



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 116
Monday, October 24, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 24, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

REUNITING FAMILIES ACT

The House resumed from September 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (temporary resident visas for parents and grandparents), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this bill will have a positive and meaningful impact on family reunification for many immigrants, particularly immigrant women.

Bill C-242 would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, specifically the eligibility criteria for parents and grandparents who wish to apply for the temporary resident super visa. To better understand this, let us take a quick look back.

The super visa was introduced in 2011. It allowed many parents and grandparents from around the world to temporarily enter Canada for two years at a time over a 10-year period. This visa allows multiple entries for extended periods. This has benefited families and communities across the country, both socially and economically. More than a third of the super visas were granted to families from India, followed by families from China, Pakistan, the Philippines and Bangladesh.

One year after the launch of the super visa program, approximately 13,000 visas had been issued, with an acceptance rate of 87%. Without exact statistics about the number of super visas issued per year, we know that it is 20,000 or less across Quebec and the country, representing a relatively small proportion of between 1% and 2% of temporary residence visas issued every year.

We can easily understand that being able to stay longer with an adult child would allow a parent or grandparent to provide support in all kinds of family situations. Very often, the individual will take care of grandchildren, enabling adult immigrants to actively contribute to the economy.

How does the super visa for parents and grandparents differ from a regular multiple-entry visa? Currently, most visitors can only stay in Canada up to six months after their initial entry. The super visa allows eligible parents and grandparents to visit their family in Canada for up to two years without having to renew their status.

Bill C-242 introduces minor and very specific amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to facilitate the arrival of parents and grandparents sponsored by a child or grandchild who is a temporary resident or Canadian citizen. This bill will extend the validity of the temporary resident visa from two to five years. This will give these families three more years to improve their chances of obtaining permanent residence. That is something.

One of the greatest benefits of facilitating the arrival of parents or grandparents from abroad is to make it possible for them to free the parents from the responsibility of caring for young children and helping them save money on child care costs.

I would ask members to note the following prediction: By 2036, between 38% and 50% of children under the age of 6 will be children of immigrants. Therefore, it will be especially important to provide the parents of these children with an alternative for their child's care.

I would also point out to my colleagues that some cultures value the importance of exposing children to their mother tongue and their culture at a very young age. Those values can have an impact on the families' preferences when it comes to choosing a child care option.

We know that the lack of established social networks, the lack of ties to the host community and language barriers significantly hinder access to child care. These factors disproportionately affect new immigrants. The situation is even worse for immigrant women. They often face a difficult choice: to work, at times for low pay because they often have few skills or their skills are unfortunately not recognized, or to stay home with the children to save on child care costs.

A resident in my constituency, Laurentides—Labelle, who is originally from India called us for help bringing over his father-in-law. That resident is a new father and it would be entirely natural for the grandfather to be able to stay in the beautiful area of Saint-Agathe-des-Monts to support his daughter and son-in-law for at least five years.

Private Members' Business

In general, immigrant families are more likely to turn to free child care options that allow both parents to work. For all these reasons, we must consider Bill C-242, which will facilitate family reunification for an extended period of time. It will enable immigrant families to turn to free child care options and make it possible for mothers to choose to contribute to the economy and improve their living conditions. Everyone wins.

For all these reasons, and to support these immigrant families, the Bloc Québécois will vote for this bill.

I would add that there are many new immigrant families who are having a hard time adjusting. We see it, and we support them every day in all our regions. They reach out to us for support in their integration journey. We must support them and support the amendments in Bill C-242.

I would like to talk about the four changes to the eligibility criteria for the parents' and grandparents' super visa. The first, as I said at the outset, is the extended stay in Canada for up to five years. Second, the visa facilitates access to permanent residence. Parents and grandparents will have three years to obtain permanent residence for themselves. Third, the visa expands the pool of insurance companies. Currently, only Canadian companies can be used. Immigrants will be able to buy coverage at a better price. Fourth, the minister will have to table a report about reducing the income requirement to make it easier for parents and grandparents to come.

In closing, we must remember that a newcomer's journey demands a fighting spirit, especially in the early years. They face many obstacles. I salute everyone in Laurentides—Labelle who is facing those obstacles right now. Of course we do what we can to support them.

Many of those who reach out to us need help finding work, learning our language or accessing various services. I believe that Bill C-242 will facilitate their social and economic integration. It is important to support them.

• (1110)

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about making it easier to reunite families in Canada. After almost three years of families across the world being unable to travel to visit each other, there seems to be no better time than right now to be having this debate. Families have missed weddings, funerals, births and so many important life events that build the fabric of a family and a community. As Canada moves forward post-COVID, we are and will be addressing the most challenging physical and mental health crises of our lifetime. Having family around is a core component of a happy, healthy recovery.

Women have carried a disproportionate burden through COVID-19 because they make up the majority of health care, education and child care workers. They have also borne the burden of additional non-paid work, invisible work, by taking on a disproportionate amount of home schooling, family care, elder care and volunteering. They need the support that comes with family reunification now more than ever.

Invisible work is an integral part of the economy, and it is time to acknowledge the size of this invisible workforce and its value. In Canada, invisible work equates to \$350 billion per year. That is 16% of the country's GDP. The people who take on invisible work are invaluable. As a government, we must recognize it in our words, measure it in our economy and adopt policies to value it. This bill is a step toward addressing that.

Before I go further, I want to take a moment to recognize that gender equality—

The Deputy Speaker: I always hate interrupting, but I think the correct microphone is not selected. Can the member make sure the right microphone is selected? Interpretation is having a hard time. She can also tap on the microphone.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

• (1115)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if it helps facilitate things, I suggest that we go to the next speaker. If the member is able to get the issue rectified, we can always come back to her if she has leave to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: I think that is probably what we will do. We will have the technicians get the member up and running, and if she does not mind, she can take the next slot. I will put the member down as the next speaker.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was just discussing with some members on our side that this is an example of the shortcomings of a hybrid Parliament.

I want to congratulate the member for Dufferin—Caledon for this private member's bill to reunite families in Canada. It is critically important. As a new Canadian and immigrant to this country, I value the fact that Canada prioritizes ideas like this. The family is the foundation of a healthy society, and the member for Dufferin—Caledon deserves all the praise for his success from communities that have been asking for this for many years. We need to pass this bill.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House in support of Bill C-242, which seeks to improve the super visa for parents or grandparents visiting their families in Canada for extended periods of time.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

I want to thank the member for Dufferin—Caledon for introducing this bill. I also want to thank all the committee members, who have been working to improve family reunification, for their co-operation.

[English]

Family reunification has always been a top priority for the government. That is why our government has always supported the principles of Bill C-242, reuniting parents and grandparents with their adult children and grandchildren in Canada.

[Translation]

Canada has one of the most generous family reunification programs in the world. We bring families, spouses and common-law partners, children and parents together through permanent and temporary programs.

