it makes very real sense to adopt this bill.

However, this is not the only aspect of representation that we need to be tackling. This is where we get to the issue of a reform of our electoral system.

Members know well that if we actually had in place a proportional system of voting, with electoral reform, like so many other countries have, we would actually see in the House of Commons far fewer Conservatives, far fewer Liberals and far more New Democrats. As we know, in the last election Canadians voted in vast numbers for the NDP, and there should be over 60 NDP MPs in the House of Commons, but we do not have proportional voting. Our electoral system, first past the post, ensures that only one of the parties is represented, despite the fact that Canadians divide up in a much more even way between the traditional old parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, and the New Democrats. Having in place proportional voting, mixed member proportional representation, would make a difference in how the House of Commons is put together.

As we know, in the last two elections, we have seen minority Parliaments that Canadians have decided on, even with the first-past-the-post system. What the NDP has done with that, with the mighty strength of our 25 members of Parliament, is push the government to finally do the right thing. The confidence and supply agreement, as we have seen, has made a significant difference in the lives of Canadians.

We are seeing put into place a national dental care program, something that has been talked about for decades. Now it is finally happening. For decades, we have had a growing homelessness and an affordability crisis in housing, and now finally that is being addressed through the confidence and supply agreement. It is because it is a minority Parliament that the NDP is able to push hard so that Canadians actually get the benefits, finally, after decades of inaction, both from Liberal and Conservative governments. I do not single out one or the other. It has been lamentable, how we have seen massive giveaways to the ultrarich and to the banks and billionaires develop over time. At the same time, Canadians are being neglected. Seniors are being neglected. Families are being neglected, and young people are being neglected.

We have seen a complete lack of respect and responsibility in terms of actually ensuring a future for indigenous peoples. We have seen how, over time, our federal institutions have been eroded, but now, with two consecutive minority Parliaments, Canadians can start seeing that they can have confidence again that the government may actually do the right thing and respond to the affordable housing crisis, respond to the crises we see in indigenous communities, respond to the climate crisis and respond, as well, to the fact that most Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. Things like dental care and pharmacare would make a significant difference in their quality of life.

Putting in place that electoral reform would mean that the House of Commons would actually reflect how Canadians vote, as opposed to a first-past-the-post system where majorities are magnified. Both Conservatives and Liberals have not had 50% of the vote, but they have had far more than 50% of the power; they have had 100% of the power with majority governments. We saw how that acted out in the dismal decade of the Harper government. We have seen how far short the Liberals fell with the majority government, which did virtually nothing for Canadians.

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Now, in a minority Parliament situation, which would happen more often and more significantly under an electoral reform and a voting system where every vote counts, we would be able to achieve more for Canadians. The neglect of regular Canadians that we have seen over decades, while hundreds of billions have been given in handouts to banks and billionaires in overseas tax havens, would have to cease, because ultimately the NDP would have a greater representation in the House and be able to push hard for a better response to what working people are going through.

It is not just about electoral reform in the sense of proportional representation; it is also about giving younger people a voice. That is why I want to pay tribute to the member of Parliament for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for presenting Bill C-210 in the House. All members of Parliament will have to vote on this important initiative. Bill C-210 would give 16- and 17-year-olds the full right as Canadians to finally be able to vote in federal elections.

● (1315)

This is fundamentally important. With the climate crisis, we are seeing things change in our country. Last year, in my area of Burnaby and New Westminster and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, we saw over 600 people die in the sweltering temperatures of the heat dome provoked by the climate crisis. Many of the people who died were simply unable to leave their apartments and did not have air conditioning in place. The emergency systems were overloaded. Ambulances simply could not keep up. Firefighters stepped in. This occurred over a number of days, as hundreds of people died. I spoke with emergency workers and first responders who said that if it had gone on for another couple of days, it would have led to a collapse of our emergency response system.

Therefore, for governments to not respond to the magnitude of the climate crisis for decades is absolutely irresponsible, and I blame the Conservatives and the Liberals equally. Young people in this country understand that, so by giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote, I believe we will cause a substantial change in voting patterns and the composition of the House of Commons, because young Canadians will no longer accept an ostrich-style response to the climate crisis that is now upon us. Giving 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote gives them a stake in their own future. The bad decisions that have been made over the last few decades will fundamentally change with an influx of voters who understand what is at stake with respect to the climate crisis.

With respect to representation, this bill, in a very limited scope, does one good thing, but we expect the government to move further on keeping its promises. We all remember in 2015 when the Prime Minister stood up and announced, with the eyes of the nation on him, that it would be the last first-past-the-post election, and won a majority government as a result. He promptly broke that promise and has not had a majority government since, because what Canadians have been saying to him and to the Liberal government is that they simply will not accept a situation in which 30% or 32% of the vote gives 100% of the power. As members well know, a minority Parliament situation allows for real discussions about the future of our country and what Canadians need to be brought to the forefront of the House of Commons.

I have been in this House as an elected member of Parliament in a number of majority Parliaments, and we need to have a Parliament that reflects how Canadians vote. I hope that legislation will be forthcoming in the coming years.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the reason we have this legislation before us today is that a commission was established through the independent agency known as Elections Canada to look at the number of seats and how the boundaries would look in future elections. Upon receiving that report not that long ago, the general consensus, I believe, of the chamber, or at the very least within the Liberal caucus, was that we see this as a piece of positive legislation that addresses a specific need with respect to the commission.

My question for the member is this. How important does he believe it is for the legislation to pass quickly so the commission can continue to work on boundary redistribution in the province of Quebec, where there have been population shifts?

● (1320)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, we have seen the Conservatives stand in this House and say they support the legislation, but that they want to debate it. We have seen this since the last election, with the singular difference and distinction of the ban on conversion therapy, which was passed by all four corners of this House in December. That seems to have led to a meltdown within the Conservative ranks. Since then, the Conservatives have been blocking every single piece of legislation before the House and refusing to let anything pass, no matter who would benefit. I find that unfortunate. I hope they will see reason, stop blocking this bill and allow it to go through.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague. What does he say to people who know that their French-speaking nation is in decline, who are fighting, breathing through a straw and calling for even a modicum of respect to avoid becoming minimized in Quebec? It is all well and good to keep the same number of seats, but what about proportionality?

How are we supposed to interpret the fact that our colleagues are saying that the French-speaking nation is important when the reality is that our nation is in decline? What are we to say to that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, that is precisely my point. Proportional representation would mean seven fewer Bloc Québécois representatives in the House of Commons and seven more NDP members.

We have to respect Quebecers' choices. If we look at the percentage of votes, we see that they would have chosen to elect seven more NDP members and seven fewer Bloc Québécois members. However, the Bloc is opposed to a proportional system for Quebec and the rest of Canada.

I do not understand that. The Bloc says we have to respect Quebecers' choices. That would mean seven more NDP members if we look at proportional representation.

I do not understand why the Bloc Québécois refuses proportional representation in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the history of Canada has minority Parliaments, or at least never a majority of the population voting for one party. This actually fits with our heritage. I would like the hon. member to reflect on that. The question is whether we should be moving towards where Canadians have always wanted us to be.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I admire my colleague from Windsor West a lot. He is always very incisive and effective in the questions he asks in the House of Commons.

We have had a tradition of ensuring that the regions of our country, provinces and territories have a minimum level of representation. That has been a principle of Confederation. It is something that Canadians work together on.

The bill is an important one. The interesting thing is the refusal of the Conservatives to let it move on, to let it move to committee, to let it move through the various stages of the House of Commons. That is something that is abnormal. Conservatives in the past have tried to work co-operatively with other parties. They certainly did in the last Parliament. That seems to have stopped. I regret that, and I hope the Conservatives will start working again with other parties, allowing legislation to advance so we can get things done for Canadians.

• (1325)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I hope this works. I am going to ask my friend the question I was going to ask the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands about the ways in which our voting system tends to enforce notions of regional difference and further isolate. The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands was saying that rural Canadians do not get represented properly in this country, and partly that is because of first past the post.

In Saskatchewan, in the last election, 20% of voters voted for the New Democratic Party, but none of the members represent that particular viewpoint. If we had proportional representation, we would have members from the governing party probably in cabinet and members of other parties raising the voice of concern for more rural Canadians.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, this is an obvious scenario on which the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and I agree 100%, that our voting system is simply not working. We have representation from the older parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, that is far beyond the number of Canadians that actually voted for them, and under-representation from other parties. That includes the New Democratic Party. Fundamentally, there should be 60 NDP members of Parliament here. That is how Canadians voted, and the Green Party is another example of that, under-represented in the House of Commons. We need to make sure that representation in

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the House is proportionate to the votes that Canadians cast, and the NDP will continue to work with other parties to get to that end.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talks about co-operation and is very excited about the NDP's co-operation with the Liberals. I wonder if he has the same enthusiasm for co-operation with the provinces, which it is incumbent upon the government to undertake.

Prior to the NDP's committing to support this legislation, can the member share with us what consultations, that he knows of, have taken place between the federal government and the provinces? As for the work that is already ongoing with respect to the boundaries commission, has that been adjusted, altered or worked into the planning of the potential implementation of this legislation?

Further, Canadians have a guaranteed right to representation by population. What is the member's thinking with respect to Canadians' existing rights and the government's responsibility to partner, co-operate and communicate with the provinces instead of an "Ottawa knows best" or a "Liberal-NDP knows best" approach?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I am a little flabbergasted, quite frankly. I gather, though I may have misunderstood, that the Conservative member, for whom I have a lot of respect, is calling into doubt the whole essence of how we have composed the House of Commons, including the minimum representation that Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and the territories get.

If the idea is that the Conservatives are turning against that, which the member seemed to imply, that would be a serious shift in how we have composed the House of Commons. We have given those areas of this country a minimum representation, not based on representation by population but on a varied historical background. I will have to clarify with the member later, but I hope he was not renouncing Conservative policy in that regard.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up with my hon. colleague. He raised concerns about the fact that the Conservatives seem to have lost their way as a credible voice, trying to pit region against region, obstructing work that is badly needed in the House of Commons, and now promoting crazy things like bitcoin. I guess it is fair to say that bitcoin is crazy, is it not, after the crash? However, this is their new economic policy.

Can my hon. colleague explain what has happened in the ranks of the Conservative Party?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I would simply suggest this: We should not take financial or economic advice from the member for Carleton, because if we had, we would have lost half our wealth since he began his leadership campaign.

• (1330)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

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I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-14, which talks about preserving provincial representation in our House of Commons. This is fundamental to who we are as Canada. It defines us as being equitable in how we treat Confederation. Ultimately, this is about ensuring that the overall basis of having equal representation by population is adhered to.

This act would not take away the addition of seats in faster-growing provinces such as Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, but would ensure that slower-growing provinces, such as Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, some Atlantic Canada provinces and Quebec, are not shortchanged in the seats they currently have. It goes without saying that all members of the House want to ensure that the numbers we currently have for each province are respected.

If population growth in Manitoba had not kept up over the last number of years, especially if we look back over the last two redistribution periods, and if we had kept to the strict rule of representation by population, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and other provinces may have lost seats. The voice of each province counts. Although representation by region is more adequately represented in the Senate, we need to ensure that all voices from all regions of Canada are heard here. It is for that very reason that I am standing in support of this bill. I want to ensure that Manitoba never loses a seat beyond the 14 it has.

If we look at representation by population, the average riding in Canada currently holds about 100,000 people. My riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman is currently at 109,000. It is at the upper end of the range that is allowed in redistribution, as ridings can be a maximum of 10% above or below population averages within each and every province. The average in Manitoba is now at 100,000, which is about the national average. The bill would ensure that each and every one of us here will represent about 100,000 people so that our voices are equal.

However, we know that in periods between the distribution of ridings and boundary commissions redrawing where boundaries fall, and because of new developments, faster growth in some areas and economic opportunities, riding populations often increase dramatically. We know that some of the ridings in Ontario, Alberta and B.C. represent 140,000, 150,000 or 160,000 people, so we need to make sure that we add seats and members of Parliament to those provinces so that we have an equal number of people represented per riding. That is only fair and something we need to do.

When the Conservatives were in government back in 2011, we brought forward the Fair Representation Act, which set in stone the formulas that are used as we go forward with redistributions by boundary commissions. They are ongoing right now. In Manitoba, we are waiting to hear in the next week from the boundary commission regarding how it is going to redraw boundaries in Manitoba. It is highly probable that some regions of Manitoba will see boundaries change.

One of the ridings in Manitoba where I do not believe the boundaries should be changed too dramatically is the riding of Churchill—Keewatinook Aski. Geographically, that riding represents two-thirds of the province of Manitoba. Although its population has dropped by a couple of thousand people since the last redistribution, I believe the ability to represent that large a geographic

area, which includes remote, rural and northern communities, is incredibly difficult for the member who currently represents the riding, and for any member in the future, for that matter.

• (1335)

There are several first nations there that are fly-in only. Churchill, for example, is only accessible by rail or air. Until recently, before we had the east side road built up on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, all of the first nations in that area were only accessible by winter road, by boat or by plane. It is therefore important that we take some of these conditions into consideration as boundary commissions consider their work.

Back in 2011, we added 30 new seats because we were caught in a system that dated back to 1985. Ridings were set at 308 for the entire country for that entire time. Ensuring that we can match the number of seats in the chamber with population growth is something that I find necessary and is something that realistically looks at how things are changing in our great nation.

When we look at places such as Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, population does not always keep up. We need to make sure that this representation does not slide down past where we are right now. I would hate to see the provinces of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, New Brunswick and P.E.I., which is guaranteed four seats in the House of Commons, go back to when they joined Confederation and lose seats. In reality, for P.E.I., we would only have one or two members of Parliament based on population, but the voices of members who represent P.E.I. count. We sometimes have to balance population with regional and provincial areas of interest. We need to be focused and open-minded at the same time as we talk about the changes in our boundaries.

We respect the independent boundary commissions and the work going on right now. They are going to provide opportunities for Canadians to look at how they redraw boundaries. I know there are a lot of discussions taking place over some of the commissions' reports that have already been released, including for British Columbia, Saskatchewan and other provinces. However, there is going to be an opportunity for the commissioners who drafted the first reports to hear from Canadians, whether they are community leaders, those in municipalities, us parliamentarians or those who have a very strong interest in how we conduct ourselves and how we represent areas in our regions.

When we look at our electoral districts, it is important that we look at what is important from a municipal standpoint. Rurally, boundary commissions sometimes cut municipalities in half and put half a rural municipality or half a community in one riding and half in the other. I have always advocated for the fact that it is best to keep municipalities in one riding so they are completely captured within one riding. It is better for working with members of Parliament.

We also want to make sure we look at trade corridors and communities of like interest, communities that are, for example, all agriculture-based or maybe resource-based. Maybe they are indigenous. Those communities should be lumped together to ensure that their vote matters and that through their members of Parliament, they are heard loud and clear.

I know we are not looking at whether this is a permanent solution or just a patchwork. We are concerned that this is coming up late, as boundary commissions are already completing their work, and we wonder if this is going to delay that work.

I will end with this. I am looking forward to a response from the government on how it will ensure that we are not disturbing the critical work that boundary commissions are doing right now.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to answer the member's question, it was not that long ago when the electoral commission brought forward the number of seats in the distribution of the provinces. The legislation we have today is a direct result of an independent agency, as it should be, and I suspect it will pass unanimously. That is what I am expecting to see on this legislation.

There is something I do not quite understand, and maybe the member opposite can explain to people who might be following the debate, in particular those in the commission, because this does matter. The Quebec commission requires the legislation to pass. The longer we hold off on passing the legislation, there more it could, no doubt, have an impact.

Why would the Conservative Party not want to see this legislation pass? It is not like it is that unique. We already have things of this nature for other jurisdictions. The member made reference to Manitoba, our own home province.

• (1340)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member for Winnipeg North that back on March 2, the Conservatives brought forward a motion that was passed unanimously. The motion read, "That the House oppose any federal electoral redistribution scenario that would cause Quebec or any other province or territory to lose one or more electoral districts in the future, and that the House call on the government to act accordingly."

That was on March 2. What took the member so long to bring this forward? He should not be blaming the Conservatives for holding up having a fulsome discussion on this piece of legislation, when the Liberals waited until the last minute before boundary commissions are supposed to be wrapping up their work.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for sharing in his intervention the piece on the geography of ridings. As members know, as the member of Parliament for Nunavut I have a huge riding. I have 25 mayors, 25 communities with schools and 25 communities with health centres, and I cannot visit all 25 communities in one fiscal year. It would take me more than one fiscal year to visit all of my communities, so this discussion on the barriers of geography is an important one for me.

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I wonder if the member would share more on why it is important to ensure that larger ridings have more MPs to make sure that all of our communities can be heard.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Nunavut. I have some familiarity with her riding. My mother was born in Chesterfield Inlet and spent a number of years up in Pangnirtung. It is a part of Canada that I really love.

I have travelled around a bit in Nunavut, and I know how far apart places are and how expensive it is to get from one community to another. Their voices need to be heard just as much as the voices of somebody living in downtown Toronto or Winnipeg or here in Ottawa. We have to make sure that we find ways to better communicate with our constituents and ensure that they are getting the representation they deserve.

As I mentioned in my comments earlier, Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, a northern riding in Manitoba, covers two-thirds of the province of Manitoba. In my riding, I have 70-plus communities, 32 municipalities, two first nations and 27 Métis locals, and I need to get around to them. It is difficult for me to get to every one of those communities over a year once or twice, and that is in a riding of 26,000 square kilometres. When we look at northern Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon, we see they are very challenging, and we always have to consider them as we make these types of decisions.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo encompasses a somewhat urban centre in Kamloops, but it also has a number of smaller communities, such as Vavenby, Clearwater, Barriere, 100 Mile House and 70 Mile House. I wonder if the member can comment, based on his experience, about the importance of remembering the rural areas to ensure their ongoing representation so that this is not just a focus on what might otherwise become urban sprawl in the larger centres.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I think all of us, especially those who represent mixed areas of urban and rural, do not want to allow the urban area to become a louder voice than that of the rural population. For those of us who represent rural areas, our hearts and souls will always be with the farmers and remote northern communities. We have to make sure their voices are heard loud and clear.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be participating in the debate on democracy in Canada, our electoral democracy in which every vote is to be counted correctly, but also, and this is important, in which every Canadian has access to quality service because of the presence of a member in their riding.

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There are 338 representatives in the House, and each riding has its own characteristics. There are urban ridings that are two or three square kilometres and that are peopled from one end of the riding to the other. They are densely populated. In Canada's Far North and in the northern areas of the provinces, there are vast ridings that are hundreds or even thousands of kilometres long, where people need to be represented effectively and where the MP must play a role.

For that reason, every 10 years, based on demographic change, Elections Canada assesses whether demographic weight has been maintained in all parts of Canada. This has resulted in conflicting opinions. Some will say the number of ridings should be decreased in a certain area or increased in another, and so forth.

Let us be honest. As parliamentarians, in a way, we are in a major conflict of interest. We are judge and jury. It is not up to us to define or carve out electoral districts. Of course, it would be tempting, but it would also be dishonest. Our top priority is to represent the people. That is why we need to be aware of the fact that every riding must be balanced and that every citizen has the right to a representative who can do their job properly.

In 2021, the government was taking a second go at electoral redistribution following the improvements that were made by our government in 2011 when we were in power. Some questions were raised about the electoral map and some public comments were made that were completely valid and relevant in a political debate. That recently led to the introduction of Bill C-14.

I tried to read the bill's description earlier, and I must admit that it almost put me to sleep. I will therefore summarize it in a few very simple words: The representation of every province will be preserved and no province will lose ridings. As much as possible is being done to balance that reality.

We support Bill C-14 because, as my colleague rightly pointed out a few minutes ago, the Conservatives moved the following motion in the House on March 2, 2022:

That the House oppose any federal electoral redistribution scenario that would cause Quebec or any other province or territory to lose one or more electoral districts in the future, and that the House call on the government to act accordingly.

That is exactly what the government did. Some may wonder why a bill is needed if a motion was already moved. I can already sense that Canadians watching right now are wondering that same thing. The answer is that, quite simply and unfortunately, one member denied unanimous consent for our Conservative motion that has the exact same purpose as Bill C-14. That one dissenting voice came from the Green Party.

I cannot wait to find out why the Green Party opposed a motion that would ensure that no province would lose a single seat. I am talking about the member from British Columbia and not the one from the Maritimes. If I had one thing to say about the electoral map, it would be the outrageously long riding names. I have a big problem with that, but that is my own issue. I will not get into that here.

When ridings have long names that just never end, we should do what was done in my neck of the woods, which is to just say Louis-Saint-Laurent. It is a universal name. He never harmed anyone, everyone can agree on that. If the name is too long, condense it

and choose one everyone can agree on. Several suggestions could be made. I went a bit off topic there, but I still think it is a good idea.

Getting back to the crux of the matter, I was saying that we want to preserve that. As I briefly mentioned earlier, all Canadians should be represented by their MP, but the ridings are not the same, geographically speaking.

In the case of my riding, I am very lucky, and some would say it is the most beautiful riding in Canada. I think it is, but I will let people be the judge of that. It is located on the northwestern edge of Quebec City, and the Wendake First Nation, which I very proudly represent here, is right in the middle of it.

• (1350)

My riding is about eight kilometres wide from east to west and about seven or eight kilometres from north to south. If we are being generous, with the Val-Bélair area that sticks out toward the west, it is about 20 kilometres long. In short, if I want to drive across it, there is no problem; it is a quick drive. From one end to the other, it takes me 25 minutes at most, when I have one event in Lebourgneuf and another in Val-Bélair. It is an easy drive, and it is no problem.

However, not everyone is as lucky as I am, and I am not talking about the vast ridings in Canada's north. In southern Canada, there are very large ridings in many provinces, like Saskatchewan. It is the province that is literally at the heart of our country, which is why some people have suggested that the national capital should be located there, but I will let my friends from Regina—Qu'Appelle and other areas make that case themselves.

Almost all of the 14 Saskatchewan members have very large ridings. Take the riding of Cypress Hills—Grasslands, which roughly forms a square of almost 300 kilometres by 300 kilometres. For viewers in Quebec City, that is like leaving Quebec City and going further than Montreal, almost to the U.S. border. This is a single riding, in the south of the country, not the Far North. This is a concern for many people.

Often, these are the ridings that need federal support the most, but communities with a population of 15,000 to 20,000 or perhaps less than 10,000 do not have easy access to federal services. In many cases, they have good people serving as mayors, councillors and town managers in their community. It is the federal member of Parliament who represents the entire federal government.

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I would like to mention my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques Cartier, who has a magnificent riding that stretches over 135 km from Sainte-Brigitte-de-Laval to Deschambault. Their populations may be small, but the dozens and dozens of municipalities in his riding are lively and valuable. When the representatives of these communities have to deal with the federal government, they do not pick up the phone and call the Prime Minister, as mayors of larger cities sometimes do. They turn directly to their member of Parliament. We need dedicated people. That is the balance we want to preserve. Our motion, which greatly inspired the Liberal government, was aimed at maintaining this balance, but above all at ensuring that the people are well represented and that we do not lose any members of Parliament.

We also need to remember that representation is very important. Losing a riding is like losing a piece of our democracy. That word is loaded, it is powerful, but it is particularly relevant. Some might go so far as to say that one person from an inner-city riding is roughly equivalent to three people from a so-called rural riding. However, that is not the reality because these citizens, these communities, need to have direct access to their member of Parliament just as much as everyone else. Moreover, there is the fact that several of these very large ridings that measure hundreds of square kilometres include a number of first nations. If we are to respect first nations, we must also ensure that they have proper, democratic access to this institution, to the House of Commons.

If we merge two huge ridings to make one even bigger one, we risk losing and diluting the quality of the work being done, and not because those doing the work would be doing it in bad faith or would be watering down the quality of their work. Rather, the public would be faced with the fact that they would not have direct access to their member of Parliament as often or as quickly.

That is why we are in favour of this bill. As I was saying, this bill is almost exactly the same as what we proposed on March 2. Unfortunately, that proposal was rejected by one member in the House, which is completely legitimate in parliamentary debate. That is what democracy is all about.

I look forward to hearing those who were opposed to our motion explain why they were against it at that time and why they are now in favour of the Liberal bill, which is quite similar to the motion that we, the Conservatives, moved before.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what has become very clear is that both Conservative speakers have said that they support the legislation. Both made reference to the fact that they brought forward a unanimous consent motion to do exactly what this legislation says.

We recognize the importance of passing the legislation. I thought it was virtually unanimous in the chamber. The member said there is a Green member who does not support it, but everyone else seems to be supporting the legislation. The reality is that what is preventing it from being passed today is that the Conservatives will not stop talking about it. If they stopped talking about it, we could actually pass this legislation in the next few minutes. All the Conservatives have to do is agree to allow the legislation to pass.

Will the member agree with me that it is time to pass this legislation?

● (1355)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I love the expression “look who is talking”: look who is talking about the fact that we are making speeches here in the House of Commons. He is not the king or the queen; he is the god of speakers in the House of Commons. He is speaking on everything all the time, and now he is asking questions and asking why we are talking about this. We get inspiration from the member.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, in fairness to myself, I know when to stop speaking so legislation can pass.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a nice change to see such strong agreement in this place among different parties. I am glad to see that.

I am rising to share something with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. He mentioned a few times, as some of his colleagues have, that a member of the Green Party, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, is in opposition to this motion. I want to let the member know that on that particular day, my understanding is that the reason for that was that consent was not shared beforehand, to seek that by email. We are working on that. That has been changed.

I am rising to let the member know that and to assure him, as he has been asking, that there was support from both Greens and we would appreciate being told about future UC motions.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if I misled the House when I said that the member is coming from the Maritimes. I apologize and retract my words.

I do accept the explanation from my colleague. Obviously, there is some concern. I was there. I was just feet away from my colleague from the Green Party in British Columbia. I have a lot of respect for her. She is a strong voice for Canadian democracy and I hope that this time she will support the will that we had, as Conservatives, in tabling that very important motion. I remember she said no. I also remember that from other people on the other side. I am pleased to hear that the Green Party will support the spirit of our March 2 motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with me on the following. Quebec's political weight will drop if we keep the same number of members in Quebec and increase the number of members everywhere else.

Can we count on his support to change that?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment.

I would like to come back to the debate.

Statements by Members

The motion that the Conservatives proposed would have applied to Quebec and all the provinces. However, in the March 2 debate, the Bloc Québécois suggested that the motion should apply only to Quebec.

We agreed with the principle, but we wanted it to apply to all of the provinces, which is the intent of Bill C-14. We are therefore very pleased to see that the Liberals modelled this bill on our motion. That is great because it is good for all of Canada.

I would like to remind the member that that suggestion was made during the referendum on the Charlottetown accord. As the member knows very well, Quebecers voted against it.

[English]

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. My colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent has shown himself again to be a brilliant orator.

The Liberal Party has called on the Conservatives to expedite this matter, ostensibly because democracy demands it and that is the will. What does my colleague say to the fact that the Liberal Party has curtailed and cajoled debate in this House over the last two weeks in order to further its own aims, rather than having democracy as a whole in mind?

• (1400)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about a democratic system, and that is exactly what we are talking about today, we shall respect the right of a member of Parliament to speak on an issue. That is what we are trying to have.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 125th anniversary of a remarkable organization, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, which has served the most vulnerable in our region of Windsor Essex since 1896. The Gospel of John tells us “let us not love with words or speech but with actions”.

Today, the 35 employees and 200 dedicated volunteers of Saint Vincent de Paul live those words to feed, clothe and comfort residents in need, from a food box delivery program and distributing 653 beds per year to operating store locations where residents can pick up gently used donated clothing and goods. The Vincentians embody neighbour looking after neighbour. President David Leslie says, “There is a real pride in what we have been doing serving generation after generation.”

Our community is proud of Saint Vincent de Paul and so grateful for the service and the hope that Mr. Leslie brings to our residents.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND ADDICTION

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine people driving the streets searching desperately for their child. Imagine them waiting for a call late in the night telling them that their son or daughter has been found dead. It is a pain many of us cannot imagine.

A couple of weeks ago, I hosted a very informal round table in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha, listening to parents who have a child struggling with addiction or who have lost a child to addiction. These are some of the quotes that deeply resonated with me: “Stop assuming I am a bad mom”; “No one told me what to do”; “I was waiting to be told how to fix it, but it is not about fixing them.”

I chose to run for politics to bring better awareness and treatment for mental illness and addiction. The reality is that recovery centres are desperately needed, especially in my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha, but so is a social shift to understanding that addiction is treating pain.

I urge everyone in this House to replace judgment with empathy. I urge the government to hold true to its election commitment and invest the \$4.5 billion it promised for the Canada mental health transfer.

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TOP 50 CEO AWARDS

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I joined the 2022 top 50 CEO awards hosted by Atlantic Business Magazine, where my son-in-law Justin was recognized for the third consecutive time as one of Atlantic Canada's top 50 CEOs. I am so proud of his success, including in leading Yellow Cab to transition its fleet to hybrid and electric vehicles and installing charging places in a number of properties to reduce the ecological footprint.

I was also thrilled to see Terry Paul, chief of Membertou First Nation and CEO of Membertou Development Corporation, win the CEO of the year award. Chief Paul and his community are both models to emulate and trailblazers. Thanks to his leadership, Membertou is one of the largest employers on Cape Breton Island. Having worked with him on the provincial level, and now in my capacity as a member of Parliament, I know how big an impact he has had.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating this year's award winners.

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[Translation]

FRENCH IN QUEBEC

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday there was a protest in the streets of Montreal against the Quebec government's Bill 96. It is the new version of Bill 101 that was long overdue, given how quickly English is gaining ground in Quebec.

Anyone can see that English is taking over, and anyone who cares about the future of the only francophone society in North America does not like it and would like to see measures taken to curb it. Apparently, not so for Saturday's protesters who are against Bill 96. In their view, Bill 96 deserves the harshest words, which I will refrain from repeating here, and must be fought. The most shocking thing is that the protesters included several members of the governing party in Ottawa. At least that sends a clear message: For this government, any action to defend French in Quebec will always be excessive, even when it is taken by the only government responsible for it, the Quebec government.

There is a word for that: It is called colonialism.

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• (1405)

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2022 would do many things to support people in many different ways.

I want to thank the Minister of Housing for the incredible work he has done on the housing file. I could talk about housing co-ops or a wide variety of things that enable Canadians to find a home. However, what I want to highlight is the multi-generational home renovation tax credit. It is truly an amazing program that would make such a profound positive difference. For many Canadians, having different generations live in one home is of great value. It is something that is greatly appreciated. Through this renovation credit, up to \$7,500, under a new program, would be put into place in 2023.

I would like to thank the Minister of Housing, the Prime Minister and the caucus for developing a program that would make such a positive difference for all of Canada.

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SUMMER IN WELLINGTON—HALTON HILLS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the past few years have been difficult for many organizations in Wellington—Halton Hills, especially ones that organize local events and fairs. The good news is that festivals and fairs, markets and shows are coming back this summer, events like the Georgetown Highland Games, which is taking place on June 11. It was established in 1975 and is one of the largest, single-day Highland games in North America.

Other events are also happening in the upcoming months, such as Canada Day in Glen Williams, the Fergus Scottish Festival and Highland Games, the Acton Leathertown Festival and Riverfest Elora.

These events are not possible without the hard work and dedication of thousands of volunteers, organizers and sponsors. The people behind these events are the reason Wellington—Halton Hills is such a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Let this be the summer of the great reopening.

Statements by Members

CANADIAN RANGERS

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since May 1947, the Canadian Rangers have played a critical role in the Canadian Armed Forces. They are proud to pass on their deep knowledge, which is critical to survival and navigation in some of Canada's harshest climates.

The Canadian Rangers have supported the surveillance and sovereignty of Canada's north. They have enabled a military presence in more than 200 communities in the far north and in isolated and remote areas in Canada. They have helped indigenous communities through challenges and crises. They have supported provincial, territorial and local authorities in disaster response and search and rescue, and provided assistance through the pandemic.

This year is the year of the Canadian ranger. Let us honour their place in our nation's culture and military heritage as they celebrate 75 years of excellence and service to community and country.

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ATTACK IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, we saw another horrific massacre in the United States; this time, just across the border from Canada in Buffalo. What was particularly chilling about this murder was the killer's ties to violent, far-right, white supremacist extremist ideology targeting African Americans.

Canada is not immune from this threat. We saw this in the horrific killings at the mosque in Quebec City and again last summer in London, Ontario.

We see extremist organizations continue to foment discord and hate and threaten violence here in Canada, yet there are many who question why we should focus our attention on ideologically motivated, violent extremism perpetrated by the far right and by white supremacists. This weekend's murders in the United States are a perfect example of why this focus is necessary.

We must remain vigilant and set aside our differences to curb all forms of ideologically motivated, violent extremism here in Canada. I ask that all members of this House work together to ensure that Canadians know that we are united when it comes to recognizing and addressing the threat we face from white nationalism and far-right extremists.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind folks, during Statements by Members, to keep conversations as low as they can so that people can get their statements out.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

*Statements by Members***YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH**

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has threatened the long-term health and mental health of Canada's children and youth. Since the onset of the pandemic, health care organizations have seen a two- to threefold increase in children's hospital admissions related to self-harm, anxiety, eating disorders and substance abuse.

Currently, Canada ranks 30th of 38 wealthy countries with respect to the health and well-being of children and youth, with 62% of parents reporting that their children's mental health has worsened throughout COVID. We cannot ignore these facts. It is time we provided concrete policy solutions.

Forty-eight percent of parents have sought out mental health services for their children for the first time as a result of the pandemic. In some jurisdictions, the wait time for children's mental health services can be up to two years. That is two years too long.

Budget 2022 fails to address the gaps in services for children and youth mental health. This is an investment we cannot afford to miss. For many, the effects of the pandemic will last a lifetime, but that does not mean we cannot help now. Our children and youth need us.

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● (1410)

JUNO AWARDS

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Toronto hosted the 51st annual Juno Awards, held in person for the first time in years. Our nation came together to celebrate Canada's rich and diverse music history. With talent that shines on the global stage, we can be proud of our Canadian artists. From the Fan Choice Awards to new awards like Contemporary Indigenous Artist or Group of the Year, the Junos have showcased Canadian artists and their successes in these challenging times.

Of all the wonderful achievements on display, none may be more proud than my friend, Kitchener—Conestoga's own John Bailey, who earned his eighth nomination for Recording Engineer of the Year. It is an award he has already won twice, and this is coming off his Grammy Award win last month. Our community is proud of him.

As a recording artist myself, I know that musicians do not do it just for the applause, but I invite members of this House to join me in congratulating and celebrating all of our Canadian artists for their dedication, perseverance and talent.

Congratulations to them all.

The Deputy Speaker: Again, I will remind folks to keep their conversations down.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

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GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada faces tightening fiscal pressures, ballooning debt and inflation. Deficit and debt levels are so large that

getting back to balance requires government not just to find efficiencies, but actually to do fewer things. The history of growth of government has not simply been one of government filling unmet needs; very often government has grown by displacing community, not-for-profit and other private organizations.

If we are going to reduce government expenditures while continuing to meet vital needs, Parliament needs to develop a strategy for revivifying strong communities and increasing the ability of extended families, charities, community organizations and the private sector to offer opportunity and support to people in vulnerable situations. We need to replace big government with strong community. Strong communities do not just meet individual needs; they also draw those involved into a sense of common endeavour and attach service provision to tangible, personal support.

Too often, the government measures success by how much it is spending in a particular area. This way of measuring accomplishment incentivizes government growth at the expense of community response and does not actually measure positive outcomes for individuals. The best way to reduce government spending is to replace government provision with something better.

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CARBON TAX

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the current Liberal government's recklessness has caused the price of everything to go up. People in my community are being forced to choose between buying nutritious groceries for their families and paying their utility bills.

For a lot of families, summer sports are now a pipe dream due to the high price of gas. Never before have we seen gas prices this high, and the government continues to raise gas taxes, with no end in sight. The Liberals seem to be pleased with the massive cost of fuel, because it has helped to achieve the end goal of their carbon tax: to continuously raise taxes and increase the price of fuel, so that Canadians are effectively beaten into submission and can no longer drive because they cannot afford it.

The cost of living crisis is desperately impacting Canadians, especially rural Canadians like those in my riding. They are looking to catch a break; they are looking for relief, and they are looking for someone to stand up for their best interests. Canada's Conservatives will continue to hold the government to account for its recklessness and mismanagement. We will continue to fight to make life more affordable for all Canadians.

PLACE À LA MARCHÉ

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to highlight an organization in the riding of Saint-Laurent that brightens the days of hundreds of seniors. Place à la Marche is a seniors organization that promotes healthy living by creating exercising and socializing opportunities at our local mall, Place Vertu. It caters to all seniors, but works primarily in English, being one of the only exercise groups that caters to the English-speaking community in the riding.

The group meets three mornings a week to exercise, but they know how to have fun as well, by celebrating their members' birthdays over lunch or dinner at least once a month. The group is successful at attracting new members and keeping Saint-Laurent seniors happy and healthy because of the passion and work of their fabulous volunteers, including the president, Dominic Santini; the treasurer, Bernie Weinstein; Joanne Morrison, Pressie Banequit and others. Today they have come to join us here in Ottawa, and I would like to take this opportunity to wish them a fantastic day on Parliament Hill and in Ottawa.

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• (1415)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's two largest political parties are meeting the threat of climate change with a woeful lack of ambition, action and commitment.

One party has disguised itself, trying to fit in among the environmentalists, but it cannot hide the fact that it bought a pipeline with taxpayers' money, the costs of which have gone wildly over budget. It cannot hide the billions in loans it guaranteed or its subsidies to private oil companies as they profiteer off the backs of working families.

The other party has buried its head in the oil sands, trying its best to ignore all the evidence. It has all but given up trying to have a coherent plan on confronting the climate crisis, instead wanting to increase oil and gas production and build pipelines in all directions.

We must change our course, or Canada will be witness to larger and more powerful forest fires, extended droughts, flooding and killer heat waves. The time to act is now.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, National Police Week goes until May 21. It is my privilege to work closely with people who represent police forces at all levels. I have tremendous respect and admiration for the people who do this job.

The women and men who protect us and keep us safe have to wear many different hats at once. In addition to being peace officers, they are often social workers and confidantes, and they are privy to the problems in our communities. Their courage and resilience, especially in their fight against crime, are remarkable.

Statements by Members

On-the-ground police presence, investigations and operations such as Centaure have resulted in the seizure of hundreds of weapons. Police operations save lives every day. I salute the dedication of dozens of officers in the Lower St. Lawrence region last fall who searched day and night for a child who was kidnapped in Sainte-Paule, near where I live.

Together, let us honour the sacrifices they make and the risks they take every day to protect one of our most dearly held values: our democracy.

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[English]

ZACHARY HARTMAN

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 27-year-old Zachary Hartman of Exeter was tragically murdered this weekend in my hometown of Grand Bend. A friend described him as a calm, gentle person who never went looking for trouble, but someone who would call out anything that he knew to be wrong. This is not something that anyone expects to happen when they visit our small and friendly tourist town.

We know arrests have been made, and we look for justice to be served. Our community grieves for the victim, and our most sincere condolences go to his family. I would like to thank the OPP and Anishinabek police from Kettle Point, as well as the paramedics and volunteer firefighters for their swift action. I was close by that evening and witnessed their immediate response. My heart goes out to all who knew Zachary.

Losing a young Canadian to a sudden and senseless act of violence is not something any family or community wants. At times like this, we must remember the importance of mental health. We must also denounce the rise of violent crime, gang activities and illicit drugs, which ruin lives.