[English]

One such mechanism is the super visa, which is a multiple-entry temporary resident visa that allows parents and grandparents to visit a child or grandchild in Canada for extended periods of time. Bill C-242 is focused on changing the super visa. The super visa has been a particularly popular way for the government to help reunite families. Since it was first established in 2011, nearly 150,000 super visas have been issued, with approximately 17,000 visas granted annually.

[Translation]

We are talking about approximately 150,000 parents and grandparents who were able to spend time with their children and grandchildren during extended visits to Canada. These parents and grandparents play an important role in the family and help guide the next generation. Having parents and grandparents around can make life easier in situations where both parents work.

[English]

What makes the super visa unique is the length of stay and the ability to leave and to return to Canada. For a standard visitor's visa or temporary resident visa, the length of stay is limited to up to six months. Because the super visa allows for longer stays and the ability to return without reapplying for another temporary visa, it is highly valuable to bringing families together.

Our government has made many changes to improve the super visa. First, by increasing the length of stay per entry from one year to two years in 2018, and most recently, in June of this year, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced the visa would be enhanced to allow for stays up to five years at a time. The super visa also holds the possibility of multiple extensions. Now a parent or grandparent can stay up to seven consecutive years.

A long-term, flexible visa means that applicants and their families might be subject to additional criteria before their applications are approved. This includes undergoing an immigration medical exam, purchasing private medical insurance and ensuring that the applicant will receive minimum financial support from their Canadian or permanent resident child or grandchild.

• (1120)

[Translation]

Super visas are authorized through ministerial instructions, in accordance with the powers granted to the minister by Parliament under the law. Ministerial instructions are a more flexible instrument that can usually be implemented more rapidly when governments need to make changes quickly to respond to our clients' needs.

[English]

I note that some members of the committee raised concerns that by enshrining a new super visa condition into the legislation, it might be less adaptable to changing circumstances. While there are advantages to maintaining the program in ministerial instructions, Bill C-242 would advance every party's desire to keep families together and allow parents and grandparents to support their loved ones in Canada.

Our government firmly supports the five-year length of stay per entry for super visa holders, and that is why we announced changes to the super visa in June of this year to increase the length of stay to five years per entry, with a possibility of extending the stay for two years.

Bill C-242 would also legislate that applicants can purchase health insurance from insurance companies outside of Canada. Currently, only Canadian insurance companies can offer coverage for those parents or grandparents coming to Canada.

As previously mentioned, the minister announced enhancements to the super visa in June of 2022, and as part of those changes, the minister is now able to designate foreign medical insurance providers to provide insurance coverage for super visa applications. I am glad the language of the bill supports a robust and thorough system to approve international insurance companies.

[Translation]

Finally, we firmly support the minister examining the program criteria for the current super visa and tabling a report in Parliament outlining how to improve the program. This responds to some of the concerns raised in committee about the income requirement for the super visa, which would ensure that parents and grandparents are supported while they are in Canada. I believe that all members in the House want to examine options for improving any and all programs so that as many families as possible can access them.

[English]

Similarly, we appreciate the recent amendment to Bill C-242 to authorize the minister to conduct an examination of special circumstances that may have arisen during the processing of temporary resident visa applications, and report back to Parliament. We are supportive of this study and look forward to its findings.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

I appreciate the work done by the committee and the House seeking to improve our immigration system and reunite more families in Canada. I thank those who contributed to and are working on improving this program and other immigration programs. I am pleased about the prospect of future collaborations and a law that brings all parties in the House together to work on behalf of all Canadians and in their best interests.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to the next member, I want to ensure members check their microphones to ensure they are working. I need to back up on one thing, which is to ensure people do not tap their microphones if they are not working. I would them to unplug them and plug them back in to ensure they are working.

• (1125)

[Translation]

The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

[English]

I hope her microphone is working correctly this time.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Speaker, before I go further, I want to take a moment to recognize that gender equality is still a daily fight and that this fight is deadly right now for women in Iran.

In a bloodthirsty dictatorship, women are at the front line of unspeakable abuses. They are being killed, raped and brutalized just because they are women. This needs to end, and the Canadian government must do more to end the killing.

While fear and killing escalate in Iran, for the Canadian women who are here and who have in the past applied to have their families come here to be with them, those visas have been rejected by the government. While visas are being granted for people bringing into this country enormous amounts of money, money launderers, women who have desperately wanted their parents and grandparents to come and visit and support them have had the door closed.

For the Liberal government, it appears that money talks and that entry into Canada is a pay-to-play system. This is wrong and it needs to be corrected. That correction involves more resources to IRCC

Wait times for IRCC are absolutely unacceptable. When it comes to the super visa process, it reflects a lack of compassion and understanding by the government of the importance of family reunification.

In my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, I have met too many young families that have not been able to overcome the barriers that the Liberal government puts in front of them to have their parents come and visit. Too many families in my community have had to go through an illness, a birth, a death, a marriage, a breakup and many other life events alone, because the government is without compassion and has not invested enough resources into the immigration programs. The lack of investment and the lack of compassion and understanding by the government manifests in stress and anxiety for families.

I want to share a few real situations that have caused undue financial and emotional stress in my community. More often than not, it is women who get hurt.

The first example I have is a community person who reached out to say that she had applied for a visa on June 24th for her mother to come and visit. The writer says, “I have given birth to her first grandchild and we were hoping to have her here with us to assist us with our first child. Having an additional set of experienced hands would be so helpful to me during this time, as my husband is back to work full time.”

The second person from my community said, “I have applied for my mom's super visa on Nov 08, 2021. I haven't received any response from IRCC on my mom's application. It's been five years and five months that I haven't seen my mom due to my schooling. I recently got engaged and want to get married this year and want my mom to be here.”

Last, this person wrote, “My mother and I came to Canada about three years ago and became refugees. Our refugee acceptance came in September 2020 and we are permanent residents now. We haven't seen my father for over 3 years and my mom is getting depression and anxiety since her husband can't be with her in this tough time.”

These stories highlight how imperative this super visa program is to the lives of Canadians. Although the bill before us seeks to enhance the current process by addressing the high costs with respect to insurance coverage and extending the period in which parents and grandparents can come to Canada, the government must address the lack of resources in IRCC.

There is no doubt in the minds of the New Democrats that ensuring family reunification for parents and grandparents is a laudable goal. It is a goal we support. We want to see this measure come to fruition. Let us reduce the costs of family reunification with loved ones and make it not something a person needs to buy into, but something that is accessible and something that we all honour and respect.

The NDP has always seen family reunification as a pivotal component of Canada's immigration system. All families want to be reunited with their loved ones, and they should not have to go through such hardships to be with their parents or grandparents.

Research has shown that when a family network includes parents and grandparents, it makes the settlement and integration process much easier for newcomers. It also confirms the essential role parents and grandparents play in supporting the healthy development of youth.