I would like to ask anyone with information about the incident to call the OPP or Crime Stoppers.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES**

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that on May 15 of every year we observe International Day of Families. Families are the cornerstone of our society, shaping our country, our communities and our homes. As someone who comes from a family of 15, I always value family above anything else.

My wife, my children and my grandchildren are the greatest treasures in my life. They support me through my happiest times and pick me up when I am down. I would like to thank my family for the strength and support they have always provided.

To my friends and my colleagues in the House, let us spend today and every day celebrating, supporting and protecting the family unit. Treasures of the heart cannot be stolen.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, masks came off in Quebec this weekend, but instead of seeing smiles on people's faces, I saw worry.

The cost of living is unbelievable. It spares absolutely no one. Everything costs more. Experts say that the worst is yet to come. On top of that, gas prices have reached record highs across Canada. The worst part is that the NDP-Liberal government is happy about it.

When will the Prime Minister give Canadians some breathing room during this major inflationary crisis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely understand that the cost of living is an important issue for Canadians. We also understand that Canadians, including Quebecers, understand the importance of climate action.

Our budget includes a range of measures that will help reduce the cost of living, such as dental care, doubling the assistance provided by the first-time home buyers' tax credit and a one-time payment of \$500 to people facing housing affordability challenges.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people are tired of hearing those kinds of answers.

Do my colleagues really want to know what the Liberals think of higher gas prices? The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and member for Halifax could not have been more clear when he said, and I quote, "There needs to be a bit of pain there. That's the point of it."

The more expensive gas is, the better for the Prime Minister and his cabinet, and too bad if it hurts Canadians. That is the reality.

Is the Deputy Prime Minister prepared to come with me to a gas station and say that to the worker who has to pay \$100 to fill his tank, because gas is no longer affordable?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians are smart. Canadians know perfectly well that inflation, including high gas prices, is a global phenomenon caused by the pandemic, Putin's illegal war in Ukraine and China's zero-COVID policy.

We understand that this is making life difficult for Canadian families, and that is why our government has taken action. Our response includes, for example, increasing old age security.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Supreme Court suggested that Parliament adopt legislation to prevent anyone who commits a violent crime while extremely intoxicated from using that state as a defence.

The majority of victims of this type of crime are women. The Supreme Court's ruling has serious consequences for victims. We are prepared to work with the government on this.

Will the Minister of Justice commit to introducing a bill in the next few days to remedy this situation?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring that our criminal justice system keeps our communities safe, respects victims and holds offenders to account, all the while upholding Charter rights. We are carefully reviewing this decision to determine its effects on victims and on criminal law.

It is critically important to emphasize that Friday's decision does not apply to the vast majority of cases involving a person who commits a criminal offence while intoxicated.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that defendants accused of violent crimes such as homicide and sexual assault can use self-induced extreme intoxication as a defence, striking down a federal law supported by women's advocacy groups. Sexual assaults remains one of most under-reported crimes, according to the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics. This ruling is taking us backwards.

When is the government going to respond and put the needs of victims first?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said in French, our government is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring that our criminal justice system keeps communities safe, respects victims and holds offenders to account, all the while upholding charter rights. We are carefully reviewing this decision to determine its effect on victims, as well as on the criminal law. It is critically important, though, to emphasize that Friday's decision does not apply to the vast majority of cases involving a person who commits a criminal offence while intoxicated.

• (1425)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to provide inadequate answers to the real questions facing Canadians. We know that the current system is not set up to protect victims. The lack of self-reporting, victim fear and psychological stress are only a few of the reasons why this system is failing. Women's advocacy groups, legal experts and many others are concerned with the Supreme Court ruling. Our job is to protect victims, not add to their burdens. When will the government introduce legislation to close the loophole?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times publicly, we are investing in victims and protecting victims within our system. They are always at the forefront. This decision came out on Friday. It does propose a few ways forward. We are studying those ways forward in a responsible manner to get to a response that protects victims and eliminates gaps in our criminal law.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there were so many Liberals at the Bill 96 demonstration on Saturday that it was like being at their convention.

In attendance were the members for Mount Royal, Saint-Laurent, Vimy, Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lac-Saint-Louis, Pierrefonds—Dollard and Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle. It was quite the party.

This raises questions. Is the federal government now going to wage war on Quebec's Bill 96? If not, will the Deputy Prime Minister tell her merry band of superstars to mind their own business?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has introduced Bill C-13 to strengthen French not only in Quebec, but throughout Canada. That is exactly what we will do, while respecting the rights of all minorities.

Unlike the Bloc Québécois, our MPs are not locked up, they are not handcuffed and they are not chained to posts. They have the right to demonstrate to defend their point of view, unlike the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal Liberals are currently fighting two battles with respect to French. There are the superstars who are trying to fight Quebec's Bill 96 and a group of ministers, with their own bill, Bill C-13, who want to block one of the key measures of Bill 96, which would impose

Oral Questions

the Charter of the French Language on federally regulated businesses.

Both groups want to thwart Bill 96 or lessen its impact by promoting English as the language of work.

Do the Liberals want to defend French or further anglicize Quebec?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will point out that what these federal MPs are superstars at is defending both official languages.

We do not make a distinction, as the Bloc Québécois does. We are all proud to be Liberal MPs. The 35 MPs from Quebec are not less Québécois than the members of the Bloc Québécois just because they do not want Quebec to separate. We are just as Québécois as they are. We love French and Quebec just as much.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's shamelessness is reaching new heights in Canada. While the big oil companies are posting record profits and paying out millions in bonuses to CEOs, the government has decided that it will give these companies even more public subsidies.

In the meantime, people are already struggling to make ends meet and are now paying more than \$2 a litre at the pumps.

When will the government stop subsidizing polluters and how will it provide real help to those who are paying twice: once at the pump and again through the subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government made a strong commitment to put an end to all subsidies for the oil industry in 2023. That is a firm commitment and we will follow through.

I also want to point out that carbon capture is a very important way to reduce emissions across the country, for example, in the steel, concrete and aluminum sectors.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, gas prices are reaching record highs across the country, and costs are only expected to increase in the summer. Canadians are frustrated. After years of the pandemic, many had plans to travel across Canada to visit loved ones, but the high cost of gas is ending that dream. While Canadians are getting gouged at the pumps, big oil and gas are making record profits, and the Liberals are handing over more public money to support that profit. How about the Liberals be accountable to Canadians? When will the government make big oil and gas pay their fair share?

Oral Questions

● (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we already do that. Our government has put forward the most ambitious climate action put forward by any Canadian government in history, including a price on pollution, which is the most economically effective and powerful way to get our emissions down.

I want to just remind Canadians that we are committed to eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, and that will happen by 2023.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, gas prices are at record highs, and Canadians are suffering. As other G7 leaders take action on high gas prices, when given a chance to support a Conservative motion to give Canadians a break at the pumps by dropping the GST on fuel, the Prime Minister and his spend-DP-Liberals voted against it. This is the same Prime Minister who said four years ago in Vancouver that high gas prices were exactly what he wanted.

Does the Prime Minister stand by what he said in Vancouver four years ago?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in this House needs to be mindful of the fact that none of us should be doing Vladimir Putin's work for him, and that means we all need to recognize the reality and be honest with Canadians about the reality that inflation, including the higher price of fuel, is a global phenomenon. It is being driven by Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine. It is being driven by China's zero-COVID policy.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Europe has cancelled fuel taxes, amounting to over 20 billion euros. In contrast, the government has decided to gouge \$2 billion more in fuel taxes from Canadians. The Minister of Finance says that inflation is a global phenomenon, but when her government has a tool to curb one of inflation's main causes, she sits on her hands. This is the only government in the world increasing fuel taxes.

Will the minister pay attention to what is happening around the world and provide Canadians the same relief from inflation?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the price on pollution is such an effective economic mechanism to bring down our emissions because the money goes back to Canadian families. The member for Calgary Centre knows that in Alberta, a family of four will receive up to \$1,079. In Ontario, the province that I represent, a family of four will receive \$745. In Saskatchewan, it is \$1,100.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the objective of Canada's carbon tax is to make gasoline more expensive. The Liberal member for Halifax even said there needs to be pain at the pumps. Well, mission accomplished. The difference in pump prices between southwest New Brunswick and northeast Maine after the exchange rate is 50¢ per litre. It is \$2 in my riding and \$1.50 in Calais, Maine. Since New Brunswick's oil refinery supplies both countries with pump gasoline, that difference is all tax.

Why are the Liberal ministers and the Deputy Prime Minister not taking credit for making energy more expensive? It is precisely what they want.

● (1435)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would say a couple of things to my hon. colleague. The first is, as he should know very well, it is President Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine that has driven up gas prices around the world. We are certainly working to ensure, and have instructed the Competition Bureau to monitor the situation to ensure, there is no collusion here.

With respect to the price on pollution, I would be quite happy to have a conversation with the member so he can understand how it works. The average family gets more money back than they actually pay on the price on pollution. It is an effective way to reduce emissions, but doing so in a manner that maintains affordability for all Canadians.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think Putin's invasion affects Maine, but gas is going for \$1.88 in Saskatoon today. People have to choose between filling up their gas tanks and putting food on the table. These are hard-working Canadians who commute to work, take their children to hockey and cook meals for their families. Postponing the increase in the carbon levy is absolutely within the minister's control. She is clearly refusing to act. As a result, she is directly cutting the purchasing power of Canadians and contributing to increasing the cost of everyday goods.

Will the minister offer immediate relief to all Canadians by rolling back the carbon tax increase on gasoline?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saskatoon West began his remarks by saying he did not think that Putin had an effect on Maine. What I would like to underscore for all members of the House is that Putin's illegal war in Ukraine is having a devastating effect on the entire global economy. It is raising the price of energy for everyone. It threatens to create a famine in the world. That is what we need to be focused on. When it comes to the great people of Saskatoon, a family of four in Saskatchewan will get \$1,101 back.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, gas prices reached yet another record high this weekend, with many in Ontario and across Canada paying more than \$2 per litre. The pile-up does not stop there, with drivers being urged to brace for yet another increase. According to a gas prediction website, prices are expected to reach \$2.15 per litre for most Ontario cities by Victoria Day. While experts are urging Canadians to stay home and stop driving, countless Canadians across the country, including many in my riding, have no choice but to drive for their livelihoods.

What does the government say to hard-working Canadians who are being gouged by government inaction?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like the member opposite, I too am a member of Parliament for the great province of Ontario, and that is why I am happy to share with the constituents of the member opposite and with my own constituents the fact that our price on pollution is not only economically effective in driving down emissions, but also puts money back into the pockets of Canadian families.

In our province of Ontario, the average family of four will get \$745 back.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at well over \$2 a litre, British Columbians are paying the highest gas prices in North America. It now costs over \$150 to fill up a minivan: more than a day's wages for many Canadians. They are worried and struggling to make ends meet. Other jurisdictions have responded by cutting fuel taxes, but the Liberal-NDP coalition voted against a Conservative motion to cut gas taxes and then made matters worse by raising the carbon tax.

When will the Liberals finally cut gas taxes and give Canadians a break at the pumps?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would offer to my hon. colleague that to suggest that the rising gas prices are the result of action on climate change is just ridiculous. It shows that the Conservative Party still does not understand both how global economics work and how addressing climate change is important.

Energy consumers around the world are seeing a rise in petroleum products. Canada is not alone on this front. As we see, it is the illegal invasion of Ukraine that is driving global energy prices. We are working very hard to ensure that we can stabilize those prices, but consistent with that, we are continuing to fight climate change and, as the hon. member should know, the average Canadian family gets more money back than it pays.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind folks that turning your mike on and trying to heckle online is not acceptable either.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we saw several members of the Liberal Party of Canada at last Saturday's protest against Bill 96. As Quebecers, it was their right to attend, but it does raise a question. It is high time members understood that responsibility for the language laws that guarantee the future of the French language as the only official and shared language of all Quebecers lies only with the Government of Quebec. To be clear: As federal members, it is none of their business.

Does the Minister of Official Languages condone what these members have done?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is my colleague saying that Liberal members from Quebec are somehow less Québécois than members of the Bloc Québécois?

Is he saying that they have no say in the matter?

Is he saying that it is wrong to ask questions and to reflect the positions of some of their constituents?

Are they less Québécois than members of the Bloc Québécois or do they have the right to express their views like every other Quebecer?

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one would have thought that Ottawa had finally understood that the only official language in jeopardy in Canada is French. I thought that was clear to everyone.

However, it was not clear to the Liberal members who went to protest against a Quebec law that aims to protect French. By opposing the defence of French in Quebec, these members become little more than defenders of the anglicization of Quebecers.

That is unacceptable. Will the government commit to not obstruct the application of the Charter of the French Language in Quebec?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Liberal members, including the 35 Liberal members from Quebec, recognize that French is under threat and that more needs to be done. That is what we are doing through the excellent work of the Minister of Official Languages.

We are seeking to protect French not only at home in Quebec, but also outside Quebec. The difference between us and the Bloc Québécois is that we care about linguistic minorities, both anglophones in Quebec and francophones outside Quebec. A Quebecer is a Quebecer, regardless of the language they speak.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Let us talk about it, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals claim to be staunch supporters of minorities. However, they appointed a unilingual English lieutenant governor in New Brunswick. The courts found that choice to be unconstitutional.

Imagine. The Liberals announced that they are going to appeal. They want to maintain the right to make unilingual English appointments in New Brunswick, Canada's only officially bilingual province.

The minister keeps repeating that she is from New Brunswick. Does she agree with the decision to appeal or does she agree with us that this is a slap in the face to Acadians and francophones?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Oral Questions

Our government remains firmly committed to protecting and promoting French across the country. The decision to appeal the ruling of the Court of Queen's Bench does not in any way compromise our commitment to protecting and promoting linguistic duality, which includes our modernization of the Official Languages Act.

Going forward, our government is committed to appointing bilingual lieutenant governors in New Brunswick, starting with the next appointment process.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety has claimed numerous times that he invoked the Emergencies Act after a recommendation to do so by law enforcement. Last week, RCMP commissioner Brenda Lucki told committee that, “There was never a question of requesting the Emergencies Act,” and that she could think of no other law enforcement body requesting it, either.

Can the minister tell Canadians what law enforcement asked him to invoke the Emergencies Act?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me clarify again for my hon. colleague what the commissioner said. She said:

...what I can say is that the Emergencies Act did give us the tools that we needed...to get the job done quickly.

She said:

I can tell you from an RCMP perspective, for example, that we were in the midst of trying to enforce at Coutts and we could not enforce, because we couldn't access any tow trucks.

Those are just two very clear statements from the RCMP commissioner who explained how the Emergencies Act helped to restore public safety.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that still does not answer the question. The RCMP commissioner may have said it was necessary, but she clearly refuted what the minister's claim was, which was that they had recommended it. On May 2, the Minister of Public Safety stated in the House, “At the recommendation of police, we invoked the Emergencies Act”. On April 28, he further stated, “It was on the advice of law enforcement that we invoked the Emergencies Act.”

Can the minister back up these statements by answering my question, or will he admit that these statements were false?

• (1445)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am just finally glad that on Monday, May 16, my hon. colleague from the Conservative Party admitted that the RCMP commissioner's testimony was that the Emergencies Act was necessary in his own words. It finally happened. We have been waiting months for that admission. We invoked the Emergencies Act to protect Canadians. We invoked it and we will continue to participate now in the review exercise in a way that is transparent.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the illegal protest in Ottawa, the Minister of Public Safety said on May 2, “At the recommendation of police, we invoked the Emergencies Act”. Last week, the RCMP commissioner said in committee that there was never a question of requesting the Emergencies Act.

The question is very simple: Who is telling the truth? Is it the minister or the RCMP commissioner?

Personally, I have a lot more confidence in the RCMP commissioner.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already mentioned a few times, the commissioner said during her testimony that there were provisions in the Emergencies Act that acted as motivators and as deterrents for people to return.

What I can say is that the Emergencies Act gave us the tools we needed to get the job done quickly. Today, Monday, May 16, the Conservatives finally recognized that.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year, Chantel Moore, an indigenous woman, was fatally shot by police during a wellness check. The inquest begins today, and we hope that her family and community get the answers that they deserve. On the current government's watch, police violence against indigenous and racialized people continues to cost lives. The government is not moving fast enough with police reforms that include indigenous oversight.

When will the government act to reform policing and make sure that what happened to Chantel never happens again?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to share our sympathies with Chantel and her family. I thank the member for his ongoing advocacy, and I agree with him wholeheartedly. We need to accelerate our work when it comes to reconciliation, which does include more indigenous representation not only in the oversight of the RCMP, but in the RCMP itself. I assure him and all members of this chamber that we are working very diligently with the commissioner of the RCMP not only to do those things, but to make sure that we implement all of the calls to justice as part of the meaningful work of reconciliation.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the Nunavut Impact Review Board recommended that the government reject Baffinland's phase 2 proposal. The board said the adverse effects cannot be prevented.

People in several Nunavut communities have said that narwhal migrations have changed because of the Mary River project. The Mittimatalik Hunters and Trappers Organization has been trying to meet with current ministers for months. Marine mammals and wildlife are at risk. The livelihoods of Nunavummiut are at risk.

Will the government assure Canadians that the most-impacted communities will be heard by requested ministers?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague might know, today we launched the consultations on the first-ever national adaptation strategy. It will clearly focus on the most-impacted Canadians, which include, obviously, indigenous communities across the country and certainly racialized communities and the poorest among us. We are at the very beginning of the consultation, but I can assure the member and this chamber that the consideration of indigenous people and the people of the north, Inuit, will be taken into great consideration as we elaborate this national strategy.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a great day for Canada and our Parliament Buildings. The design competition for Block 2, directly across from Parliament Hill, has concluded and the winner was announced today. The winning design brings together the past, present and future, mixing heritage-designated buildings with modern landscaped courtyards and a public square facing the Peace Tower. The preservation of heritage features and indigenous considerations are at the heart of the chosen design.

Can the Minister of Public Services and Procurement please tell us more about this very exciting design?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1450)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Hold on a second. All of us want to hear what is happening here on the precinct.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Block 2 is one of the most prominent city blocks in the country. I was pleased to announce today that the winner of the design competition is the team consisting of Zeidler Architecture of Toronto in association with David Chipperfield Architects of London, U.K. Congratulations to them.

I wish to thank all design bidders for their participation, and give special thanks to the jurors in the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada for their hard work.

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CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, boaters in my riding have been impacted by the public safety minister's decision to suspend service at several small vessel reporting offices of the CBSA. Boaters are now required to travel many kilometres out of their way to check in. The additional travel will be a

Oral Questions

significant cost for an individual's wallet, up to hundreds of dollars per trip with these gas prices. This accomplishes nothing but punishment for law-abiding Canadians.

Will the minister reverse this decision and restore service so my residents can enjoy the summer on their small boats?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague for the question. We are, of course, in the process of opening up a number of smaller ports of entry. We made tremendous progress.

Travel and trade are finally heading back in the right direction, as a result of the good work of Canadians, and we will continue to work with all members in the chamber so smaller ports of entry are able to facilitate travel throughout the summer. We are looking forward to making that progress in due course.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two small vessel CBSA reporting sites in my riding have been closed since the start of the pandemic: one at Smugglers Cove in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the other at the Greater Niagara Boating Club in Chippawa. Their continued closure is causing all kinds of issues for Canadian and American boaters who use the Niagara River to cross between Canada and the U.S.

While there is one reporting station in Fort Erie at Miller's Creek Marina, we need to meet the demands of our boating community by having all sites in Niagara reopened. When will this happen?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, as I have just reported to the chamber, we have made significant progress in opening up a number of smaller ports of entry that involve vessel travel, and we look forward to having more good news on that front. In the meantime, we are very happy to see that trade and travel are increasing, and we will continue to make sure that we make that progress in cooperation with all members in the chamber.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we still have no answer. Does the Prime Minister know that boaters still have to travel long distances to register their boats upon returning to Canada, or is he too focused on spending time on his surfboard in Tofino? Boaters are concerned that, as the season heats up, they will be forced to converge upon a small number of vessel reporting sites, which would cause chaos and safety issues for months.

When will the government tell the CBSA to reopen all 400 reporting sites?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, just to provide members of the chamber with some concrete numbers on the progress we have made, we have seen the reopening of 86 small vessel ports, 47 small airports and four land ports.

I know that my hon. colleagues across the aisle are very anxious to see more opened, as are we, and we are working closely with CBSA, the ministry of transport and all colleagues on this side to make sure that we can get trade and travel going again.

Oral Questions

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Canadian communities along the Great Lakes heavily depend on boaters being able to cross the water from the U.S. Prepandemic, there were 400 such check-in points, and now there are 84. It has gone from 400 to 84.

Some are having to travel 76 kilometres out of the way, rather than just going 800 meters across the river. It has been disastrous for local communities, and all they have gotten from Liberal ministers are lip service and excuses for a lack of will and a lack of effort to get this done. When will the Liberal minister get this done for Canadians, fix the problem and open the check-in points? Let us go.

• (1455)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going. As I said, we have reopened 86 small vessel ports, 47 small airports and four land ports. That is not lip service. That is actual reopening progress in action.

We will continue to work with my colleagues and all members across this aisle in this chamber to get trade and travel going again.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with shootings on the rise in the Montreal area, Quebec police forces are asking for more power so they can intervene more effectively.

One tool that only Ottawa can grant is to start an organized crime registry. This would allow police to arrest on the spot any individual who can be proven to be a member of a recognized criminal group.

There is a gang war going on in Quebec and people expect the federal government to do its job. When will the minister make up his mind and give police an organized crime register?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague.

The short answer is yes.

First, we mourn the lives lost in the mass shooting in Buffalo. Our hearts go out to all the victims and survivors. These senseless killings were motivated by hatred, fear and anti-Black racism. While this act occurred in the United States, Canada is not immune to racism and gun violence in our communities.

We still have much to do to stop gun violence. We will do good work on the ground with all MPs.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the police ask for more resources to address gun violence, at the very least, they should be making use of the resources already available.

Right now, RCMP officers are deployed at the border, but they are not there to fight gun trafficking or dismantle criminal networks. Believe it or not, they are there to welcome migrants at Roxham Road.

Does the Minister of Public Safety think it might be about time we shut down Roxham Road by suspending the safe third country agreement between Canada and the United States and giving the RCMP more powers so they can finally focus on weapons?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side of the House believe in an immigration system that is just and that protects' refugees rights.

Last year alone, we worked with Mr. Legault's government to launch a program and create a pathway for refugees who help strengthen our economy. We will work with police forces, including the SQ, to ensure we have a border integration system with appropriate investments.

The Bloc needs to support our investments at the border.

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[English]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have massive lineups at airport security. Passengers are being held on the tarmac, and there are missed connections, costly delays and outdated COVID testing. Many Canadians still cannot even travel. Canada's airports are getting a reputation, and it is not a good one. The reason, according to the minister, is that Canadians have forgotten how to travel and that they are out of practice.

Is the minister going to take responsibility for his government's failure, or will he continue to blame Canadian travellers?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not a surprise that a Conservative member of Parliament would repackage and misinform Canadians about what I said. Having said that, it is really important to acknowledge the good news today, which is that more and more Canadians are travelling. That is good news.

We are seeing that the surge for the demand to travel is putting a lot of pressure on our airports and our security systems. We are making sure that we increase resources. We are working with airports. We are working with airlines to address this issue. This is a priority.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, wait times at Pearson International Airport are abysmal, and the Minister of Transport had the audacity to blame travellers. Those were his words.

Blaming the customer for failed operations is never okay. The rules and restrictions are ridiculous and out of date. The ArriveCAN app is a mess and again we see zero accountability from the Liberals. Tourism needs to recover for both our economy and our mental health. What is the Liberals' plan to manage these out-of-control wait times other than to blame Canadians?

● (1500)

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians, especially those who work in the tourism industry, saw how the government stood by them during the difficult period of the pandemic. They saw how the political opposition from the Conservatives was against providing support to those who needed it.

We will always be supporting our tourism sector. We are all excited about the travel season coming up. Canadians are travelling. We are doing everything we can to address these lineups. We are working with airports. We are working with the airline sector, and we are working with CATSA to address these issues.

* * *

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the industry committee, we heard from leaders of small and medium-sized businesses the impacts the government's policies are having on tourism operators' bottom lines. After two years of border closures, cycles of lockdowns, labour shortages and rising inflation, we heard that tourism small businesses are now concerned that things such as ArriveCAN, immigration inefficiencies and airport worker shortages will discourage tourists.

Why do the Liberals continue to double down on policies and ineffective processes that say to the world, "Canada is closed for business"?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. Only weeks ago, we had one million arrivals in Canada in one week. In budget 2022, we have \$20 million to increase indigenous tourism and \$4.8 million for Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada.

Canadians are travelling. Independent tourism numbers are up. Canada is open for business. The Conservatives do not like it, but we sure do.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, SMEs in New Brunswick know that our government is there to help them.

Last week, I was proud to announce that four businesses in my riding are sharing more than \$1.6 million for projects that will allow them to innovate, grow and create new jobs.

Could the Minister responsible for ACOA tell the House more about how our government is supporting the economic recovery in Atlantic Canada and across the country?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for highlighting how our government creates jobs and supports economic growth in New Brunswick.

Through the jobs and growth fund, we are investing in businesses that create jobs and ensuring that communities such as Saint-François-de-Madawaska and Grand Barachois are included in our economic recovery. We know that these businesses are pillars of local economies, and ACOA, along with our government, will be there to support them every step of the way.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nazifa was a 10-year-old girl whose father worked for the Canadian Armed Forces in Kandahar. She was murdered by the Taliban while waiting to come to Canada. A veterans group volunteer helping Afghans blamed an inadequate evacuation effort by the Canadian government and delays in immigration processing for the girl's killing. There are thousands more in this situation.

Will the minister show some humility and implement the Conservatives' ask for single-journey travel documents to avoid the processing delays, or will he just resort to more partisan attacks?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Nazifa's killing was a tragedy that I think on every day as we seek to develop policies that would expedite the arrival of more Afghan refugees.

However, with great respect, the hon. member's suggestion that we issue a single-journey travel document would not achieve what he says it would achieve. What the member is seeking to do is have the Canadian government issue a document that would grant permission for a person to enter a third country. Third countries remain in control of the entry requirements into those countries. We are having conversations with partners in the region, as well as organizations on the ground, to secure safe passage for as many Afghans as possible so they can achieve a second lease on life through one of the most substantial refugee commitments of any nation in the world.

● (1505)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as reported by various news outlets, the Taliban are controlling the people of Afghanistan in a very radical way. This government has abandoned our Afghan interpreter friends.

Oral Questions

We are talking about people who served Canada for years with our armed forces, people who are very well known to our military and who are already trusted by Canadian authorities.

Given that this is a matter of life and death, can the minister explain why they cannot come to Canada right away, while their refugee claims are being processed?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that in fact many of those who have served Canada have already arrived in our country. Just last week, the most recent charter plane carried approximately 330 government-assisted refugees who have come to Canada as a result of their service to our effort in Afghanistan during our mission there.

We are going to continue to do whatever we can to make sure that we deliver on our commitment to resettle 40,000 Afghan refugees, which I would remind all members of the House remains one of the most substantial commitments of any nation in the world. There is much work to do, but the situation on the ground in Afghanistan is heartbreaking. That is why we have made such a substantial commitment.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Afghan interpreters are dying. The ministers says that many have arrived, yet only 31% of the number the government assured us would come have arrived. However, the government gave a standing ovation just last week to the immigration minister. Shame on them.

The government called an election as Kabul was falling. People were dying, and people continue to die. Shame on them.

What do we get now? Partisan rhetoric from the immigration minister. Will the immigration minister and the government put aside their partisan rhetoric and get vulnerable Afghans to Canada now?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration.

We are having Internet problems with the hon. minister's connection.

I think we have the minister back.

The hon. Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great respect to the hon. member, there are now more than 13,000 Afghan refugees who have arrived in Canada [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The Deputy Speaker: We are going to go to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if it were a matter of will, there would be 40,000 Afghan refugees here already. The reality is that every step of the way we are facing obstacles that were not present in other resettlement efforts. There are a number of factors that we do not fully control, such as safe passage out of Afghanistan and the ability of Afghans

who want to resettle to leave the country. We are committed to 40,000, and we will bring 40,000 Afghan refugees to Canada.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we emerge from the pandemic, our focus is on creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth and making life more affordable for Canadians. In order to do this, we know that we need to support and modernize our traditional industries, such as the auto and aerospace industries, while also laying the groundwork for Canada to become a global leader in new and emerging sectors, including EVs, quantum computing, AI and clean tech.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry kindly update this House on how this government is working to attract more investment to Canada that will create well-paying jobs and spur economic growth?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will do that with pleasure, but let me first thank the member for his excellent work and his hard-working attitude on this file.

We all know in this House that Canada is one of the best places in the world to do business. That is why I travelled to the EU recently to make the case for Canada as a premier investment destination for clean technology, the automotive sector and EV batteries. Moreover, I also met with our G7 counterparts to ensure that everyone can benefit from the new digital technologies that will drive innovation and growth in this country.

* * *

● (1510)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the horrendous killing of beloved Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is unacceptable and blatantly violates the protection of journalists. The attack on her funeral procession by Israeli security forces a few days later was abhorrent. The world is outraged. The U.S., the UN and the EU have called for an independent investigation. Will the government condemn these horrific actions and immediately join the call for a truly international independent investigation?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would hope I speak for every member of this House in expressing the outrage we have all shared with respect to the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh. It was an outrage that affected our deepest sense of humanity, as she was simply doing her job and was killed. Our hearts are with her family, friends, colleagues and those who mourn the loss of the work she was doing.

Canada has called for a thorough investigation into this killing, such that people will have confidence in its findings. We will continue to advocate for that and ensure that the rights of journalists are protected this day and every day.

* * *

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a government bill on electoral representation, but there is no mention in it of electoral reform or proportional representation. Back in 2015, the Prime Minister promised over 1,800 times that he would make every vote count. Seven years later, we still do not have any legislation or indication from the governing party that it will follow through on these promises. Will the federal government support an independent, non-partisan national citizens assembly on electoral reform?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his continued interest in improving Canadian democracy. I would urge him to work with us to pass Bill C-14, which, as he correctly noted, is before the House of Commons now, to ensure that every province has the right representation in the electoral boundaries redistribution process under way.

I know he is very excited to have the report from the Chief Electoral Officer on the most recent election. We share that excitement, and we look forward to working with all colleagues in this House to make elections more accessible in every possible way.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw something to your attention. I am sure you saw that the member for Waterloo was in violation of Standing Order 16(2) and Standing Order 16(3), which state:

(2) When a member is speaking, no member shall pass between that member and the chair, nor interrupt him or her, except to raise a point of order.

(3) No member may pass between the chair and the table, nor between the chair and the mace when the mace has been taken off the table by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The member for Waterloo definitely crossed between you and the table when the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry was speaking. We need to maintain decorum here, as you often try, and the member for Waterloo definitely turned the tables today.

The Deputy Speaker: I believe the member for Waterloo has a comment on this.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did. I was in the way, but I wish the member would spend more time actually advancing legislation improving the lives of Canadians in place of these points of order.

I apologize for causing him such—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Points of Order

There are standing orders and rules of the House. Members should not pass between the Chair and the speaker, and of course the mace as well. Let us all try to follow that practice.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

There have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: That this House reiterate that Quebec is the sole master of its language policy and that it call on the federal government to not impede or restrict—

The Deputy Speaker: I am already hearing some nays, so there were no discussions.

* * *

[English]

ATTACK IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations with other parties, and I believe if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion:

That the House:

express its horror at the hate-fueled mass shooting by a white supremacist in Buffalo, New York;

extend its deepest condolences to the families, friends and communities who lost loved ones; and

reaffirm the need to confront racism, white supremacy and hate in all their forms.

• (1515)

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

Hearing no dissenting voice, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also rise on a point of order.

[Translation]

It is about unanimous consent.

[English]

In the debate earlier today, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent said several times that I opposed something that I had not opposed.

I want to put on the record that when there is consultation between the parties, there needs to be consultation. I not only did not get advance notice, but I did not hear what the member for Mégantic—L'Érable said. I have expressed it to the member for Mégantic—L'Érable and he understands—

An hon. member: Debate.

Business of Supply

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but this is not debate. This is a point of order, because I have been denied unanimous consent on every non-controversial and sometimes deeply personal matter, such as being able to rise to pay tribute to my friend of 40 years—

The Deputy Speaker: I want to make one comment on this before I recognize a few other people.

Unanimous consent motions are being abused in the House of Commons. Those motions used to be before question period, and a number of years ago the House adopted the forum to use Statements by Members. I urge each and every member of the House of Commons to use Statements by Members to get their points across rather than using unanimous consent motions as they are being used today.

I cannot stop it and it will continue to happen, I am sure, but I do hope we use them for the opportunity they actually are, which is to get the unanimous consent of the House.

* * *

[Translation]

ATTACK IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK

The Deputy Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all the parties in the House, I understand that there is unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the shooting in Buffalo, New York.

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CANADA-PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONSHIP

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:19 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills relating to the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 90)

YEAS**Members**

Aitchison	Albas
Allison	Angus
Arnold	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Hughes
Idlout	Jeneroux
Johns	Julian
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Masse	Mathysen
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McKay	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seebach	Shipley
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné

Singh	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zarrillo	Zimmer— 168

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Boissonnault
Bradford	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskind-Smith
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garneau
Gerretsen	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Jones	Jowhari
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuire	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao

Speaker's Ruling

Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sorbara
Spengemann	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zuberi— 155	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1535)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it at this time, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mr. Kelly McCauley for Edmonton West for Mr. Steinley for Regina—Lewvan.

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

Hearing none, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED INTERFERENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE WORK OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on May 5, by the member for Simcoe—Grey concerning alleged ministerial interference in the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

Routine Proceedings

When presenting his question of privilege, the member explained that he had received an email chain meant for members of the Liberal Party in connection with the preparation of instructions for the draft of the committee's report. While recognizing that this is normal party practice, he said that he was concerned to learn that the staff of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship was actively involved in drafting these directives. The member alleged that such interference in the work of the committee meant that ministerial staff were trying to steer the direction and manipulate the analyst's work. In his opinion, he believed that this is contempt of Parliament.

For his part, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader remarked that it is normal for the political staff of a parliamentary secretary who is a member of the committee to provide advice on a report in order to ensure an approach consistent with governmental policies. He argued that they are merely suggestions and not an attempt to constrain the members or dictate the work of the committee's analyst. The parliamentary secretary suggested that it is premature to raise this question of privilege since the committee has not presented a report to that effect.

[Translation]

The crux of the problem raised by the member for Simcoe—Grey is that the minister's political staff participating in the discussions about the committee's report supposedly somehow deprives the House and, by extension, the committee of its right to govern its own proceedings, as mentioned by the member for Salaberry—Suroît.

The Chair takes every allegation of interference in the proceedings of the House and its committees seriously, and it analyzes each case based on the facts presented to it. In this case, the situation described by the member does not seem highly unusual when a committee reviews a study, begins to plan the drafting of the report and discusses possible instructions. The members of a committee can consult stakeholders, interest groups and even their political colleagues before formulating their recommendations. It is not immediately obvious to the Chair how such discussions could constitute a breach of members' privileges, especially since there is no indication of confidential information's being shared or of threats or intimidation.

[English]

A committee that deems it appropriate to submit certain problematic aspects to the Chair's attention can follow the normal process by presenting a report to the House.

It is therefore impossible for me to conclude that there has been a breach of the rights of the House or that a contempt has been committed. I therefore consider the matter closed.

I thank the member for the intervention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 14 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

● (1540)

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS**

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114.

I intend to move concurrence in this seventh report with the agreement of the House.

[English]

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to its study on the main estimates for the fiscal year 2022-23.

If the House gives its consent, I move that the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

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

Hearing no dissenting voice, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Health, presented on Friday, April 29, be concurred in.

It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this important report, tabled by the health committee.

I would like to note that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

This report reaffirms the support of the full participation of the country of Taiwan in the WHA, the World Health Assembly, and the WHO, the World Health Organization. Taiwan has been shut out of these international institutions over the objections of one group, and that is the Chinese Communist Party.

We should go back and take a look at the implications of this and the important role that Taiwan could have played in a major, recent global health event.

In the early days of the COVID pandemic, we had a great opportunity. I want to take us back to December 31, 2019. One of the big global players that we saw on the stage during the COVID pandemic was the Communist Party of China. On December 31, 2019, it was not talking about COVID, but Taiwan signalled to the WHO major concerns about the COVID-19 virus being transmitted from person to person. That was the opposite of what the Communist Party of China was saying, but Taiwan was saying what we now know to be true. Taiwan was on the leading edge of this in 2019.

It is interesting. We talk about "COVID-19", because it is from 2019, but most of the world was not recognizing it until well into 2020. Taiwan was on the leading edge, but instead of heeding the warning offered by Taiwan, the WHO took the advice of communist China. In the early days of COVID, the world could have been informed by Taiwan's transparent epidemic command centre, but instead we were met with misinformation, cover-ups and suppression of the work of independent journalists.

Now, more than ever, the need for rational states in the regions influenced by aggressive, authoritarian regimes has been made clear. The pressure and influence the CCP has exerted and continues to exert on these international institutions is nothing short of extraordinary, and the CCP has made it clear that if Taiwan wishes to be part of the WHO or the WHA, it must submit and accept the one China policy. That language is important. It is evident that, because of the pressure put on these institutions, China will be the one calling the shots.

It should be noted that Taiwan participated in the WHO as an observer from 2009 to 2016, but since 2017 Taiwan has been excluded from the WHA due to opposition from China, particularly due to the policies of the current president. Since then, the WHO has denied Taiwan even observer status. Taiwan, a democracy, is being denied participation in the WHO and the WHA by the CCP. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Taiwan deserves a seat at the table and should be allowed to participate on the world stage. That is evidenced by the point that I referenced earlier: its epidemic command centre. Taiwan was able to provide pandemic information on the leading edge in 2019, while we were being met with misinformation and cover-ups from the very country that would see Taiwan denied admission to the WHO and the WHA. From a health perspective alone, it is outrageous that Taiwan is not given the opportunity to participate.

Canada and Taiwan's friendship has been ongoing during the past 150 years. They have enriched and benefited each other through their continued involvement and through their continued interactions. Canada must be there for its allies. Canada must stand up for its democratic allies.

• (1545)

Many of our allies have been strong in their public support for Taiwan's participation in these important global institutions. The G7 issued a statement that said, "We underscore the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and encourage the

Routine Proceedings

peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues." It went on to affirm its support of Taiwan's inclusion, saying, "The international community should be able to benefit from the experience of all partners". The United States has passed legislation supporting Taiwan's inclusion in the WHO and the WHA, underscoring the importance of the debate occurring today and a vote affirming it in this place.

The United States House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill, S.812, to ask Washington to help Taiwan gain observer status in the WHA. The bill cleared the U.S. Senate in August of the past year, and President Biden passed the bill into law on May 13.

Who else are we talking about? Denmark, Latvia, Slovakia and the European Parliament have all passed resolutions supporting Taiwan's participation in the WHA. Despite this, Canada has not offered support as an individual nation. It looks like it is our turn. There is more we can do and there is more that we should be doing. Concurring in this report is not all that can be done, but it certainly is a good step in showing support for Taiwan on the world stage.

What has happened in Ukraine with the Russian invasion really underscores the possibility, frankly, that it could happen in Taiwan. It could be China that invades a sovereign democracy. Russia and China signalled their intention to have a close and historic partnership that everyone in the world should pay attention to. I have mentioned this before in the House. They talked about a comprehensive strategic partnership. Mr. Putin described it as "a relationship that probably cannot be compared with anything in the world".