Families are particularly important in the maintenance of the well-being of racialized communities, members of the disability community and women.

Women and immigrant women are the core of the care economy in Canada. One in four jobs in Canada is a care job. With the current labour shortages in our country and the crushing weight of an overburdened health care system, immigration will continue to be a necessity to bring more workers into Canada.

Care is already a sector disproportionately represented by women and immigrant women who deserve to have a family support network to support them and their work.

• (1130)

HUMA recently studied labour shortages in the care economy and witnesses asked how they could be expected to attract and retain workers in this highly gendered occupation when the industry discriminated against them. The exploitation of care workers needs to stop. We must make every care job a good job and that includes reunification of the families of these workers.

A high proportion of immigrant women work in care. They provide the professional and emotional support patients need, yet they have no extended family support to help them with looking after their own children when this super visa becomes a barrier.

Witnesses told us during the HUMA study that their situations would greatly improve if they were able to bring family to Canada: better mental supports, child care supports and more security in their communities.

Canada will continue to rely on immigration in the coming years and a good, strong family reunification program will play a significant role in attracting, retaining and integrating immigrants who contribute to our success as a country, particularly as we work to through COVID-19.

When parents and grandparents come to Canada through family reunification, they contribute to the economy. They support the family, allowing parents to get out into the workforce, and they can help with child care. They help with the growth of children by teaching them their cultural and family history, language and more. All of that contributes to building a healthy, happy and multicultural Canada, one of which we are very proud.

With that in mind, I will reiterate that the NDP wants the government to lift the cap on parents and grandparents reunification so all those family members can seek permanent residence status in Canada in an expeditious way.

Of course, the NDP supports the super visa extension. It is a welcomed change that is a stepping stone to a more compassionate family reunification law.

In addition to the points I have already made, it is also essential that we bring back the appeals process for the parents and grandparents stream. As the member for Vancouver East has said many times in the House, she had a family that was rejected for the program in its third year of meeting the onerous financial requirements because it went on maternity leave for one month. As a result of that, the family's income dipped and its dream of reuniting with their parents vanished. This is wrong. An appeals process with some ability to provide flexibility would have accommodated that temporary change in circumstances.

Private Members' Business

Ultimately, our immigration system is in need of repair and the NDP would like to see long-term change. In the meantime, the measures in this bill would help people, and that is something the NDP supports.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-242 makes minor, very specific changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The bill seeks to make it easier for a child or grandchild with temporary resident status or citizenship to bring in sponsored parents and grandparents. It amends certain specific super visa eligibility criteria.

The super visa was introduced in 2011 under the Conservatives. It is a visa that allows multiple entries and is valid for a maximum of 10 years. It allows parents and grandparents to enter Quebec and Canada and visit their family under a temporary visa for two years without having to renew their status. A regular visa for multiple entries is also valid for a maximum of 10 years, but it allows a maximum stay of six months each time.

I do not have precise statistics on the number of super visas issued per year, but we know that there are fewer than 20,000 issued nationwide every year. This represents a fairly marginal proportion of 1% to 2% of the 1.7 million temporary resident visas issued annually from 2017 to 2019.

The super visa has allowed thousands of parents and grandparents from abroad to come to Canada for extended periods, which benefits the families not only socially, but also economically. For example, by being in Quebec, those parents and grandparents can help care for young children, allowing working-age immigrants and citizens to fully participate in the labour force and the economy.

Having them here saves parents from paying for child care. Studies show that immigrant parents are less likely than non-immigrant parents to pay for child care in order to go to work. Sometimes, these families simply cannot afford child care.

It is well known that immigrant women are particularly likely to be underemployed for their level of education. Faced with a choice between accepting low-paying work for which they are overqualified and staying home with the children, many immigrant mothers choose to stay home and save on child care costs.

It is worth noting that the difference in the use of child care services between immigrant and non-immigrant families is not statistically significant in Quebec, which has had a universal public child care system since 1997.

Private Members' Business

As one study found, it is women who usually assume the additional responsibilities of child care. Bill C-242 is therefore more likely to have a positive impact on the social and professional lives of immigrant women.

Since they have temporary status, these super visa immigrants cost the government little or nothing. One of the eligibility criteria for the super visa is that the person sponsoring their parents or grandparents must provide a letter that includes a promise of financial support.

A child or grandchild who invites their parent or grandparents to come to Canada must prove that their household meets the minimum necessary income. Applicants for the super visa must have medical insurance from a Canadian insurance company and must provide proof that the medical insurance has been paid.

The obligation to provide proof of medical insurance reduces the likelihood of any potential demands on the health care system or social services funded by Quebec and Canadian taxpayers. The insurance also protects the parents and grandparents, who will not be taking any risks and will not have to pay the total cost of medical care out of pocket.

As with any temporary immigration document, applicants must prove that they will voluntarily leave Canada at the end of their visit. Contrary to what we may infer from all the financial restrictions that the government has put on this super visa, having a parent or grandparent come here does not pose an additional financial burden. It is just the opposite. Having a family member provide child care allows parents to spend more time working, freeing them up to take additional shifts, for instance.

• (1135)

Studies also show that parents and grandparents who are invited under the super visa program or sponsored under the parents and grandparents program help their immigrant children remain in or join the labour market. Having a grandparent at home can also enable parents to accept jobs with irregular hours that fall outside child care hours.

Bill C-242 seeks to facilitate the arrival of these parents or grandparents by amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in four concrete ways. First, it allows applicants for a temporary resident super visa to purchase private health insurance from an insurance company outside Canada. Based on the law of supply and demand, it is possible that, over the long term, Canadian insurance companies may lower their own insurance premiums and contributions for temporary immigrants.

Second, it extends the maximum stay in Canada to five years instead of two, without requiring the document to be renewed.

Third, the bill also requires the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to prepare and table a report assessing the implications of a reduction to the minimum income requirement, again to facilitate the arrival of parents or grandparents by reducing the financial restrictions associated with applying.

Fourth, the super visa currently allows eligible Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor their parents and grandparents

so that they in turn can obtain permanent residence. Basically, this program operates like a lottery.

By extending the validity of the temporary resident visa from two years to five, Bill C-242 gives these families three extra years to improve their chances of obtaining permanent residence for their parents or grandparents.

Bill C-242 is particularly relevant in light of the labour shortage happening in Quebec and everywhere else. That labour shortage is exacerbated by a shortage of child care spaces.

The Fédération des intervenantes en petite enfance du Québec, a Quebec organization representing child care providers, says that there is a need for 75,000 regulated, subsidized spaces.

This shortage has considerable economic impacts: Seventy per cent of SMEs say they are having human resource management issues directly related to a lack of child care spaces.