Autocratic states want to upset the international and rightful order of things, and weakness on the world stage is exploited and allows these types of things to happen. Allies must support each other. Having Taiwan's full participation in these international bodies is important not only to the world, but also to Canada. It would be an asset in our responses to future health events.

I invite all colleagues to join me and support Taiwan's inclusion in the WHA and the WHO, and in concurring in this report. An awful lot of work is transacted in this place, and we have an awful lot of opportunities to do the right thing. We have famously heard from the government in the past that Canada would be back on the world stage. It is time for people around the world to take notice, for Canada not to be last and for Canada to stand up for an ally, stand up for a democracy and stand up for Taiwan. That is the opportunity we have today.

Routine Proceedings

● (1550)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not surprised that the Conservative Party would use the tactic that has been used on many occasions in order to prevent debating substantive legislation. It is a little disappointing, but not surprising.

I am somewhat suspicious that the Conservative Party would be looking to the World Health Organization on anything to do with COVID, given that many within the caucus believe there is absolutely no need to have any mandates anymore. In the province of Quebec, masks are still mandatory.

I wonder if my colleague could reflect on some of the performances of his colleagues within the Conservative ranks who are not necessarily listening to health experts and science.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, that is a very disappointing response from the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for the Government of Canada. We are using an important tool in this place, and that is to concur in a report from a committee that calls for the participation of Taiwan in the WHO and the WHA.

With respect to the advice that we get from global health bodies, that advice can be improved by the participation of responsible, democratic countries like Taiwan. The government has an opportunity today to put aside the partisan politics that the government House leader's parliamentary secretary is offering and instead engage in this debate, which will be very brief on a day that we sit until midnight. Then we can vote in favour of this motion to support Taiwan's participation in the WHO and the WHA. It will result in better health outcomes for everyone around the world and all Canadians.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, could the hon. member share further on the importance of ensuring that we consider responsible actors, especially Taiwan given the unique challenges it faces within the region? Why is it so important to ensure that the House has the opportunity to debate this issue and that we have this show of support and solidarity in Canada's Parliament for Taiwan's inclusion in the WHO and the WHA?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it is so important. I want to harken back again to that day at the end of 2019 when Taiwan advised the world about the person-to-person transmission of the COVID-19 virus. We had the opposite of that coming from countries such as China. The Communist Party of China was telling us the very opposite. We could have all benefited from that information.

When we look at the country of Taiwan, we see it is under threat like Ukraine has been under threat from Russia. When we do not speak out in advance and do not show our support for democracies like Taiwan when it counts, authoritarian regimes roll right over top of them and we have to try to support them in the aftermath of that.

We say an awful lot about what can be done. This is something that we can do today to make sure that the next Ukraine is not Taiwan. It is so important that we support our democratic allies.

● (1555)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, would the hon. member concur that the effort by the Chinese Communist regime to block democratic Taiwan is part of a broader campaign of aggression perpetrated by the Chinese Communist regime?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, absolutely I concur. The increase in military activity, the increase in pressure on our allies and the increase in pressure on global bodies like the WHO and the WHA to exclude Taiwan are part of an effort to isolate Taiwan and to make sure it cannot be supported diplomatically or militarily by its allies and partners. That is why it is so important that we are not bullied and pushed around by bad actors.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the concurrence motion that the House support Taiwan's participation at the World Health Organization and the World Health Assembly. The 75th World Health Assembly is set to convene in less than a week, from May 22 to 28, in Geneva.

Without more, there is no legitimate reason for Taiwan's exclusion from this international health forum. It should be noted that attendance at the WHA does not require statehood. Indeed, it is commonplace for non-members and NGOs to attend the World Health Assembly as observers. Taiwan itself attended the WHA as an observer for eight consecutive assemblies between 2009 and 2016.

There is only one reason and one reason alone for Taiwan's exclusion, and that is politics by the Chinese Communist regime to deny Taiwan its rightful seat at the table since 2017. This is part of a broader campaign of aggression being perpetrated by the Chinese Communist regime to delegitimize and isolate our democratic ally Taiwan.

In the face of this escalating campaign of aggression, it is imperative that Canada take every opportunity to join with our allies in standing up to Beijing's bullying and stand with Taiwan. Part of standing with Taiwan is to support Taiwan's participation at international fora, including the upcoming WHA.

Let me take an opportunity to underscore the importance of Taiwan's relationship with Canada and Canada's relationship with Taiwan, because make no mistake about it: Taiwan is not some peripheral state in terms of Canada's interests.

We share important economic ties. Taiwan is one of our largest trading partners, as the 13th largest in the world and the fifth largest in Asia, and we have \$8 billion in annual bilateral trade and growing. We share strong people-to-people links with Taiwan, hosting the fourth-largest Canadian diaspora in the world. Most importantly, we share common values. Taiwan is a vibrant democracy committed to freedom, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law.

Routine Proceedings

Taiwan's friendship with Canada was demonstrated in the early days of COVID-19. In the first months of COVID-19, Canada had a PPE shortage. Taiwan could help and Taiwan did help by providing, and donating in fact, more than half a million surgical masks to frontline Canadian health workers. That is something Canadians should remember for a very long time. When Canada needed help, Taiwan was there at a critical period of time.

Aside from the importance of our relationship and the common ties that we share, Taiwan is a major leader with respect to international health and international health security. Again, this was prominently illustrated during COVID.

• (1600)

Taiwan provides many lessons that the world can learn, having had among the most successful records in dealing with COVID. Among the measures that Taiwan undertook were a command system that provided a streamlined decision-making process. Taiwan undertook a number of proactive measures, including border control, case identification and measures to contain the virus. It also boasted leading R and D: Taiwan, very early, developed a COVID-19 rapid antigen test.

As the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes noted, Taiwan not only had a tremendous record of success internally. It was also among the first to alert the world to the threat of COVID. Taiwan's disease surveillance systems picked up on COVID in December 2019, and Taiwan provided among the first reports of COVID to the World Health Organization. The WHO has recognized Taiwan's leadership in that regard.

Not only did Taiwan alert the world at a critical point in time, but over the past two years, Taiwan has demonstrated itself to be a force for good by not just providing PPE to Canada, but also providing millions of pieces of PPE and rapid tests to countries in need. In that regard, Taiwan has played a critical global role in the fight against COVID.

Taiwan's leadership in global health is hardly confined to COVID. Taiwan has provided significant financial assistance and expertise to address an array of global health challenges. Since 1996, Taiwan has provided some \$6 billion in international health and humanitarian assistance, benefiting some 80 countries, and Taiwan has been recognized as a leader in terms of its health care system. In that regard, Taiwan has ranked number one by some measures, in terms of its health care system, all of which underscores the absolute absurdity of Taiwan's exclusion from the WHA.

Global health and global health security require coordination, co-operation and mutual assistance. It follows that Taiwan deserves a seat at the table and must have a seat at the table. That is not only in Taiwan's interests: it is in Canada's interests and the world's interests, because it is in the interests of global health.

It is time to take politics out of the WHA. It is time to stand up to Beijing's bullying. It is time for the House to send a strong, clear and unanimous message of support for Taiwan's participation in the WHA and the WHO.

• (1605)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is in regard to the signal that is required. This motion was agreed to at committee, but I am wondering if the member would be able to comment further about the importance of sending a strong signal from Canada's House of Commons to the world that Taiwan's inclusion in the WHA and the WHO is important, and the importance of this place being the mechanism to have that show of support.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, it could not be more timely. The WHA is set to convene in less than a week. Once again, the Chinese communist regime is thumbing its nose at global public health. Our allies have been clear and consistent in their support. We have seen resolutions passed in other parliaments, including the European Parliament. Just last Friday, President Biden signed into law legislation to direct the U.S. Secretary of State to develop a strategy for Taiwan's inclusion: legislation that received unanimous support in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. It would be very fitting if the House of Commons also lent its unanimous support.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a very important concurrence debate we are having here right now. I want to get the member's thoughts on Taiwan's exclusion from another organization: the ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organization. What does that mean and how important would that be for it?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, my friend for Cypress Hills—Grasslands is quite right that Taiwan has been excluded from participating as an observer at the ICAO. It is again part of the broader strategy on the part of the Chinese communist regime to isolate and delegitimize Taiwan. It is important that Taiwan participate at the ICAO, the WHA and the WHO from a global health standpoint and a global aviation safety standpoint. In that regard, I would just note that Taiwan has one of the busiest airports in the world at Taipei, with tens of millions of passengers going through it. From simply a civil aviation safety standpoint, it is absurd the Taiwan would be excluded from ICAO.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, parenthetically, hon. members would be interested to know that there is a Green Party of Taiwan. It contributes to our global Green meetings with very large delegations because we are one of the only international organizations that allows them to come. Members come in large numbers.

I am puzzled by the debate we are having now. Unless I have missed something, we are debating a concurrence report that recommends that Taiwan be allowed to participate in the World Health Assembly and the World Health Organization. Have I misunderstood that? I am trying to understand the point of the debate at the moment, since it appears the concurrence report supports the point the hon. members are making.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, this is an opportunity for the House to speak with one voice. That is the purpose of this debate and the vote that will be triggered as a result.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, in response to the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, the member talked about aviation safety. I want to pick up on that point and ask him about the exclusion of Taiwan from Interpol and to whose benefit it is to exclude it from all of these agencies. Whether it is with respect to tracking criminals, aviation safety, the WHO or the WHA, who is benefiting when a responsible actor and democracy such as Taiwan, one of our allies, is excluded?

● (1610)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, the world is not benefiting from the exclusion of Taiwan. It is straight-up bullying by the Chinese communist regime, and we need to stand up against that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, typically when I rise, I say it is a pleasure to speak on something that is before the House. Even though this is an important issue, there are many important issues that are debated and discussed in standing committees. As Parliament goes on in the months and years ahead, we will see standing committees do some outstanding work on a wide variety of different issues. There is no doubt about that.

I want us to stop for a moment and think about what the Conservative Party is doing. It recognized that the standing committee had a meeting, and then there was a recommendation from the committee. There was no detailed report or anything of this nature. It was a very simple statement, and I will read it. It will not take very long. It states:

That the Standing Committee on Health report to the House that it supports the full participation of Taiwan in the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

That is the recommendation from the committee. There is no doubt that there would have been a great deal of discussion regarding the merits of a motion of this nature coming out of the committee, but I would also suggest that there are many standing committees.

For example, I remember the work, in particular, with the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration when I was in opposition. There were so many issues. We would raise the issues and have reports come to committee, just as we are debating today a report that went before the committee. If we were to debate every report that comes before the House of Commons—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, the interpretation is not working.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is working now.

[Translation]

The parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, if we were to take reports such as the one that has been brought forward by the Conservatives today, the one that I actually read onto the record, if we were to do that every day on all the different reports, there would not be the opportunity to have debates on the legislative agenda, not only from the government's perspective, but also from the private member's perspective, especially if we factor in opposition days.

People who have been following the debates of concurrence motions will be very much aware that the Conservative Party of Canada might be interested in the topic being debated. All members of the House are very much aware of the relationship between Taiwan and China, and we are very much concerned about Taiwan and its future. We see the true value of having Taiwan play a stronger role with the World Health Organization. I suspect that is one of the reasons why it passed through the standing committee.

The Conservative Party announced that we need to have a full-some debate on this issue to be able to see how the entire chamber is going to vote, how each member of the House is going to vote. What issue in the standing committee, which is ultimately providing a report, would the Conservative Party say it has no interest in bringing before the committee as it is an absolute waste of time? I suspect they could argue that every report is important and should be brought to the House. As the opposition House leader said, they are.

If we do that, we are taking away from the opportunity for the House to do the many other things that it needs to do. One would ultimately argue, as I would, that the real purpose of the motion is not to deal with Taiwan and the World Health Organization. It has everything to do with the ongoing gamesmanship of the official opposition to frustrate the government from being able to get its legislation dealt with.

I ask members to think of the motion. I will read it again:

That the Standing Committee on Health report to the House that it supports the full participation of Taiwan in the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Madam Speaker, how many times have you sat in your chair and heard members from all sides of the House stand and say, "There have been consultations among the parties, and we would like to see if we can get unanimous consent to pass", before reading their motion?

I am surprised, and I will maybe give some advice to my colleagues across the way: If they are genuine about the topic at hand, why not have those discussions? Why not get the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the shadow minister for the Conservatives together? Let us get our friends in the New Democrats and the Bloc, and do a little consultation with the Green Party, which is something the Conservative Party is not very good at. Let us see if we can have a discussion among parties in the chamber and build the consensus that was achieved at the standing committee.

Nothing would prevent the leaders of the House from then bringing forward a unanimous consent motion. I would suggest that they follow the advice that was provided by the Speaker shortly after question period, when the Speaker clearly indicated, on the passing of unanimous consent motions, that there should be some consultations done prior to the introduction and the sense that it would be approved.

• (1615)

I looked at my colleague, the deputy House leader at the time, and we both thought that was a pretty bold and right-on statement by the Speaker. I was encouraged by the number of Conservative members of Parliament who were applauding the comments of the Speaker. That tells me that even Conservative members in opposition recognize how important it is to actually work with other members of the House. That is a good, healthy sign.

We, in the government, have been reaching out to the Conservative Party to say that they should work with us and recognize some of the benefits being brought forward through House initiatives. There is some really good stuff here that we could be passing, that we could be working together on. However, the Conservative Party is not interested in that.

If the Conservatives were interested in that, we would not be speaking about this right now. The opposition House leader talks about disinformation, just as the presenter of the motion talked about misinformation and disinformation. Hopefully I will have some time to expand on that. I think that is a valid point being raised by the mover of the motion.

For me, at this stage in my comments, I want to acknowledge that sometimes we do see some encouraging signs coming from the Conservative opposition. After question period, I saw that.

Let me suggest to the members that, before they just look at the Order Paper and pluck something out that they want to introduce that day as a tool to filibuster, prevent debate or stop the government from being able to debate its legislation, before they actually do that random draw, to take a look at the motion. Did the House leadership of the Conservative Party realize the content of the motion? I do not think it did.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we have an admission from the opposition House leader. I appreciate that. We can go a long way with some honesty.

At the end of the day, this is the type of thing that I think, with some effort from opposition—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1620)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have been very patient, I think, but this is not a conversation. We have times for people to speak and times for people to comment. I would like to let the hon. parliamentary secretary conclude his speech.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am just trying, in a friendly fashion, to give some advice and thoughts on ways in

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which we can be more effective inside the House. I know that opposition members appreciate that I am afforded the opportunity to talk on this important issue, by them bringing in the concurrence motion. In that sense, I thank them for that because I do have a great deal of passion for Asian nations. I often talk, for example, about Philippines and how important Philippines is to me personally, let alone other nations in that region. Therefore, I am very sensitive to it.

I very much would like to see Taiwan be a part of the World Health Organization for many of the reasons the member for Sherwood Park—St. Albert mentioned. At times, the member says some pretty good stuff, including his comments concerning the role that Taiwan played in advising and providing information and support to Canada. Taiwan has contributed in a very positive way. I suspect that the member for Sherwood Park—St. Albert is not alone in his thinking—

An hon. member: He is the member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I should know that he is the member for St. Albert—Edmonton because I was actually posted in Edmonton when I was in the forces. St. Albert is a beautiful community.

The point is that there are many members of Parliament, no doubt, who would realize and see the value of Taiwan's contributions.

With respect to the World Health Organization, on the other hand, we know that members from the government caucus and, I suspect, maybe even members from the Conservative caucus, have a full appreciation of the World Health Organization and the work that it did in the pandemic. The World Health Organization, much like Health Canada, has very strict enforcement and respect for science and health experts. In regard to the pandemic, Taiwan did have a lot to offer. I am not sure, but one member made mention that it was the first country in the world to say that COVID-19 can be passed person to person. That was already part of the debate on the issue. I do not know for a fact that it is the case, but I do know that Taiwan did lead in many ways, as did Health Canada.

Through Health Canada, we have an independent agency that has served Canadians well over the years. During the pandemic, civil servants have played such an incredible role in ensuring that Canada is in a great position to provide the advice that was absolutely necessary for the general public as a whole. I am thinking of individuals who did the science, looked at the World Health Organization, worked with health experts from coast to coast to coast and came up with the recommendations that were necessary, as a country and as a nation. The Prime Minister had daily briefings for Canadians, talking about the importance of, for example, washing our hands, wearing a mask and making sure that people were in protective zones, as we went through a very difficult process at the very beginning.

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● (1625)

The World Health Organization took a global approach in ensuring that all countries around the world recognize how important it is to step up to the plate. I think that the World Health Organization was able to benefit from some of the policy initiatives that Health Canada advanced. I do believe that Canada, the European Union, the United States, Taiwan and many other countries, the over 150 countries that participate in the World Health Organization, all have had contributions to make not only at the beginning of the pandemic in 2019, but even today.

We still are not out of the pandemic. It is easy to think we are, but that is not the case. When we listen to Conservative members, we can think of the issue of misinformation. There are members of the Conservative Party who believe that mandates are no longer required, and yet your home province, Madam Speaker, the province of the Conservatives' deputy leader, had a mandatory mask mandate that has just been lifted. That is fairly recent.

If we take a look even back to December, people were starting to think that things were turning around, but curfews were being put in place. Manitoba had additional measures. The demand for rapid testing went through the roof.

We understood as a government the types of things we needed to do. The World Health Organization was a great resource for some countries more than other countries. For developing nations that do not have organizations like Health Canada, it played a critical role as it does today.

My suggestion to members opposite is that they spend less time on the political gamesmanship that we see day in and day out and more time on serving Canadians. Today, there is no reason why, before five o'clock, we could not have passed Bill C-14. There is no reason at all. Yes, the Conservatives will talk and talk about this and that and debate times and so forth, but there is absolutely no reason why. Elections Canada is independent and every member in the chamber is supporting Bill C-14, so there is no reason why it should not be passed. However, the Conservatives, as with this particular concurrence report, are more interested in playing political games and using up government debate time on the legislative agenda.

It was not that long ago when Canadians said that we, as the Liberal Party, were going to be given a new mandate, but part of that mandate meant that it was going to be a minority—

● (1630)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member for Winnipeg North has been droning on for almost 20 minutes now and he has not been relevant to the motion at hand, which is a concurrence motion talking about health. The last five minutes—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): He has been very relevant to the motion at hand.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the point is that there are other mechanisms, especially when we talk about this particular motion.

I would encourage members of the official opposition to heed the advice of what the Speaker said after question period. Let us do a little more working together. That is what Canadians want. They want the government to work with opposition parties, and they want the opposition parties to work with the government. This could have been a good example of that.

If we take anything away from the debate today, let us recognize the fine work that the standing committee has done, and let us see if we can do some more work together for the betterment of all Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, if I could, I would certainly want to use a unanimous consent motion to give the member more time to speak to this because he was so riveting. I know that you, Madam Speaker, were paying great attention.

We want to ensure that the committee's work is recognized in this House on an important issue, especially with all of the geopolitical issues going on around the world, not the least of which is what is happening in Ukraine, but also the sabre-rattling that is going on in the South China Sea basin as it relates to Taiwan, recognizing the importance of Taiwan and its inclusion in the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization. That is what the committee came back with and that is what we are concurring on today. If that is not important, I do not know what is.

Also, we are hearing a lot from the Liberals about the issue of obstruction. The House hours were extended until midnight tonight. As it stands right now, there are zero Liberal members scheduled to speak tonight to the government legislation. So far on Bill C-14, there have only been three. The prediction that I made in this House on Motion No. 11 is that, in effect, we could have opposition members solely speaking to government legislation and the government not trying to convince Canadians why it is important for these pieces of legislation to pass.

I am wondering if the hon. member has comments as to why there are no scheduled Liberal speakers tonight on an important piece of legislation like Bill C-14.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I agree that it is important legislation. That is why, from the government's perspective, we do not need to put up speakers. We have already put our position on the record. We are supporting the legislation and want it to go to committee. This is important legislation. We do not have to debate every piece of legislation at great length. Everyone in this chamber supports it.