Bill C-242 does not deal so much with the issue of the quantity of immigration as the quality and fairness of the immigration process. It is consistent with the concept of looking after new immigrants rather than feeding a machine designed to receive large numbers of immigrants with no regard for their integration into the host society.

As we know, the process of adapting and transitioning into a new society is often tumultuous and rife with challenges, particularly in terms of the language and culture of the host country, difficulty finding a job, a lack of social support and all the material sacrifices caused by arriving in a new country.

Bill C-242 could therefore make things easier and allow new immigrants to have more time, for example, to properly integrate into the host society, learn the French language, look for work and improve their living conditions.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-242.

• (1140)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon has the floor for his right of reply.

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the Bloc Québécois and NDP members for the support of my private member's bill. If they had not supported the bill at committee, it would not be here for third reading. I do not know where the government is going to be on this private member's bill when it comes to a vote.

The Liberals talk about how it is great that the super visa has been extended from two to five years. They talk about how it is great that foreign insurance companies can now provide the health insurance coverage for super visa applicants. They took those two chunks from my private member's bill and passed ministerial instructions to allow them to happen. That is fantastic, but it is just dipping their pinkies in the pool. I am suggesting they take the full plunge. Let us just jump in the pool altogether. Ministerial instructions can be fickle. The minister might say he no longer likes it and he can just snap their fingers, change the ministerial instructions and those two enhancements to the super visa could vanish overnight.

My bill would legislate it. It would enshrine it in legislation. It could not be changed at the whim of a minister. That is why the bill should continue and go forward. It is important to have these changes, and members from the government rose in debate and said how fantastic they were. I know they were not congratulating me for them. They are taking the credit for doing them in ministerial instructions. It did take my private member's bill to get them to actually do this, despite a committee, five or six years ago, suggesting these things be done. The Liberals were the government the whole time. However, the second a Conservative MP put something forward, they saw the light, so I guess I should give them some congratulations for that.

What the Liberals do not talk about is that the other part of my bill deals with the LICO, the low-income cut-off. So many new Canadians are disenfranchised from getting a super visa because they do not meet that low-income cut-off. New Canadians, people who have been here a short period of time, are generally working several jobs and their incomes are not very high. They cannot even apply for a super visa. It is easy for members of the chattering class to say "too bad", but people who are working hard should not be discriminated against because their incomes do not meet that test. My bill would require the minister to prepare a report to lower the low-income cut-off. I do not know why the government seems to be against that. It should be supporting it.

This bill is going to pass here at third riding, thankfully with the support of my friends in the NDP and my friends in the Bloc Québécois. I am beseeching the members of the government to talk to their independent senators, who are really Liberal senators, and pass this in the Senate. It is an important piece of legislation. It would go further than ministerial instructions. It also would get the minister to prepare that report to lower the low-income cut-off.

Why it is so important and why I am pushing so hard on this, even now at third reading, is that having a parent or grandparent here in Canada is so important for families, and not just from an economic sense. What we heard at committee and what we know is that having a parent or grandparent here in the country improves the economics of that family. That is indisputable. That is why lowering the low-income cut-off is a good thing. It would allow more families to bring their parents or grandparents here, which would help them economically.

What we also have to talk about are the amazing things that it does for the family unit. Whether it is passing down traditions or the cohesiveness of having parents and grandparents in the home together, these are things that we should all support. If we truly

Government Orders

want new Canadians to succeed in this country, not only economically but socially, we should all be saying let us dramatically reduce the low-income cut-off. So far, the government has not moved on that.

So far the Liberals have not said whether they are going to vote in favour of this bill at third reading. They should for that reason alone: to allow more new Canadians to qualify for the super visa. It would be good for them. It would be good for the country. I hope the Liberals will vote for it.

● (1145)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I would prefer it to carry on division, or perhaps, by unanimous consent.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will be clear: We would like a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 26, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Deputy Speaker: Being that we are a little ahead of time, I would suggest that we suspend until the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:48 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12:03 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1200)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House, if the motion for the concurrence in the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, presented on Friday, April 29, 2022, is moved under the rubric Motions during Routine Proceedings today, it shall be disposed of as follows:

(a) only one member shall be allowed to speak; and

(b) upon the conclusion of the 10-minute question and comment period following the first intervention on the motion, the debate shall be deemed adjourned and shall be resumed today at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment provided that;

(i) during the debate, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair,

Government Orders

(ii) at the conclusion of the time provided for the debate tonight or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion shall be put without further debate or amendment,

(iii) the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

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

It is agreed.

[*English*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

**STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT**

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise once again to finish my speech on Bill S-5. For the benefit of my colleagues in the chamber today, I will do a quick review of where we were last week.

Before looking at how the bill is written, I explained why we should always be ready to question the Liberal government's real agenda whenever it makes announcements or introduces legislation about the environment. We need to look no further than its history of hypocrisy, double standards, failures and empty promises. If its members say that they are doing something in the name of the environment, it is not necessarily the case to begin with, and later we do not see the expected results.

Sometimes it gets worse than that, when a policy that claims to be helping the environment will end up having a negative impact on the environment. With all the economic and social costs, and with our industries attacked or neglected despite their own best efforts to be environmentally responsible, Canadians are left to wonder what the point of it really was, but it does not need to be that way.

There needs to be a balanced approach to caring for the environment and promoting industry. Bill S-5 seems to be a little different from the more outrageous examples that Canadians are used to seeing from the Liberals, but some of the amendments have raised concerns that we will not maintain the right balance, which is the point I was making before the House adjourned.

I was talking about one of those amendments in the section dealing with assessments of whether a substance is toxic or not. The original version of the bill mentions “vulnerable population”, but it has been amended to include a new term, which is “vulnerable environment”. As a new term, it is vague and unclear, and this could

be another source of regulatory uncertainty for the stakeholders who are involved in the assessment or enforcement process.

Such a concern does not come out of nowhere. It is a real possibility, and we have already seen it happen more broadly with the same government's impact assessment process. It has not only ruled out new pipelines for oil and gas, exactly as it was expected to do, but the Liberals have made their hostility to that sector abundantly clear, and they will find any excuse to express it to the point of absurdity.

The Chancellor of Germany travelled all the way here to ask for our support in supplying them with more LNG, but we let him down. Since then, we recently heard the Prime Minister say that Russia invading Ukraine will accelerate Canada in its transition away from petroleum products, even though there is a surge in global demand for Canadian LNG and oil to stop relying on Russian energy. Despite the needs of our allies, the Liberals will not miss a chance to publicly attack our energy sector. This will be a sad part of the legacy of the Impact Assessment Act.

That same process has created challenges in other areas of resource development, whether it is with forestry or even with expansion in new mining projects, and I will provide a quick example.

In the CUSMA deal, when it was renegotiated, there was a three-year window to source lithium tariff-free regionally, but because of the Impact Assessment Act, there is not a chance that there will be a mining project in Canada put on—

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has not yet touched on Bill S-5, which is certainly the subject of debate today, and I would ask you if there is a need to ask for relevance.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for her intervention. It is a reminder to always, of course, stick to the bill at hand.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has the floor.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, I was talking about an amendment that was in there previously, so I have touched on the bill, but sometimes the truth does hurt.

I will finish with my example, quickly. When it comes to these lithium projects, we are missing the opportunity to source them tariff-free in that three-year window because of the impact assessment project. We were told in committee it would take approximately 10 years to be able to get a project going because of the Impact Assessment Act, so it is very important to have that issue raised when we are talking about this bill because we are talking about the environment.

Government Orders

As much as the Liberals want to talk about Canada leading a new industry of critical minerals for a green economy, the time frame, as I just referred to in that example, is an obstacle to starting these new projects. The government has spent a lot of time talking about how we have an abundance of raw materials for this emerging sector. Canada has what it takes to successfully compete in the global market for electric vehicle batteries and other products, and there is a lot of potential there if it works out.

It has always been true that our country is blessed with having so many natural resources. It is the economic foundation of our prosperity. The Liberals point to critical minerals as the answer to reducing emissions, creating new jobs and strengthening our position through an energy transition, but how can it happen if it takes too long to review and approve, for example, mining projects? All the minerals will stay in the ground.

The Liberals see an opportunity in front of them, but their own policy will make us watch on the sidelines as it passes us by, and they will sabotage their own environmental plan. The delay makes it all but impossible to get ahead of the curve and be competitive. I will take this opportunity to remind the government, once again, that stakeholders told us this when we were studying the subject at committee. This is what happens when the government does not listen or respond to practical feedback from industry. It is counterproductive.

I have already raised this issue with the minister, but the government has not acknowledged it and has not shown a willingness to reconsider what it is doing. Unless we take a different approach to development, one that is compatible with protecting the environment, this is a problem that will continue to hold us back. It will remain a lose-lose scenario.

There is another example of this that is closer to the subject of the amendment. Under the new fuel regulations, the government wants to rely on expanding the production of biofuels. Again, it offers it as a solution for both the environment and our future economy. This would increase demand for crops like canola, and we are advised farmers should produce the higher yields required without using more land to do it, which remains to be seen.

However, this creates an incentive in a market dynamic for farmers and ranchers to switch to producing biofuel crops. That is their decision to make, and rightfully so, and many will probably want to do so because of the prices and other factors. It is not explicitly part of the regulation or the policy behind it to favour biofuels, but the reality is that we will have people breaking up natural grasslands to start growing these crops that offer higher returns. This is something I have already seen across southwestern Saskatchewan in my riding, and also elsewhere.

These are sensitive ecosystems, which could be the sort described as a vulnerable environment, as we see in Bill S-5, but this is a vulnerable environment at risk from environmental policy instead of toxic substances. If there is a strong incentive to break them up, they will no longer be conserved, as is currently being done, by farmers. After that happens, we will never get them back. As a result, we would also lose carbon sequestration and the other benefits grasslands and similar areas provide.

If we are trying to protect the environment, we cannot consider it in isolation, as though it is something opposed to industry. This is a real example where economic activity has brought added benefits to sensitive ecosystems. For a long time, the agricultural sector has preserved and revived the grasslands. It is in its best interest to do so. This fact has been recognized and included in conservation efforts, but now we are starting to disrupt the balanced relationship that exists, and that would have a negative impact on the environment.

This all goes to show the danger of something that sounds good as an environmental policy but does not care as much about consistency or consequences in the real world. It can interfere with climate goals and cancel itself out. With Bill S-5, it would be unfortunate if something like that happened again in an unforeseen way. It is why we need to carefully consider the details and feedback we are getting from stakeholders when we hear them at committee or when we are back home in our ridings.

Finally, the bill itself provides a right for anyone to request an assessment for whether a substance is capable of becoming toxic. This opens a wide door for the department to take in a large number of assessments outside of its regular work. We have seen how Liberals manage federal services and how easily those have been overwhelmed, whether it was with processing passports over the summer or the backlog of air travel complaints.

There is room for improvement in this bill, and we hope any remaining concerns will be resolved.

● (1210)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said that when it comes to extracting critical resources like the products required for lithium batteries, Canada would somehow be standing on the sidelines. I think those were his words.

I would encourage him to talk to his Conservative colleague, the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington, who had a pretty big smile on her face last summer when the Prime Minister showed up in our area to announce that Umicore would be establishing a multi-billion dollar facility in her riding, the largest lithium battery facility in North America, for that matter. It does not appear as though corporate industry is waiting on the sidelines. It is jumping in feet first into the Ontario sector because it knows there is an opportunity here.

More importantly, the member now talks about lithium and the transition toward lithium and electrifying the vehicles that we have. Does that mean the Conservatives have now come to realize what the future holds, that the future is in electrification and we will be moving away from fossil fuel-burning vehicles towards lithium and electrification—

● (1215)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Government Orders

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, we always favour an approach whereby industry is given an opportunity to lead and we let people, the consumer, have a choice. Mandating things in or out is not a fair market approach. If electric vehicles are the best solution, providing the best value and product for a person to use, consumers will buy them. However, that is not the approach we are seeing from the government.

What I was referring to in the example I gave in my speech was the fact that the government negotiated a three-year window to source lithium regionally, tariff-free. It is going to take 10 years to do so. We heard that at committee. We have also seen other lithium projects in this country cancelled or scrapped after millions of dollars of investment in trying to get them going, because of regulatory uncertainty put in place by the government. Those are the issues we are seeing and continue to see not being addressed.

Conservatives definitely support those projects where we have development and resources, but the government is getting in the way and preventing anything from happening sooner rather than later.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all parliamentarians in Quebec voted in favour of a motion stating that Quebec should have predominant jurisdiction over the environment. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the division of powers in environmental matters.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, there is a very important role for the provinces to play. Certainly, we can see that the environment in Quebec is much different from the environment in Saskatchewan. A policy that may work in Quebec probably will not work in Saskatchewan, and one that works in Saskatchewan might not work in Quebec.

I think when the government tries to take a one-size-fits-all approach, it does not work. We need to have policy that works with the provinces and not against them. I would like to see the government taking a better approach that enables the provinces to be the masters of their own domain.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I lived right on the border with Saskatchewan for a long time. Cypress Hills is a beautiful interprovincial park there. It is fantastic. One of the conditions, however, that park is facing, as I heard from park officers, is that climate change is destroying the provincial park. The member would probably know about much of the drought that southern Saskatchewan is facing right now.

What is the member's climate plan to save Cypress Hills park?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, the Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park is a very unique and diverse ecosystem. It plays a very important role, obviously, in many industries in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. What is interesting about it, though, is that it is right in the heart of the Palliser Triangle. The Palliser Triangle is an area of the country that, when the country was being developed, was deemed to not be suitable for humankind. Drought is not something new. It is a naturally dry area of the country.