The opposition House leader says that this is an important issue, being the report we have before us today. If it is so important, why not have it on an opposition day motion? The Conservatives have this Thursday as an opposition day. Has the Conservative Party ever brought forward a concurrence motion on an opposition day? The answer is no. The Conservatives will not do that because they are not going to filibuster on their opposition days. They only do it on government days.

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Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, there were a lot of words spoken and I will let Canadians judge the substance of those words.

The member for Winnipeg North inferred something that brings forward an interesting contradiction in the Liberals' messaging. Often the Prime Minister, members of the Liberal cabinet and the member himself will say that committees are in charge of their own destiny. This motion, passed by a committee of this place, was supported by the Liberals unanimously. I am curious as to why the member is so opposed to that support. He has previously suggested that committees are masters of their own destiny, although I sometimes question the independence of them, but that is for another conversation.

As members in this place, there are tools and mechanisms, and moving concurrence motions is one of them, and an important one. The House spoke very strongly to re-engage the Canada-China committee that was cancelled. The committee passed a motion. Why does it not deserve fair hearing in this place?

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, standing committees pass all sorts of motions. I would argue there is an endless number of wonderful debates that we could be having, but that is not the issue here. The issue here is that the Conservative Party continues to focus its attention on doing whatever it can to prevent the government from being able to debate its legislation or budgetary measures.

The Conservatives could have worked with the government on this particular motion. We could have had a group hug and see if we could pass this with unanimous consent. At the end of day, let us be very clear. This has nothing to do with Taiwan. This has everything to do with Conservatives playing games and filibustering. That is what this is all about. They do not want to debate Bill C-14. Let us vote on Bill C-14 and get it passed.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, whenever I hear the hon. parliamentary secretary in high dudgeon because there are political games being played in this place, it is so very *Casablanca*: "What? I'm shocked. There's gambling going on here?" We have to recall there are political games on all sides. We can all do better. This is an important issue. This is a concurrence debate that attaches some significance, but I join the hon. parliamentary secretary in lamenting that we are not debating Bill C-14. This is less a question than a comment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Bill C-14 is the bill that we were supposed to be debating today. We started it this morning. In essence, Elections Canada is an independent organization. We are bringing forward legislation to ensure that the province of Quebec, a province I am very, very proud of, especially that French factor, gets the minimum 78 seats. In fact, I understand that every member of this chamber wants to make sure that Quebec gets that, but there is one political party that just wants to debate it. Members of that party do not want it to pass it. They just want to filibuster until I do not know when.

Sometimes they need to be shamed into doing the right thing. Hopefully a little shaming here will cause them to allow Bill C-14 to pass. It would be wonderful to see it pass before 5 p.m.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am encouraged by the parliamentary secretary's words of support for Taiwan's participation at the WHO and the WHA. The Chinese Communist regime, in addition to trying to block Taiwan's meaningful participation in international fora like the WHO and WHA, has also insisted upon the mislabelling of Taiwan in which certain Canadian government institutions are currently actively participating in such mislabelling. One is the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which is the leading federal government health agency. The minister has been aware of this issue for some time. I wrote to the minister some six months ago. The member for Humber River—Black Creek has brought this issue forward and yet, this mislabelling continues. Why?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, over the years one of the things that I have learned, whether it was with Stephen Harper when he was prime minister all the way to today, there are some significant tensions between China and Taiwan and it does have an impact around the world, including Canada. I have full confidence that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is working with the different departments to ensure that first and foremost Canadian interests are met and our Canadian values are espoused around the world. That is something which we in the Liberal caucus take very seriously.

• (1640)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I would simply ask a question that was asked a previous Conservative speaker on this. It is not only important to acknowledge the reality of Taiwan's exclusion from the WHA and WHO, but also other international entities, such as Interpol, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization. The member said that this has nothing to do with Taiwan. With respect, I would fundamentally disagree. This has a lot to do with Taiwan and the ability for this place, the centre of Canada's democratic infrastructure, to make a clear statement to say that Taiwan does matter.

I would ask the member to comment specifically on Taiwan's exclusion from other international organizations.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the motion before us today has everything to do with Taiwan. What I was referring to was the games that are being played by the Conservatives, which is something that I have very little tolerance for. I hope that the Conservative Party will bring this issue back on Thursday when it has an official opposition day.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, International Development; the hon. member for Calgary Centre, Natural Resources; and the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Climate Change.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, although we were supposed to be debating Bill C-14 today, we nevertheless had to consider the tabling of the committee report.

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Last week I attended Taiwan Night with some colleagues, where we were able to discuss the Taiwanese government's concerns on this matter. After the event I invited our Taiwanese friends to come observe this afternoon, but I am disappointed, because I have been hearing members over the past hour asking why we are not talking about something else. I obviously care a lot about Bill C-14, but it is also important that this report be tabled. We must examine its findings and how it calls on us, as parliamentarians, to do something about this situation.

We have all witnessed the situation in Ukraine and Russia over the past few months, and the expression that comes to mind when I think of that situation is "the thorn in the lion's paw". NATO has said that it is no one's fault but, at the same time, it is everyone's fault. That same expression comes to mind when I think of relations between Taiwan and China.

I think we need a little flexibility in order to make an informed decision under the circumstances. That is what we need to discuss this afternoon: What can we do to speed up Taiwan's admission to the World Health Organization, or WHO, and the World Health Assembly?

In a community or a group, the first thing to do if we want to be in society is to appreciate the true value of the "other". The failure to contribute to the admission of entities—or, in this case, independent countries—to associations such as the WHO or the World Health Assembly amounts in some way to denying their existence.

Why do we do this? Generally, we do it strictly on the basis of conviction. We all have convictions, whether it is the Speaker, me or even the member for Winnipeg North. That is what keeps us standing, what we value, and it is often an imperative. However, societies also have convictions. Unfortunately, a conviction is something that we hold very dear, but with little regard for its predictable consequences. Following a conviction is often done at all costs, which is evident in the delay of Taiwan's admission to the bodies I mentioned.

However, when it comes to a conviction, we cannot deny that there are no consequences to our actions. Every action has its consequences. In fact, the consequences are part of the action. For Russia and Ukraine, the consequences are dire. We had good intentions, but good intentions do not count if they are not carried through. We can hope, but if we do not act on that hope, it does not count.

We must justify our conviction about whether we are for or against admitting Taiwan into these organizations. This is what I personally call the ethics of responsibility, the ethics of a form of decision-making that involves considering the foreseeable consequences of a given action.

What are the foreseeable consequences of admitting or not admitting Taiwan to these organizations? We can predict that, if Taiwan is denied admittance, the decision will be postponed, and there will be petitions, more lobbying and, most importantly, people who will not be able to contribute to or benefit from science.

I believe we are heading for the inevitable and that admittance is the best way to go. If we agree to admit Taiwan, I think we will reduce the risk of confrontation in a part of the world that, frankly, is prone to confrontation. I do not have a crystal ball, but when I look

at Russia, Ukraine, Finland and Sweden, I see Taiwan on the other side of the crystal ball.

The consequences of denying Taiwan admittance should not be underestimated. We all have our own convictions, and that is fine. When we look at the consequences of having or not having convictions on this issue, we reach the stage that I call the ethics of discussion. I mention this because it is what we do here in Parliament. The ethics of discussion is the ability to discuss objectively in order to reconcile what we want to do with what we end up doing.

● (1645)

This is about reconciling what we want to do with what we end up doing. It is about aligning word with deed. I believe that we should be able make a decision without having unnecessary barriers thrown up, without getting bogged down. We may decide to take action or we may decide not to. Yes, we might make a mistake, but we are not God. The worst mistake is not deciding. The biggest mistake is looking the other way. I often say that the greatest lack of ethics is turning a blind eye.

Certainly, in this case, we are not being asked to make a decision. We are not the WHO. We are being asked to receive the conclusions of a committee that is established under the rules of the House of Commons, one that operates independently and has tabled its report.

Too often in the past, we have seen reports that were not received by the House of Commons, which comes back to haunt us after a while. It makes for even more procedures than necessary.

This afternoon, what are my Taiwanese friends seeing when they are watching us? In the last hour, they have seen people disagreeing about how to move forward. No one has been stubborn about moving forward, but we disagree about the method. Meanwhile, time is passing and people are waiting, yet no decisions are being made.

I believe the report should be presented because I believe Taiwan should be part of the WHO. Why do I believe that? I think it is about social values. Values are things that we find to be good, noble or desirable, but the value we are talking about here is solidarity. Solidarity means unity for common cause. In this case, that common cause is health. Taiwan made a significant contribution with respect to COVID-19. Taiwan is willing and able to contribute. What may be preventing this report from being presented today is fear, misplaced fear of the Chinese bear. We are a legally constituted Parliament. I believe we should make this decision. This is not a life or death decision; this is about concurring in a report. We should concur in it so we can move forward. This is about solidarity. This is no time to pretend the problem does not exist. This is no time to be stubborn about our convictions just for the sake of being stubborn.

In answer to the concerns raised by my colleague from Winnipeg North, I would like us to adopt this motion quickly so we can move on to Bill C-14. Bill C-14 is extremely important to me. What I would suggest today is an entente cordiale among the parties so we can move forward and do our parliamentary work without obstacles of our own making.

• (1650)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are many different reports that will never come before the House. I would ultimately argue that concurrence, in this particular case, is not necessarily to send a strong message. The message has already been sent through the standing committee, and this is one of many reports that will be tabled over the coming weeks and months.

Does the member believe all committee reports should have a concurrence here on the floor of the House? If so, does he also believe, then, that it should not happen just on government business days? Should it also be on opposition days, or should it be restricted to only government days?

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North. I should be a little candid here, because as a newly elected member, I do not know all the rules. However, to answer both points, I believe that all committee reports should have a life. Now, is this the only time they can have a life? I do not have the answer to that, being new to Parliament. I do not think there is any committee work that should remain in the shadows, and I believe that everything is better in the light, frankly. Should it be during government orders or on an opposition day? I think there is probably strategy on both sides, but I cannot assume bad faith.

One thing is for sure: I am on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics with the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot, and we work very hard. Until recently, we have had unanimity on just about every decision we have made, with the Liberal Party and everyone. Honestly, I think it is nice that we can all work for the common good together. I think the outcome of the work should at least be heard.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a very thoughtful speech by the member for Trois-Rivières. I think he touched on some of the important reasons we need to take this seriously.

My question is similar to a question I asked the parliamentary secretary and that another Conservative colleague asked earlier in this debate. On the substance of what we are discussing, we can see that Taiwan, for geopolitical reasons, I suggest, is being excluded from some of these international organizations. That certainly is problematic in terms of Taiwan's being a democracy. Further to that, I would suggest in this place today that it is to the detriment of the ability of the world, in the case of the WHO and the WHA, to combat COVID-19.

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I would ask for the member's further thoughts on that, as well as on Taiwan's being excluded from ICAO and Interpol, among a number of other international agencies. It has a significant voice that should be heard. What does the member think about the tactics being used by certain regimes around the world to try to exclude Taiwan, for geopolitical gain, from what are very meaningful and important organizations, whether it be about COVID-19 or other issues that our world faces?

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot.

Taiwan is a democracy and a free country, just as Quebec will be one day. At that time, I hope that we will also be recognized, and that we will become formal participants in international organizations.

Now, my colleagues know full well where the red light on the decision to include Taiwan came from. I think we need to be very careful. Denying an established democracy's right to exist is a bad idea. Whether we are talking about Interpol or the international aviation organization, in all cases, this seems to needlessly kick the legs out from under an established democracy and, once again, as a member of a party that supports the creation of a country, our failure to show our support would concern me deeply.

• (1655)

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, interestingly, I am in the chamber today. I am always honoured to speak in this House, representing the people of London—Fanshawe, but I am in the chamber today because the Standing Committee on National Defence was cancelled, unfortunately, because the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is filibustering a motion on women's reproductive rights at the foreign affairs committee and there simply are not enough resources for the House to hold that filibuster and continue the Standing Committee on National Defence.

The Conservatives have been seizing every opportunity to delay legislation and are now holding up committees. I certainly am prone to the committee I sit on, which is national defence, but I know we all feel the same in terms of the business of committees, which they are holding up. Now we see today, again, with this debate, that there is no difference. Time after time, with legislation, they are holding up debate in this House.

We are debating a committee report that I support, absolutely, and that New Democrats have supported, absolutely, and that we are proud to have supported. It was adopted unanimously at committee. I hope we can do the same in this chamber.

I would like to seek unanimous consent for the following motion, that the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Health, presented on Friday, April 29, be adopted immediately without further debate or amendment.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: No.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to say that I am quite surprised the Conservatives moved this motion to adopt the report. It was proposed for unanimous consent and they denied it. I am not quite sure why. They wanted this report approved and we were willing to do that.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

● (1740)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 91)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos

Fraser	Freeland
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Jen	Jaczek
Johns	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Sorbara	Spengemann
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Virani
Vuong	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi — 175	

NAYS

Members

Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong

Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
MacKenzie	Maguire
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Perron	Plamondon
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shipley	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer— 137	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

FINANCE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC) moved:

That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Finance that, during its consideration of Bill C-19, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures, the committee be granted the power to divide the bill into two pieces of legislation:

- (i) Bill C-19A, An Act to amend the Civil Lunar Gateway Agreement Implementation Act, Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Criminal Code,

Routine Proceedings

the Judges Act, the Federal Courts Act and the Tax Court of Canada Act, containing divisions 18, 19, 21 and 22 of Part 5 of the bill,

(ii) Bill C-19B, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures, containing all the remaining provisions of the bill.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this and to advise you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, a beautiful part of the country. Of course, the predecessor of the hon. member was a good friend of all of us, Gord Brown, who passed away tragically. He was an hon. member of Parliament and conducted himself with great integrity, at one point as the opposition whip, and he is greatly missed in this place.

The reason why I rise today is to discuss a curious part of the bill, the budget implementation act, which, of course, as we are aware of, is an omnibus bill, a bill that includes many provisions in it. It totals, roughly, well over 400 pages, and it is a difficult bill to comprehend, in the sense of the volume of the bill and the amount of information that is in it.

There is one curious issue about this bill that I think requires further consideration by the committee. That is why I stand here today to propose splitting this bill, to really give the committee an opportunity to look much deeper into this aspect of the BIA, an act to enact the civil lunar gateway agreement implementation act and amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Criminal Code, the Judges Act, the Federal Courts Act and the Tax Court of Canada Act, containing certain divisions.

Effectively, what this means is that what the government is proposing on this, and this is why it is curious and why it needs to have further study at committee, including the potential for further witnesses to talk about the consequences of this bill, relates to travel to the moon. We are assuming that, obviously, astronauts are going to the moon. I do not think, and I stand to be corrected, that there has been a situation where a Canadian astronaut has been to the moon, but of course we have had several who have been on the space shuttle and have circumnavigated the earth, and we are very proud. One is in the House right now and I congratulate the hon. member for that.

I will note, Mr. Speaker, that you pointed him out, not I, but we are all proud of Canada's involvement in the space program. The hon. member conducted himself very distinguishedly and proudly as an astronaut, and there have been several others before and certainly after. In fact, I recall that, just a couple of weeks ago, the hon. member rose and paid tribute to a fellow astronaut who was part of the space program. When we lose that legacy, it is difficult.

Curiously, I am not aware of any plans. I know there are plans to go to Mars, for example. This part of the budget implementation act did not address the part about Mars, but I am not aware of any plans for lunar landings. I am not aware of any plans that there are going to be any bases on the moon to which these provisions, not just of the Criminal Code but of the tax act, would apply. I assume that if astronauts do land on the moon and they are paid, they will have to pay tax on it. We are just not sure of that and what impact this would have.

Routine Proceedings

I think this speaks to a broader problem, as I speak to the budget implementation act. I am not even sure what the tax rates on the moon will be. I suspect that maybe they would be higher than they are currently. The only good thing is that there may not necessarily be an affordability crisis on the moon that I am aware of. Of course, if the government is still in power when astronauts do land or live on the moon, I suspect it will be looking at ways to increase levels of affordability on the moon.

We are trying to give the committee, seriously, an opportunity to take this part of the bill and look at it in more depth.

• (1745)

As I said earlier, the budget implementation act is an omnibus bill. Despite the fact that the Prime Minister said in 2015 that he would end omnibus bills and there would be no more omnibus bills, there are hundreds of provisions in this bill, which does constitute and classify it as an omnibus bill. What the Prime Minister did in 2015, as he has done many times over the course of the last several years, was break another promise. This is another broken promise not to have any more omnibus bills, yet we have an omnibus bill with this type of provision in it, and it is difficult to understand what the impact of that is going to be.

Therefore, having the committee analyze the bill and extract it from the budget implementation act, basically separate it out to be able to study it a bit further, is important, and it is important to understand what its implications are. As I said, we are not aware of any lunar plans for Canadians to either land or cohabitate on the moon. However, if they are going to be paying taxes and doing some of the other things that this part of the budget calls for, then I think we need to have a better understanding of that.

I want to speak as well to the types of actions by the government. We see an omnibus bill when the government ran on saying it would not be implementing omnibus bills. We are seeing some other things happening, for example Motion No. 11, which we have talked about in this House previously. This all adds to a further decline in democracy and really speaks to the trust in our democratic institutions.

Recently, and I have said this previously in the House, the Ethics Commissioner came to the procedure and House affairs committee and I asked him about the decline in democracy and the decline in the faith that Canadians have in their institutions, all institutions. When we see these types of motions, like Motion No. 11, and promises not being kept with respect to acts like the budget implementation act, which is clearly an omnibus bill, it further adds to that decline in democracy, and I think all Canadians and certainly all parliamentarians are concerned that we are heading in that direction.

Therefore, we should give the committee an opportunity to look at this part of the bill, and there are many other parts of the budget implementation act that in my opinion should be separated and pulled out from the entire act so that the committee can do its job.

On the subject of the debate we have had, perhaps we could have been talking, debating and asking questions of the government as to what this particular part of the budget implementation act means, but the reality is that we were given very little time to discuss the

BIA. The government imposed time allocation. I believe there were only five hours of debate on a 400-plus-page omnibus bill and 11 speakers who had an opportunity to speak to it. If not on this, then perhaps on other parts of this budget implementation act we could have asked the government what it means and perhaps debated it and offered suggestions.

What I am trying to do is make sure the committee is able to do its work and look at this particular part, and there are many parts of this bill. I hope it does, for the sake of the faith in our institutions and certainly the faith in our committees. We see other committees that are doing very important work right now, for example the foreign affairs committee, which is studying Ukraine and what is going on in the South China Sea and how Canada can be better prepared for those things. We see games being played by the government, which is adding to this further erosion in the trust and confidence Canadians have in our institutions, and it is certainly adding to a decline in what we are seeing in many western democracies around the world.

We are going to continue to make sure that Canadians have answers. In terms of the level of importance, I would say it is probably not at the top, but there are questions that need to be answered with respect to this part of the budget implementation act, which is why I stand today to ask that we separate this part of the BIA.

• (1750)

The Deputy Speaker: Before I go on to questions and answers, I apologize to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount for pointing him out. He is my favourite astronaut, so I took the opportunity. When great Canadians are here, I have to do that.

It looks like he might have a question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

• (1755)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the very generous comments with respect to my previous career.

This is more of a comment than a question, although my colleague may wish to comment on it. Just for his information, Canada joined the Artemis program, which is a NASA program and, as a result of that, we will have a chance to send a Canadian to the moon. The first time it will be to orbit, not to land, but with the expectation, because the U.S. is returning to the moon, that eventually a Canadian will also have the opportunity to land and work on the moon.

We are being forward-thinking in trying to plan the necessary legislation that would apply to that lucky individual who would one day go to the moon.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was a very young boy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I just turned 58, so I was not that young, but I remember watching the hon. member and feeling that sense of Canadian pride, and seeing that patch on his shoulder as he flew into space on the space shuttle. It was a terrific moment, a very proud moment as a Canadian to see the hon. member and his colleagues, many of whom have followed in his footsteps.

The Artemis program is probably years away. There are some curious questions in here, as I said, around the amount of tax that astronauts are going to be paying if they are living on the moon, and the relation to the tax court and the Criminal Code and how that applies. These are the kinds of questions that I think we could have had a fulsome debate on in this House, if the government had not moved time allocation and restricted debate on all parliamentarians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to echo some of the member's words in regard to my colleague, Canada's first astronaut. I believe that on all sides of the House, we are all very proud of him.

An hour ago, the Conservatives were arguing that they wanted to spend hours of debate talking about Taiwan, and now they want to spend hours of debate talking about the moon. I wonder if the member could explain to people who might be observing why the Conservatives are going out of their way to prevent us from talking about legislation that would enable the Province of Quebec to have a guaranteed number of seats.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. I want to thank the hon. member.

I am not going to thank the government for imposing Motion No. 11 on us, which extends hours to midnight so that we could debate very important topics that Canadians are seized with. If the hon. member wants to spend time debating these, if he wants to extend sittings to midnight, Conservatives, and I said this the very day we debated Motion No. 11, will be here every single night, as the government requires, to debate those issues that are important to Canadians.

We are also going to be debating government legislation tonight, right up until midnight, Bill C-14. When I rose earlier, how many speakers from the government side were willing to debate that? None. Just as we predicted, it will be the opposition debating government legislation. It will be the opposition asking the opposition questions on government legislation. The government put us in this position to debate these issues that are important to Canadians, just like taxes on the moon and the Criminal Code on the moon, and we are going to be here to debate them as long as we need to.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil for putting this motion forward and the discussion on splitting up the budget implementation act. There are so many pieces in that bill that really should be separated and discussed, debated and considered at committee separately, not pushed through the way the government has pushed legislation through in the past.

I recall Bill C-69, when there were literally hundreds of amendments proposed that could not even be debated. Does the member

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for Barrie—Innisfil expect the same is going to happen with the budget implementation act?

• (1800)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I hope when it does get to committee we are going to be able to deal with that. I know there has already been a programming motion put forward at committee, but again, this is a government that said it would not implement an omnibus bill. It has done it now consecutively for I do not know how many years in a row, but that is what we get when we have omnibus bills: the difficulty of dealing with these particular issues when they need to be dealt with. There are many others.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this place and speak to the important issues facing Canadians. Of course, the budget implementation act, and the implications it will have for Canadians going forward, are of the utmost importance. In the context of the affordability crisis Canadians are facing, we could not be talking about anything more important.

The opposition House leader, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil, articulated well the issues we have with a government that introduces omnibus legislation. It really demonstrates its lack of focus on the issues that are most important to Canadians, and that is why separating these issues is important.

If we put into two buckets the issue of affordability and the issue of lunar crimes, it is important we have those off. I want to talk about affordability, but it is important to note that when we talk about the aspiration the government is putting forward, with respect to enforcing the Criminal Code of Canada on the lunar surface, it is really important we manage expectations here.

We have some challenges as a country. We have seen them. They have been discussed in this place. We had a great example with even the rules that govern members of this place. There is the Conflict of Interest Act for members. The Prime Minister took a trip: He did not take the space shuttle, but he travelled by jet and then he travelled by, and this is important to underscore, private helicopter to accept a gift valued at hundreds of thousands of dollars from an individual who had dealings with the government. It was a lobbying business with the government, and we could not even address that as a country.

There has been a lot of conversation even of late that included documents we obtained under access to information laws that detailed the RCMP's struggle with its decision on whether to pursue an investigation that would ultimately lead to charges. The only piece of the test that was missing to lay a charge was to determine whether the designated public office holder, in this case the Prime Minister, had received written permission from the head of the department to accept the gift. We heard confirmation from the Prime Minister that, in fact, the written permission was not given. That is instructional to the RCMP on how to address the issue of whether an investigation, and ultimately charges, should follow.

Routine Proceedings

That is an issue dealing with the Criminal Code, and fraud on the government specifically, and enforcing those laws. We have all the resources and infrastructure here in Canada on planet earth, yet the government looks afar and to the skies to see about enforcing the Criminal Code on the moon.

Let me turn to affordability, because we are in a situation where Canadians are having a terrible time. I spoke about basic affordability earlier today, when I addressed the House. The decision families are facing across our country today, from Victoria by the sea in Prince Edward Island to Victoria, British Columbia, all the way to the North Pole and all points in between is how they are going to make ends meet. They must decide if they are going to buy nutritious food for their families or heat their homes in one of the world's coldest climates. That is an impossible choice.

● (1805)

Summertime should be a time for parents to pick which summer activity or program they are going to enrol their children in. Instead, they are saying they cannot afford the gas to drive their children to these events, to say nothing of whether they can afford the gas to get to work. That is an impossible position we are putting families in. This is a feature, and not a bug, of what the government has put forward. We know that, given the opportunity to give Canadians a break, give them a GST holiday and not increase the carbon tax, the Liberals said no. They want to discourage what the Prime Minister described as a bad behaviour. That bad behaviour is driving a car in a rural community, driving a truck on a farm and heating a home in one of the world's coldest climates.

In this budget implementation act, the affordability question that is facing Canadians is unbelievably important. I hear from people who have these struggles in their daily lives, and they just do not understand who the government members are talking to who is not making this real for them. The issue does not just affect families. It affects single individuals. It affects seniors. They just cannot make ends meet.

We will hear from the government members that inflation is a global phenomenon and that the price of fuel is being affected by Russia's illegal war of aggression in Ukraine. That does not do anything to feed the families of Canadians. Our net debt-to-GDP is best in class, is what we will hear from them. People cannot feed their families with word salad. This is what my constituents are so concerned about. This is what Canadians who are writing to me are so concerned about. The government needs to focus.

The Liberals are sitting across from an opposition that is able to do more than one thing at a time, which frustrates them. We are able to talk about more than one issue, while the government is going to have the House sit until midnight and put up a paltry number of speakers or no speakers on these issues. We are able to do that, but also to advocate for issues that are important to Canada, that represent Canada well on the world stage and that stick up for our friends and allies and the global order of peace and security, with democracies supporting democracies just like the conversation that was adjourned by the government with the help of its partners in the NDP-Liberal coalition, the NDP. The Liberals refused a standing vote on having Taiwan join the WHA and the WHO. Why was that?

We pronounce the importance of issues by having standing votes in this place all of the time. It sends a very strong message. We are going to be here until midnight. We are going to put up speakers. Conservatives will ask other Conservatives questions about why the government is failing Canadians on these important issues and why the government is ignoring what is important to Canadians. We are prepared to put in the work, but the government wants to, at the same time, jam a bunch of things into one bill and pass it through the House as quickly as possible. It moves closure more than anyone ever has, and then gets cute with Motion No. 11 and changes the rules of this place, which is usually only done by consensus, and sets a terrible precedent. It will have a choking effect on democracy.

After the stunt the Liberals pulled with our motion on Taiwan, with these omnibus bills and the repeated closure motions that they move, while I am on my feet, I move, seconded by the member for Kildonan—St. Paul:

That this House do now adjourn.

● (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1855)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 92)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Caputo	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec

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Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seebach
Soroka
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shipley
Stewart
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Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
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Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
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NAYS**Members**

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Damoff
Desbiens
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Dabrusin
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser

Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Jones
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Spengemann
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Garneau
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 202

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Government Orders

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, May 2, the motion is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PRESERVING PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (electoral representation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The next member to speak is the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, but first we have a point of order from the deputy House leader for the official opposition.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 62, I move that the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot be now heard.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could provide clarification regarding Motion No. 11 and whether we can have a recorded vote at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: It is not a dilatory motion and therefore it is in order.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1940)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 93)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Allison
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bérubé	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Danecho	Deltell
Doherty	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Goodridge	Gourde
Hallan	Hoback
Kelly	Kmiec
Kram	Kurek
Kusie	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux

Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Mazier
McLean
Morrison
Muys
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Scheer
Shipley
Soroka
Stubbs
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Villemure
Wagantall
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Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Moore
Mutz
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Richards
Seebach
Small
Steinley
Therrien
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Angus
Arseneault
Bachrach
Beaulieu
Blaikie
Blaney
Cannings
Collins (Victoria)
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dowdall
Ferrerri
Garon
Gaudreau
Gladu
Green
Idlout
Johns
Kelloway
Kramp-Neuman
Lake
Lapointe
Lattanzio
Lewis (Essex)
Mathysen
McPherson
Michaud
Nater
Pauzé
Plamondon
Reid
Robillard
Ruff
Simard
Sorbara
Stewart
Thériault
Valdez
Vignola
Waugh
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Arnold
Ashton
Barron
Berthold
Blanchette-Joncas
Boulerice
Chambers
Davidson
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Epp
Fortin
Garrison
Gazan
Godin
Hughes
Jeneroux
Julian
Kitchen
Kwan
Lalonde
Larouche
Lemire
MacGregor
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
Melillo
Morrice
Normandin
Perron
Rayes
Roberts
Rood
Schmale
Singh
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Trudeau
Viersen
Vuong
Williams

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Government Orders

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock was trying to influence my vote while we were voting, and I could not hear whether or not my vote was recorded as in favour of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for the clarification.

We have a point of order from the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of confusion as the vote happened with respect to the two hon. members, and I seek unanimous consent to change my vote from yes to no so that the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock can be heard.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, let me simply say that the west wants to be heard, the west wants in and I am so pleased that tonight there was a small representative sample of what that means for the good people of Battle River—Crowfoot.

I rise today to speak to this very important issue, Bill C-14, an act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Revenue on a point of order.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the government's responses to Order Paper Questions Nos. 447 to 455.

• (1945)

BILL C-14—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-14, an act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (electoral representation).

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at that stage.

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[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): I would like to inform the House that tomorrow morning, a minister of the Crown will announce that the hour of daily adjournment for the May 17, sitting will be 12 midnight, pursuant to order made Monday, May 2.

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PRESERVING PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (electoral representation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate this opportunity. As I have made clear to my constituents, I will ensure that their voices are always heard in this place. It is an honour to speak to some of the incredibly important issues pertaining to democracy in our country.

Let me unpack a bit what Bill C-14 is about. When it comes to the process of our constituencies, which is part of the reality of our national democratic system, every 10 years, according to our constitutional framework, a census is taken and a redistribution takes place. This is key. As I share often with my constituents, having a fair, clear, transparent and trusted process is absolutely key to ensure that democracy is protected in Canada. That is at the crux or the foundation of what we are talking about here today.

I will have a fair amount to say about the way Alberta feels, but I want to unpack a few aspects of Bill C-14.

An hon. member: We can give you lots of time.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from Manitoba for saying that there is lots of time to ensure that I get these things out.

Having a fair, trusted, transparent process is absolutely key, as many of us in this place know and as I share often with constituents. When they ask if they can trust our election system, I say proudly that we can. We need to be diligent to ensure that we do not see an erosion of that trust. That is absolutely key. I can point to various things that the current Liberal government has done over the last number of years that have contributed to an erosion of trust, but we have strength within our democratic system, and it is the distribution of our electoral boundaries that is a key element of that and why Canadians can trust it.

As many of us in this place are aware, the Chief Electoral Officer, in the second half of last year, released a report. As mandated through the Elections Act, he makes a recommendation to Parliament based on the relevant sections of the Constitution Act, 1867, formerly referred to as the British North America Act prior to the repatriation of 1982.

The Chief Electoral Officer is tasked with ensuring that the fundamental principles of representation by population within the House of Commons are respected. As many of us in this place, politicians across the country, observers, those involved in politics and interested Canadians would have noted, the Chief Electoral Officer provided a report based on the most recent census information to ensure that adjustments were made so that this place accurately reflects the population changes that take place within our country.

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I come from a province that has had, over its history, significant growth. It has been a little over a century since Alberta became a province, and it was once a largely unpopulated region. Of course, we have our indigenous history and there were settlers and whatnot, but it has grown significantly to the point that Alberta's population is now more than four and a half million. Because Alberta has had a significant growth in population, it is key that representation by population be reflected within its representation in this place.

When the Chief Electoral Officer released the report this past year, it started that process to address "inequities", which I say specifically, to ensure that the people of Alberta have representation within this place. Specifically, the recommendation was that Alberta should get three additional seats. Two other provinces also experienced population growth that was higher than the national average and were given an additional seat, and the Chief Electoral Officer recommended that Quebec lose one seat.

● (1950)

I understand the feeling of concern that my friends and colleagues, within this party and other parties, have when it comes to our voices not being heard and to reduced representation. I know that members of the Conservative caucus, when an opposition motion was brought forward by the Bloc Québécois, had outlined opposition to Quebec losing a seat. There was, I believe, an almost even split when it comes to how the Conservative caucus felt on that matter.

As a side note, the fact that there are those divides within the Conservative caucus speaks to how democracy is truly represented well within the Conservative Party of Canada. We disagree on things. In fact, as I reflect over my now close to two and a half years since being elected, a lot of issues come up, whether they relate to issues of the day or policy, that Conservatives will not necessarily clearly agree on. We agree on lots of the big-picture stuff; that is why we are Conservatives, but we may disagree on aspects of it, and that is okay. I note that it is concerning to me that other parties within this place seem to be unable to express those differences. They look at that disagreement as a weakness, but I would suggest, certainly given the feedback that I hear from Canadians, that it is in fact a strength.

The debate on that motion took place, and the Conservatives, endeavouring to show leadership on the national stage, moved a motion to address concerns. The Leader of the Opposition voted in favour of the Bloc motion because of the dynamics associated with the province of Manitoba, which she represents, and the concern that if a precedent were set, rural areas or smaller provinces may at some point lose representation.

I understand how that can be a concern. I live in a very fast-growing and populous province, and I am proud of that, but I do live in a rural region. The largest community in my constituency has about 18,000 people. Then it is down to 10,000, a couple with around 5,000 and then more than 60 self-governing municipalities ranging in size from 132 people up to 18,000.

Since the agricultural revolution, there has been a trend toward urbanization. The concern I hear often is about the divide that exists when it comes to ensuring that rural Canada, rural Alberta and the region I specifically represent still have a voice and the ability to be

heard so that our democracy is responsive to the realities that exist in a jurisdiction where there may be some stagnation of growth.

As we are now faced with Bill C-14, I note that the Conservative compromise is basically what the Liberals have moved forward in Bill C-14. I further note that this speaks to the maturity, ability and competence represented within Canada's official opposition.

Bill C-14, very simply, would amend the floor for the minimum number of seats that a province would have within our electoral system. It was set in the 1988 census, if my memory holds true, and is current up until this point. Until the bill is passed, this is the current floor, and in most provinces that looks a little different, including Quebec. The bill would basically change the floor from the current status quo.

● (1955)

Conservatives proposed that compromise because it got to the heart of the matter in ensuring that there would not be that feeling of disenfranchisement in jurisdictions that may not be as fast-growing, while also respecting the fact that representation by population is a key and foundational part of Canada's democratic infrastructure.

I would be remiss if I did not engage in the very relevant conversation of democratic reform within this place. When I look at our nation's history, I see the fathers of Confederation, those who laid the foundation and framework for what our country is today, very clearly and in the first lines of what is now known as the Constitution Act, 1867, but was then known as the British North America Act. When Canada became a nation, on July 1, 1867, the constitutional framework very clearly said it would be a government similar in construct to that of the British government, with the Westminster system of Parliament.

Now, it went on to acknowledge something that is very important, and that is the regional realities within Canada. In 1867, there were four provinces in the federation, which had a very different regional reality than we face today, as our country has grown significantly. However, that regional reality does exist.

My submission here today, and certainly what I hear often from constituents, is the fact that we have inequity in our democratic infrastructure, which includes the House of Commons, the House of the common people, which is similar in construct to that of the United Kingdom. Its representation is by population. The key balance to that is ensuring that there is a regional counterweight, so to speak. Unfortunately, that has not evolved as our country has grown.

My submission today is that, as we talk about the need for democratic reform and this specific amendment to the Constitution to address some of the feelings of alienation, which Alberta certainly knows well, we have to be willing to have the conversation to address the inequity that exists in the other place, Canada's Senate. It is based on and is similar in construct and procedure to the House of Lords in the United Kingdom, but its members are appointed through a somewhat different mechanism, with that regional representation.

In Canada's early days, there was more of that regional balance. However, it has not kept up. Alberta has six senators when the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec both have 24. I bring that up because that does not truly represent regional balance.

Alberta, specifically, is under-represented in this place, when one does the math on the number of people. Even after these changes are implemented, and there is the addition of three seats, after whenever Parliament considers and presumably implements the changes associated with the electoral boundaries commissions across Canada, Alberta will remain somewhat under-represented, although it would take a step in the right direction with three additional seats for our province.

I know the Liberals are quick to dismiss this, which I hear about so often. I know I had a take-note debate when one of the parliamentary secretaries, who happened to represent a riding from the greater Toronto area, was unfortunately dismissive of the concerns related to why Senate reform is so very important. If there was that fair regional balance, it would be very easy for those regions of our country that are less populated, and that have unique regional dynamics, to have that clear representation in a place that has, in most capacities, other than the ability to introduce bills of spending, the exact same authority as the House of Commons. That piece is missing.

• (2000)

As I have mentioned, I hear from constituents who are feeling that concept of western alienation in Alberta. It is a real thing. Any of the Liberal-NDP members or otherwise who dismiss that, do so at their own peril, because Albertans have expressed to me, and not just to me but to many other colleagues from Alberta and across the country, that they understand it as a very real concern, so to be willing to have that conversation is absolutely fundamental.

I would further note that there are some incredible people who serve and have served in Canada's Senate, and I am proud to sit in a caucus with a number of them. However, I hear quite often that, as the Prime Minister has promised to fix the process, Albertans have said very clearly that they do not want to participate. I say that because Alberta elects its senators, which has been dismissed by members of the government. I bring that up in this debate because it is part of the process of ensuring that democracy is responsive. I fully respect that not every province may want an elected Senate, but I would think that the very minimum level of respect that should be offered to a jurisdiction such as the province of Alberta would be for the leader of the country to respect the fact that we have chosen to do things a little differently.

In the case of Alberta, in coordination with either a provincial or municipal election, we elect senators in waiting. There are currently

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three of them, and they were elected just this past October. They ran in campaigns and made their case to the people of Alberta, who got to choose. That is key. Democracy worked.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister and the government have refused to acknowledge both the validity of those elections and their importance. They will say they fixed the process. They blame Stephen Harper and suggest that somehow Albertans simply need to be educated on these matters. There is a very clear precedent, set not just by Stephen Harper, but by a number of prime ministers, that shows this process actually works. It is the minimum level of respect that should be offered to the province of Alberta.

I would simply note this: When I have asked questions about this in question period, the members opposite have suggested that somehow the Prime Minister's process is superior. I will not go into an explanation at length as to why I would suggest that is patently false, but what I would share with members today is that the best system, the best formula, is always democracy and the people making the choices. I will also note for the record, as I am sure many Canadians are watching, that at least two of the senators in waiting have filed their paperwork through the Prime Minister's transparent process, and I say "transparent" sarcastically. It is key that respect be offered to the province of Alberta.

As we debate and have the conversation around Bill C-14 and the specific reasons why the debate is important, which I hope I have been able to outline adequately for the House, we need to be willing to ensure that our democratic infrastructure in this country is preserved. This is certainly a unique position, having the confidence of members of this place to be heard. I appreciate that affirmation as, since I was first elected, I have assured the people of Battle River—Crowfoot that I would be heard in this place.

I would note that it was the Prime Minister, the leader of the Liberal Party, the leader of the NDP and the coalition partnership, who chose to vote against me being heard. I think my views on the Liberals and the NDP are quite well known. I would suggest that speaks to how I am affirmed in my need, my desire and the confidence of the people of Battle River—Crowfoot to continue being heard in this place in whatever way possible to ensure that the interests of east central Alberta are heard within the House of Commons.