Cypress Hills generally gets more snow and rainfall than most other regions of the province, because of its unique nature. There is definitely drought in the areas right around it, for sure, but looking at the average snowfall, there is a lot of moisture there. We had a blizzard come through just this past weekend. At least we are seeing a good shot of moisture coming into the area.

We cannot control the weather, unfortunately, but again, having policies in place that will enable our producers to manage the grasslands and manage the forests helps prevent disasters and crises from happening in these ecosystems. Grasslands National Park is a perfect example of that, where the government in the eighties banned the grazing of the pasture land and we saw all kinds of issues in the ecosystem. Once it was opened up for grazing again, the balance was restored, and they have thrived ever since then.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as tempting as it is to engage in a discussion of a thousand-year record drought, I want to stick to Bill S-5 and its impacts. I have a close history and connection to the bill, and I want to ask the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands if he is aware of how deeply this bill is embedded in his own party. I hope that the Conservatives will support amendments to Bill S-5 and help strengthen them.

This bill was originally passed under the majority Conservative government in the late eighties. Interestingly, to me, as an environmentalist, when Stephen Harper was the prime minister and overhauled, or, one could say, attacked, most of the environmental legislation in Canada, that government left the CEPA alone. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act was not substantially changed or altered at all under Stephen Harper. In fact, the Harper government moved ahead on banning certain toxic chemicals using CEPA, for instance bisphenol A. There was never any retreat or attack on the ongoing work to create a safer environment for human health, which is fundamentally what the Canadian Environmental Protection Act's toxic substances sections are about.

Therefore, I am hoping the hon. member and the Conservative Party will be supporting this bill. It needs some amendments to strengthen it. It has not been overhauled in 20 years. My question for the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands is this. Will he vote for Bill S-5, recognizing that it is part of his party's legacy?

• (1220)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, right at the start and I think toward the end, the member was referencing amendments. We are always open to trying to provide amendments. We hope the government will be open to working with us on amendments. We have seen a history of it not showing goodwill but ill will toward amendments coming from this side of the House. We are trying to work with it in good faith on them and continuing to push for amendments to make this a better bill.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for a fulsome speech. It was very interesting.

I wonder if he could comment on some of the Liberal amendments. The Liberal Senate put in 24 amendments, of which 11 made the bill much worse.

One of the things I am concerned about is this. We hear the Liberals talk about auto manufacturing and wanting to bring more of it to Canada. I do not know if the House realizes, but items manufactured from plastic are now on schedule 1 and listed as toxic. One of the things Canada could really benefit from is not having regulations that are outside the norm in North America.

I wonder if the member could comment on the danger of amending legislation like this and if he maybe has a solution we could put forward to help the automotive industry and other industries, like the medical field, that rely on single-use plastics.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. There seems to be this ham-handed approach to either drafting legislation or making amendments on the other side of the aisle. Again, we have to work with industry. We have to work with our stakeholders.

The member raised a very important point. Whether it is on the medical side, with single-use plastics, or vehicle manufacturing and building vehicles, a lot of the time these components in our vehicles are manufactured in the manner and the means they are for safety purposes, so they are safe when we are driving down the highway. Manufacturing them the way the member has alluded to might impact the safety of these vehicles. As the government is shifting its vehicle fleet to electric, there are underlying safety issues with those vehicles that remain to be addressed, for example, how much heavier they are.

There remains an ability for the automotive industry to address some of those concerns, but if it is tied to unnecessary regulations that make things more difficult for the industry, it is going to be a lot harder for it to address those concerns going forward. We have to work with the industry, not against it.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise and speak to this issue. I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton Griesbach.

It is fascinating to be in the House talking about an update to outdated legislation to protect civilians and children from toxic “forever chemicals” and see the Conservatives wrapping themselves in defending plastics and toxic chemicals as somehow a vision for a better Canada. It really is peak Conservative.

I think of how far the Conservative Party is today from the Conservative Party back in the days when Brian Mulroney first brought the legislation through. He was a prime minister with whom I disagreed on many things, but he helped negotiate the Montreal Protocol, an international agreement that literally saved the life of this planet.

The Conservatives today, if we were dealing with something like the ozone hole threat, would be lighting their hair on fire, the ones who have hair, and attacking this as some kind of disinformation and conspiracy theory. However, Brian Mulroney was able to work internationally on that.

Government Orders

He also pushed the treaty on acid rain, which was destroying the lakes across my region in northern Ontario. Under the new Conservative leader, he would be embracing acid rain, telling us it was the best thing that ever happened and that we had to support it.

When we are talking about a straightforward update for dealing with toxic chemicals—

• (1225)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My colleague, earlier in his speech, shamed those of us who may be follically challenged in this House, and I take offence to that. I would ask for our hon. colleague to apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: I think we are descending into another debate.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize to my hon. colleague. I love the man but he is follically challenged, and sometimes the truth does hurt, as do some of the other Conservative policies. He is a good MP, I will say that.

I want to speak to the bill today in the larger context of where we are with respect to having a national vision

The Conservatives are monkey wrenching my notes. It is like they are after me all the time.

I want to speak to the overall need for a coherent vision, and this bill is part of it.

Today, we have learned that oil production in Canada is at its highest level ever, 3.6 million barrels a day. We know that we are going to have another 500,000 barrels a day coming from Bay du Nord. Of course, the \$21 billion in public money from TMX will give us another 800,000 to a million barrels a day. This is the Liberal vision for dealing with the climate crisis. The planet is on fire: let us boost oil production.

The government has put about \$18 billion a year into subsidies to oil. What is that getting us?

It is fascinating that if we break down the numbers that are coming out of Alberta today, not only are we at the highest level of oil production ever, we are at the highest profits ever. Over the last year, \$140 billion in profits came out of the oil patch in western Canada. That is 75% higher than it was in 2014, but only 7% of that is being reinvested in operations.

Government Orders

Oil operations are like mines. We can run a mine and strip it of its assets, but to make a mine profitable in the long term, we are constantly having to reinvest in construction and involvement. Only 7% is going back into the oil sector, with 25% less workers now and under-record profits. Fifty-two thousand jobs have disappeared out of the oil patch at a time of record profits.

As Bruce Springsteen says in his song, “Foreman says these jobs are going boys and they ain't coming back.” These jobs are not coming back to Alberta, because the oil lobby and the oil sector are putting this money into giving the shareholders the benefits. This is going to international capitalists and lining their pockets on Canadian natural resources. They are also spending the money on automation, so they can get rid of more workers. This is the economic vision, certainly of the Conservatives, who believe that the more oil is pumped up, the more profits that are made, and it does not matter about workers. I look to the Liberals and ask what kind of vision do they have.