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot on his speech. I am not disappointed at having voted in favour of the motion so that he could be heard.

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Let me draw a parallel between Bill C-14, which we are debating this evening, and Bill C-246, which I recently introduced in the House of Commons. There is a link, a parallel between the two bills. Bill C-14 obviously stems from the Bloc Québécois bill that I introduced regarding Quebec's political weight within Canada.

My colleague voted against the March 2 motion moved by the Bloc, which said more or less the same thing as our bill. The goal is to recognize that Quebec is a nation and that, as a nation, it must be given the tools to be able to properly represent itself for as long as it chooses to be part of this Parliament.

Does my colleague agree that Quebec is a nation and that, notwithstanding the inequities, injustices or inequalities there may be between the provinces, Quebec should have the tools to protect its unique identity?

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member from the Bloc and his confidence in the vote that was had.

We disagree on the future of our country. I have been asked many times by Albertans whether I support Alberta remaining a part of this country, and I often share that I do. I believe that one can be a proud Albertan and a proud Canadian, but the fact that those questions are being asked speaks to the failures of a Liberal government that has left Canada more divided than ever.

Notwithstanding the disagreements I have with the Bloc, I do understand and appreciate the need for regional autonomy. The provinces would have the tools they need to do what is best for the regions they represent, to ensure that there is fair representation, to ensure that there is that regional balance, and to ensure, and this is important, that Ottawa gets out of the way of provinces. The streets and office towers in our national capital city should not be dictating the very specific intricacies of how our provinces are run, and I would suggest that this significant overreach is a huge part of why there is huge frustration in both of our provinces.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, although what we are discussing tonight does not engage the Senate, the member's speech did, and I have always had this problem on the question of how we would reform the Senate. If we allow senators to have the authority and the recognized legitimacy to block votes by being themselves elected, as opposed to a vestige of the British Empire and our equivalent of the House of Lords, if they have legitimacy, then this place would become logjammed.

Has the hon. member fully considered the downsides of the Senate feeling it has the right, through legitimate election, to block legislation that has been passed in this place?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, let me clarify one thing. I am talking about the choices Alberta has made as a province, and I would suggest it is key for the federal government, regardless of party, to respect what a province may choose in determining the best path forward for how senators from that province would be elected.

Our constitutional framework is clear. Outside of a few very small exceptions, the Senate represents near equal authority to this place, and it is that counterbalance, often called the chamber of

sober second thought, that has the ability to block government legislation. By tradition, it does not.

I would suggest that, when it comes to Canada's democratic infrastructure, democracy reigns supreme. We have to ensure that people have their voices heard, and certainly when it comes to making that choice, I would trust the Canadian people, as I would trust the people from Alberta, to ensure that the right people are put in the right positions to ensure that the current inequity that exists can be addressed.

• (2010)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is fitting that the member is talking about being heard. My constituency has 209,000 people. It is roughly the same size in population as P.E.I., which has four Liberal members of Parliament. It does not matter how hard I work or how hard my staff work. I can come in here and debate all day long. I could even debate as much as the hon. deputy House leader. Still, when it comes time for our voice to count, it is during votes, and my vote counts for one vote and the P.E.I. MPs' count for four Liberal votes every single time. We have a government that is presiding over a country less united than at almost any other time in our history.

I would love to hear the hon. member, from a neighbouring constituency, talk about the disaffection Albertans are feeling from their government, that absolute lack of being listened to, and the impact it is having on the people of our province.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, it is fitting to be asked that question by the member in this place. Each member has equal standing in terms of the number of votes that they have and the ability to participate as a member of Parliament.

As the member pointed out, there are 209,000 people in the constituency of Edmonton—Wetaskiwin. I represent approximately 110,000 people. The inequity that Albertans feel is very real. I know the member for Calgary Shepard had spoken on this before. I believe he represents around 170,000 people. There are many examples, across Alberta especially, where this has to be addressed. When Canadians do not feel served or represented, it causes a disaffection that chips away at the very foundation of what our institutions and our democracy are supposed to be. That is why ensuring that this place, the House of the common people or the people's place, has that representation by population to ensure that voices ultimately are heard.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things that has always troubled me is that the foundational deal under which Canada was set up was equal representation for regions in the Upper House and representation by population in the Lower House. We have seen a very significant departure from representation by population, or rep by pop, in the Lower House, but in the Upper House we have seen a departure as well in the same direction. There are 24 senators for Ontario, 24 for Quebec, 24 for the western provinces and more than 30 for the Atlantic region, despite the fact that the Atlantic region has less than half the population of the next-smallest region.

Going back to the idea of the triple-E Senate, which was explored in the 1990s, would it make sense to advocate for all of the regions to at least have the same number of senators as the Atlantic region has?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I know the member for Kingston's long history of advocating for reforms and, I would suggest, maybe not just reforms but for ensuring that the evolution of our democratic infrastructure keeps pace with the demands of where our country is at.

Definitely, when the foundation of our country was laid, the idea of regional representation was very clearly marked out. As our nation has grown and evolved, as provinces have been added, as the population has expanded and as industries have drawn employees from around the world, we have to ensure that our democratic institutions keep pace with that. If trust is lost, it can be incredibly difficult to regain, so we have to be willing to have what admittedly would be difficult conversations. We have to be able to have them to ensure that our country can succeed, or else we will end up divided and I certainly do not want to see that.

• (2015)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member touched base a bit on Senate reform, specifically on Alberta having a vote last year in order to choose its own senators. We know that in the past, senators who were voted on from Alberta had been appointed to the Senate. What made it different this time regarding why those senators were not appointed?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will have a brief answer from the member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, the answer is very brief: Liberals.

It is unfortunate, because that has caused a further disenfranchisement and further alienation that needs to be addressed. I say with the utmost seriousness that if it is not addressed, our country could be torn apart. I do not think anybody in this place wants that, notwithstanding one party for which that is its objective. The vast majority of people in this place do not want to see our country torn apart, so respect has to be brought back to the conversation.

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POINTS OF ORDER

MOTION NO. 11—EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on an important point of order. I will refer members to Motion No. 11. Section (a) of Motion No. 11 refers to:

...a minister of the Crown may, with the agreement of the House leader of another recognized party, rise from his or her seat at any time during a sitting, but no later than 6:30 p.m., and request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the current sitting or a subsequent sitting be 12:00 a.m.

Earlier this evening, the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance rose to announce extended sittings for tomorrow night. I assume that he had the permission of another recognized party's House leader. I know that it did not come from me. I spoke to my hon. friend from the Bloc Québécois and it did not come from him.

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There should be an expectation, at a minimum, that when a minister rises and says that he has the approval of another recognized party's House leader, the party's House leader should be named. That was not done in this case, and I am asking for clarification on that. At a minimum, the House needs to understand which other recognized party House leader agreed to extend its sittings, as called for in the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As a point of clarification, the minister did not actually invoke. He said that a minister would be giving that notice tomorrow. He did not actually invoke; he just informed the House.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, it certainly is our understanding that he did engage in that, and perhaps it is a misunderstanding on our part. For future reference, at a minimum, if a minister does invoke that section of Motion No. 11, there should be an indication, and I hope the Speaker agrees with me, that a recognized House party leader who is agreeing to that be named as that minister stands up.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will review the procedures and get back to the hon. member, if need be.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

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PRESERVING PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (electoral representation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am deeply humbled and grateful to be here to speak about something fundamental to our country, and that is democracy. The reason I am feeling that so deeply today is because my riding of North Island—Powell River is in deep grief. On May 14, just two days ago, Canada lost an amazing community hero and World War II vet: "Stocky" Edwards, at the ripe age of 100. Our region is deeply shaken by this sad news, and I know that our legions and our military family will be grieving for a long time to come.

Stocky and his wife Toni have been pillars of our community for so long. Now, we will rally around her as she has done so often for all of us. My heart is with Stocky's wife Toni, and with all his family and loved ones.

When Stocky was asked about his tremendous accomplishments in the Second World War, he had no time to brag. His humbleness was one of his many assets that made our region have such deep love and respect for him. His commitment to the people of 19 Wing Comox has been deeply respected, and he and Toni provided a sense of family to so many new military folks in our area. I really want to take this opportunity to honour him and the dedication he had for our country. His loss is one that I will carry with me forever.

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I will now return to Bill C-14, which is really about democracy, our boundaries and representation. As the member of Parliament who represents the third-largest riding in British Columbia, I think that it is incredibly important to make sure that our boundaries are strong and clear, that communities are recognized, and that rural and remote communities have strong voices to support them in this process that we are all a part of in the House of Commons.

I also think that it is important to acknowledge that there are challenges of distrust of the government on this issue. The reason I bring that forward is because I was elected in 2015, and during and after that election, I had a lot of hope in the Prime Minister's promise around electoral reform. When the committee was struck, I was incredibly proud of the work that the NDP had done to make sure that the committee was proportional and that it really did reflect the space of the House. I also admired the committee deeply because of the work that it did and how much it met through the summer. That was a huge sacrifice, meaning that the members could not necessarily be in their ridings as much as they wanted to or with their families. They worked very hard and they provided a very profound report to Parliament that gave us a pathway to move forward on some key issues that matter to so many in our country.

I remember that I sent out a mailer to folks in our community and did several town halls in my region to talk about electoral reform. For a rural and remote community of that size, there was a lot of concern about access and voice, and about making sure that the representative was from the area and that those voices were specific and heard.

We had a lot of conversations. I was able to provide a report back to my community about what they had said about electoral reform. What was very interesting to me was the timing. I mailed out to my constituents what they had said about electoral reform, and just a few days before those landed on their doorsteps, the government said that it was not going to follow the report. In fact, it did it in some very disrespectful ways.

What I found interesting was that many constituents who were concerned about electoral reform, and who had a lot of things they wanted to explore further, felt very upset. They were frustrated that they did not get a voice. They felt that their voices were incredibly important in this process in a new way, because they were told they were no longer able to have a voice in the process. It was disappointing. I heard from a lot of constituents that they felt frustrated and that they felt that the Liberals just wanted a ranked ballot, and that was not what they wanted to see in our electoral process.

● (2020)

When we talk about things like proportional representation, we are talking about making sure that every vote counts, that the voices of the whole collective are reflected in our House of Commons.

As I said earlier, as a person who represents rural and remote communities, I wanted to make sure there were opportunities for those voices to be heard and that the process of a proportional system would not lose those voices. They want to see that the local representation and those voices are heard in the House of Commons. They want it to be fair.

There is room to have those discussions, but sadly, the Liberals ignored that opportunity. I really feel, and I have heard this after every election, there is a sense of cynicism that we are never going to get to a place where those voices are heard and where we actually create a system that is more proportional.

The member for Elmwood—Transcona put forward a motion in PROC to discuss the important idea of having a citizens' assembly on electoral reform in the last Parliament. It passed, but unfortunately, because of the election call, a completely uncalled for election in my opinion, the study never happened. We now have to go back to the drawing board.

What is so important about having a citizens' assembly on electoral reform is we need to see citizens engaged. We need to hear those voices. Maybe we need to take it out of the political realm and give voices to people across this country.

It is so important, and I have heard from constituents across the board that they want to explore this. They want to make sure their vote counts. They want to be able to vote as they feel, even if that vote will not get them a seat in Parliament. They do not want to feel that their vote is something they throw away.

Constituents also want to make sure that areas are represented fairly. For my riding, as I said earlier, they do not want to feel like the cities of our country are the ones making the decisions. The realities for rural and remote communities can be very different from those of larger cities. That is not to dishonour any of them, but it is to make sure that those voices are heard.

There are a lot of questions. People want to come together and they want to trust one another that they can have these frank conversations and educate each other. I hope the government will start to listen to those voices and take into account that when we have a system that allows people to have a voice, they want to speak out.

When we look at electoral reform and when we look at proportional representation, we know that diversity is engaged with those processes more. That is something we need to be paying attention to, especially as representatives of the House of the common people.

When we talk about that, we want to see as much diversity as we possibly can. We want multiple voices so that when decisions are made, they are made in comprehensive ways that take in all of those different points of view and assessments.

We continue to encourage this to happen. I know that we will continue to do the work. Hopefully we will see a study in PROC that actually gets to what we need to see happen across this country around a citizens' assembly so that the work can start. It is really important. Many people in my riding have come forward and presented this idea to me multiple times with a lot of passion and energy.

I am really happy to discuss this bill. I look forward to hearing from other people.

The last thing I want to mention is the idea of lowering the voting age. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has brought forward legislation for us to all look at and discuss. It is on lowering the voting age to 16. I am very proud to say that in my riding, we are hearing from young people who are supporting this wholeheartedly. They are actively going out and educating people about opening the doors of opportunity for young people to have a voice.

We know that when young people start voting sooner and when they participate sooner, they vote long term. I look forward to that.

I am happy to answer any questions.

● (2025)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I, too, am a big supporter of the private member's bill by the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. I introduced a very similar bill in the previous Parliament, as did the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, as did Senator McPhedran in the other place.

I sense a resistance to something that is quite sensible. Other countries have lowered the voting age to 16, yet I have a feeling, and I will ask the hon. member if she agrees, that the arguments about empowering 16-year-olds to vote are remarkably similar to the arguments about why women should not have a vote.

We hear people say that kids will not know enough and they will just vote for who their parents voted for. In the argument of suffrage for women, it was said that women would not know enough and they would just vote the way their husbands voted. We really need to examine the reasons and lack of logic in the arguments against 16-year-olds being able to vote.

Let us face it. We do not cut off voting for those who have diminished intellectual capacity as they age. There is no such thing as saying that someone with dementia who is in a home is not allowed to vote. I think 16-year-olds should have the right to vote.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's passion on this issue. I really appreciate the correlation that she made to how we diminish people by the language we use and how that was used against women. It was also used against indigenous people and people of colour. We need to stop this. In my opinion it is ageist.

I have knocked on a lot of doors in my riding. I have been so impressed by how many young people have come to the door to engage in meaningful conversation with me. Their understanding of the issues is profound. Many young people 14 to 17 years of age have dragged a parent out to talk to me on the doorstep. They have wanted to engage their parents in the conversation. They tell their

parents, "You have to vote for me if you're not going to vote for yourself."

There are some barriers. I definitely have seen it in my riding as well. Some people are concerned about this. The reality is that the facts tell us that if people vote when they are young, they are more likely to continue voting. A lot of people are not voting when they turn 18. If we gave them the opportunity at 16, I think it would make a huge difference.

It is important to have those young people engaged in the process, especially when we look at the big issues that we will have to face in the future.

● (2030)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston asked this question of the member earlier. One of the great debates of Confederation between Canadians in Upper Canada and Lower Canada at the time was about representation by population. In a Supreme Court decision regarding a case out of Saskatchewan, the Supreme Court talked about effective representation.

The member represents quite a large rural riding in British Columbia, which comes with its own challenges. I wonder if she would speak to that. I represent the second-largest riding by population size in Canada, the largest in Calgary, of course, but it is a fairly small riding. I can drive from one end to the other in 20 minutes. I have one mayor to deal with and two or three city councillors. It is far more complicated for members who have multiple mayors, multiple city councils and large regions to travel through to do that effective representation.

I would like to hear her comments on that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I agree that there are multiple challenges. There are seven ferries in my riding and a lot of areas to cover. It is a great honour for me to do that work. It does mean that I spend a lot of time on the phone or travelling to speak with constituents.

I represent 11 municipalities, over 20 indigenous communities and four regional districts within all of that. It takes up a lot of time, but I have to say that the communities in my riding are extremely effective at bringing issues that matter most to them to my attention.

As we move through this, we have to look at how our democracy works, depending on whether it is for a large rural riding or a smaller urban riding. Both have specific challenges. I think of the member for Nunavut. Although her riding has a small population, it is such a vast area that she has to travel across to spend time with her constituents.

Government Orders

All of us have challenges. It behooves all of us to listen to one another about what those challenges are and make sure that our democracy is reflective of the needs of our constituents. We are all here to serve the people of our ridings. It is important to make sure that their voices are heard. I will continue to do that.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the cornerstone of our democracy rests in people's ability to vote. We have heard from constituents over and over again. In particular, in my riding of Vancouver East, my constituents have consistently told me that they want to see a democratic system where every vote counts.

Prior to the 2015 election, the Prime Minister promised Canadians that would be the last first-past-the-post election that we would have. Of course, when the Liberals formed government, that was all but forgotten, even though the House had engaged in extensive work with regard to proportional representation.

I would like to ask the member for her thoughts about that. When the Prime Minister reneges on a promise like that, is the Prime Minister telling Canadians that they cannot trust what he promises? What damage does that do to our democratic system?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, that is an important question. My response is it does break down those opportunities for connection with leadership. People want promises to be followed through on. It was most disheartening for me because of the amount of work that the committee did. It was a significant report.

I really hope that all Canadians take an opportunity to at least read the recommendations. The report talked about the next steps that need to be taken. The minister of the day treated it as if it was too complex and that it did not do what it said it did, which I completely disagree with. These are important things.

We have to follow through on our commitments. We have to let Canadians have a voice in that process. A promise was made, but the promise was not kept. Even the process of how that was laid out was absolutely flawed. It does breed cynicism, which can make all of our jobs much more difficult.

• (2035)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really enjoy working with the hon. member in the time that we have been here, since 2015.

I want to pick up on a point that the hon. member made. I recall when the electoral reform committee was constituted, there was a tremendous amount of work that went into it. The member for Larnak—Frontenac—Kingston was on that committee.

There were recommendations that all of the opposition parties agreed to, not the least of which was to recommend the idea of proportional representation, but again, bring it to Canadians in a referendum.

There can be an argument made as to where we go. I understand that the NDP is in favour of a citizens' assembly, but would she not agree with me and reaffirm that a promise was not kept by the Prime Minister? He did not get his preferred choice of voting, which would have been a ranked system, but more so, the issue of proportional representation, bringing it to Canadians and letting

them decide on what type of voting system should be enacted is important.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed my time working with the member on different committees and in different roles. That is something all of us as members of Parliament should spend time talking about, how we work collectively across different party lines on things that matter to our constituents.

I agree that we need to have a process. I do believe in a citizens' assembly, because it is those kinds of conversations that allow people to grow in their knowledge and wisdom on these issues. I know that a proportional system is very different from the current system of first past the post. I believe that we do need to have an education component to that, so that people can ask those hard questions and work out through the process what might be the best system that serves our country.

I definitely have an opinion on that, but it is so important to have citizens doing that work. It is an important piece to take it out of the political realm. There is something to be said for having the communities make those decisions to come forward with recommendations and have politicians definitely listen to them. I look forward to continuing to work on that with the Conservative Party.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 62, I move:

That the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets be now heard.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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

[English]

Mr. Tom Kmiec: On behalf of the official opposition, I ask for a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (2120)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 94)

YEAS

Members

Albas	Allison
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bérubé	Bezan
Block	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo	Chabot
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dancho
DeBellefeuille	d'Entremont
Doherty	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Gallant	Généreux

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Genuis
 Godin
 Kmiec
 Kramp-Neuman
 Lantsman
 Lehoux
 Liepert
 Lobb
 McLean
 Muys
 Patzer
 Perkins
 Richards
 Seeback
 Small
 Steinley
 Stubbs
 Thomas
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Warkentin
 Williams

Gill
 Gourde
 Kram
 Kurek
 Lawrence
 Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Lloyd
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
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 Van Popta
 Vignola
 Vuong
 Williamson

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Members

Angus
 Bachrach
 Barron
 Berthold
 Blanchette-Joncas
 Boulerville
 Calkins
 Carrie
 Dalton
 Davies
 Ellis
 Fast
 Garon
 Gazan
 Goodridge
 Green

Arnold
 Badawey
 Beaulieu
 Blaikie
 Blaney
 Bragdon
 Cannings
 Collins (Victoria)
 Davidson
 Dowdall
 Epp
 Fortin
 Garrison
 Gladu
 Gray
 Hallan

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion defeated.

The hon. minister is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Monday, May 2, the motion is deemed adopted.

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:24 p.m.)

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