We know the Prime Minister made a statement that Canada was back. He said that on the stage in Paris. However, we have seen no coherent commitment for dealing with the environment and with jobs. I challenge the government.

The Alberta Federation of Labour came here with its plan, representing the industrial workers of Alberta, saying that the transition was happening and that its workers were suffering through the transition. It knows there is a better future out there and it has asked the government to come to the table and start working on a coherent strategy.

We hear about the critical mineral strategy. We hear the government talk about a new energy economy, but we do not see any investment. This new energy economy does not appear out of the blue. We cannot wish it in. The Prime Minister cannot just get a tattoo on his arm and create a new energy economy that is a clean energy economy. It requires investments; it requires a strategy.

This is what Joe Biden has done in the United States and this is what we, through the Alberta Federation of Labour, are asking for, a coherent strategy.

What does this mean with respect to potential? Calgary Economic Development did a fascinating report, saying that the clean energy economy was \$3.8 trillion. That is the opportunity. There is no place on the planet that has a greater potential for investing in clean energy right now than Alberta. Certainly, Calgary is in the top ten for clean tech investment. It is saying that if we do not start making these investments now, not only does Alberta lose, not only does Canada lose but the planet will lose. It has estimated that if we have a coherent strategy in clean energy, it is a \$61-billion opportunity. That is just for Alberta not counting the rest of Canada, which has enormous opportunities as well. This could create 170,000 jobs. That is what we are dealing with.

• (1230)

We are dealing with a planetary crisis, but we are also dealing with a unique opportunity. If members had heard Gil McGowan when he was in Ottawa, he spoke on behalf of the boiler workers, the operator engineers, the electrical workers, Unifor, steelworkers, those who are actually doing the industrial production in Alberta.

They are saying that there is a huge opportunity for us to move forward, to move out of boom-and-bust, but if we do not take that opportunity, those jobs are going to go elsewhere. We know they are going to the United States right now, because Biden is stepping up on this.

If we are going to have a coherent strategy to bring in investors, we need a government that actually has a vision. Unfortunately right now, we have Danielle Smith in Alberta. It is impossible to keep up with the idiotic statements coming out of her office. One thing she did last week was abolish the Ministry of Labour in Alberta. She thinks this is red-tape cutting, but this is about certainty. When big employers do not have an oversight for basic things like the occupational health and safety codes or employment standards, they leave themselves open to all kinds of action, if their workers get injured.

Danielle Smith does not understand—

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Lest my friend from Cypress Hills—Grasslands thinks I am biased in the matter on which I raised a question of relevance, while I have not disagreed with a single word from my friend from Timmins—James Bay, I have not heard much about Bill S-5.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind everyone to stick to the bill we are talking about. Relevance is something that keeps coming up.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I know it really bothers the Greens that the New Democrats are talking about a vision of moving ahead, because we believe in jobs as well as in economy that is based on sustainability. I know it get their backs up a little, but this issue is about where we are going as a nation with respect to a coherent strategy.

Bill S-5 is part of that. We have to be sending a message to the nation, but also to the investment community that Canada gets the fact that we need to have proper standards. We need to have those standards in order to draw investment, in order to create a transformative economy. Nice words alone will not cut it. Nice words from the Prime Minister will not cut it. Crazy talk from Danielle Smith will definitely not cut it. We need to do better.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the way the member opened up his speech this afternoon. He talked specifically about the difference between the current Conservative Party and the Conservative Party that it likes to identify itself with, which was the Brian Mulroney Conservative Party.

Brian Mulroney did some pretty incredible things. He brought 46 countries from across the world to Montreal to establish a protocol on protecting the ozone layer. He spent a decade pushing Washington to do something about acid rain before it finally agreed.

I wonder if the member could enlighten the House on this. If it is not the Brian Mulroney Conservative Party across the way, what exactly is across the way?

• (1235)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, imagine someone asking me to defend the legacy of Brian Mulroney, but that is the state of politics in our country today.

The one thing we could say about the Conservative Party, the then Progressive Conservatives, is that it understood that protecting heritage and environment mattered. We do have a Prime Minister who is supposed to be the environmental feminist Prime Minister, and yet oil production has gone up under his watch and I think, if we look, subsidies to oil have gone up over the Conservatives. We are seeing a disconnect on both sides.

What is missing in the House is that we do not have a Progress Conservative Party anymore. We have the convoy party. We have the World Economic Forum disinformation team, and it has formed government in Alberta, which is scaring investors away because it is coming up with some of the most crazy stuff we have ever seen.

I would take any of the Robert Stanfields, Joe Clarks, the Flora MacDonalds, the Conservatives who could actually stand up. However, on the other hand, we are still dealing with those Liberals and they are like *Teletubbies*. They keep bouncing up with more promises, but they are not delivering the jobs we need in western Canada and in the oil patch.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not too sure what to think of the reference to *Teletubbies*. This is the second time the member has mentioned this.

The member talked about the economy and how important it was that it worked with our environment, like with sustainable environment and economic development, these types of things. Before we know it, my colleague will be talking about the importance of the middle class and how we have to ensure that we enable people to become a part of the middle class.

I want to ask my colleague and friend a question. When we think of Bill S-5, many of the things it would do is make Canada's environment protection laws stronger and ultimately make Canada healthier. Would he not agree with that summation?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, it is very important we pass the bill, and I am shocked the Conservatives, of all things, are embracing toxic chemicals as a fight against the Liberals.

I would have spoken much more about the middle class, but the Liberals sure have done a pretty good job over the years with their neo-liberal policies of kicking the middle class back into the working class. We need to maintain that, but part of that is certainty. The Conservatives are talking about mining projects getting off the ground in three years. That is ridiculous.

Government Orders

I come from mining country. Mining development requires consultation with indigenous communities. It requires doing the heavy lifting. Once we have done that, we have certainty. I will talk about many mining companies and how that certainty is essential for re-assuring the long-term development and that investors understand we are doing it right. We need to have that climate in Canada.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member for Timmins—James Bay listened to my speech on Bill S-5 from the other day. I talked about how the ozone layer was fixed, how the acid rain stuff was fixed and how the automotive industry had really contributed to that.

I am concerned about this bill. The right to a clean environment is like boiling the ocean. It is not very specific. I wonder if he has comments around that. Particularly, fixing the hole in the ozone layer and acid rain were very specific things we tackled. What specifically would this bill tackle?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, this is such an obvious motherhood statement. I find that the Conservatives are mistrustful of people having a right to a clean environment. It really does worry me about what they are thinking over there. Certainly, when they were going to dump the toxic sludge from Toronto's garbage into our water system in my region, we stood up and fought that, because we have a right. Every citizen has a right to a clean environment. I would hope that the one thing Conservatives could agree on with us is that, if nothing else, we should have a clean environment. Apparently that is not so.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all my hon. colleagues who are present in this chamber today to talk about something that is really important. I am a young person and we have not updated this bill in 20 years. I was nine years old when this bill was passed, so it is about time that this House understand the impacts of the last 20 years and the importance of updating this legislation.

I mean that in earnest. I know that we often talk about differences in this House, but it is a very true fact that every party has contributed to the reality of the protection of our environment. I hope every party can continue the legacy of Mulroney's Conservatives, the Liberal governments that have supported amendments and the New Democrats, who have pushed for an environmental bill of rights, for example. I know it is possible that we can, in fact, have a fulsome discussion about climate change, our role in protecting the environment and how we can come together in doing that.

Government Orders

I want to preface my statements today with how remarkably beautiful Canada is. Each and every one of us, I am most certain, has been able to enjoy the majesty and beauty of what are Canada's beautiful and natural resources and sights. I am from Alberta. From the great Prairies all the way to the Rocky Mountains, we know how important this is for people. I can recall in my own life seeing the grandfathers for the first time. That is what we call these massive mountains in our Cree tradition. They are beautiful and majestic and have been there since time immemorial. It is truly a testament to the fact that our country is one of the greatest.

Knowing that one of our greatest truths and our greatest assets is our natural beauty, it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to do our best to protect it. To leave this place better than how we found it is truly the mission I believe in.

I want to acknowledge the countless number of advocates and activists who have made this possible. Without hearing from each and every one of those folks, we would not have the bill in front of us today. I do know there are some loopholes and issues in the bill, but the New Democrats stand in support of making sure we can get it to committee and work on it.

I want to talk about what the bill would do.

One, it is important to recognize that it would give Canadians an understanding that they have a right to a healthy environment. This could not be any more important now today for young people. When young people are looking at their futures, when they are looking at our country and when they are looking at the world, they are asking themselves where they fit in, what 2050 means to them, what 2030 means to them and what their lives will look like then. We owe it to the next generation to guarantee that they can live in a healthy environment. They deserve that.

Two, the bill would confirm the government's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is not the be-all and end-all, but it is a step toward a kind of justice that indigenous people have been deprived of for generations regarding their role in this place and their role on these lands. The fact is that indigenous people continue today to steward these lands.

I want to recognize one particular nation that is doing this right now and is up against one of the greatest fights for our natural beauty in Canada. It is the Mikisew Cree First Nation. The Mikisew Cree Nation is in the heart of the industrial lands of Fort McMurray. I met with them this summer to talk about their concerns with the fact that here in Canada we have a UNESCO world heritage site, Wood Buffalo National Park, that is under risk of being deregistered. I want that fact to sink in: A G7 country like Canada is failing to uphold environmental conditions so greatly that the UNESCO committee may withdraw the status of Wood Buffalo National Park. It is a true tragedy facing our parks.

The Mikisew Cree Nation has played an immense role in protecting the lands of Wood Buffalo National Park, even before Confederation and since time immemorial. These lands are valuable. They contain within them the spirit, strength, knowledge and stories of generations, and we have to do our utmost to protect this place.

• (1240)

The Mikisew Cree Nation is proposing that we create an indigenous conservation environmental survey group for Wood Buffalo National Park that would look at some of the ways we could implement UNDRIP, for example, in relation to this bill. The Mikisew Cree are also fearful of the toxic tailings ponds that are still present in northeast Alberta. They have spoken to me and asked that the Liberal government not allow the release of toxic tailings into the river. This is the most critical lifeline for the Mikisew Cree. The river is life. Water is life. We must do what we can to help the Mikisew Cree.

Lastly, the bill would strengthen chemical management. This is so fundamental to a developed country like Canada. The fact that we fail to have more credible toxic management is why we are seeing terrible pollution in our natural waters. Water in Canada is one of the greatest beauties we have, and we know from activists like Autumn Peltier how valuable, spiritual and important clean water is to indigenous communities, to their spirituality, to their culture and to who they are.

These three points in the bill, namely the right to a healthy environment, the confirmation of the government's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the strengthening of chemical management, are all principles the New Democrats stand for. We will support this bill, but we must ensure that we do not end there.

We have so much more to do to protect our lands. Canada is at risk. We have faced some of the greatest natural disasters we have ever seen, from the great floods that saw central British Columbia almost cut off from the rest of Canada, to the Prairies, where I am from, which is seeing massive wildfires destroying whole communities, to the Atlantic coast, where we are seeing massive storms. This is the reality facing us as members of Parliament. Imagine how much worse this will get for the next generation.

We must have courage. I implore this House to look at meaningful steps to protect our environment. These are the commitments found in the great treaties we have signed with indigenous people. To go back on these commitments now is to truly forsake the next generation and our future. When we speak about the need for industrial and economic strength in Canada, it must not come at the cost of the next generation's right to the environment. It must not.

As a matter of fact, we know that we can do both. We can ensure a safe, strong, prosperous green economy here in Canada while preserving our greatest asset. It is possible. I do not believe the rhetoric from the delay Liberals and the deny Conservatives that we cannot do this. We can.

Government Orders

I know our Parliament is divided often, but not on something so important as the lives of children of the next generation. I know that many members of the House have children. I ask them to please look deep within their eyes and understand that this is a threat to them and that we must do everything we can to protect this generation.

Finally, I want to touch quickly on strengthening chemical management, the risk to some Albertans and the history that is already present there. The Jessa family, for example, has seen the terrible condition left to them by oil companies. They purchased land, posted by oil companies, for the purpose of wanting to start a life here in Canada, a good life, and they found that they were sold toxic lands. This is a family in Alberta right now that cannot recover land all by themselves. We are dealing with legacy issues in our environment, but this bill at least puts us on the path to stopping more atrocities like that.

• (1245)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his passion for his province and for fresh water, which I share.

As the hon. member will know, Bill S-5 was first introduced as Bill C-28 in this House, which was then Bill S-5 in the other place. I am going to preface my question with a shout-out to Senator McCallum from northern Manitoba, an indigenous senator who really made a big impact through amendments to the bill, those related to indigenous communities and peoples in Canada, by recognizing, as the hon. member has said, the importance of consistency with UN-DRIP and recognizing traditional knowledge.

I wonder if the hon. member would add some further reflections on the indigenous content and whether the bill has been improved. Will he work with the government to further improve the bill?

• (1250)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, I stand committed to working with the hon. parliamentary secretary for the environment and the governing party to ensure we actually see results for indigenous people.

This is a long-awaited bill. I want to thank Senator McCallum, who is a good friend of mine, for her continued advocacy and strength for indigenous people in the area of the environment. Our greatest challenge in Canada, which will likely continue to be our greatest challenge, is tackling climate change. Indigenous people have the tools, the knowledge and the histories that are so important to understanding this and, more so, understanding the solutions. I stand ready to work with the government to ensure this.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the trouble I am having with this debate is that we are putting a lot of faith in a government that has made a lot of promises over the last seven years. It has failed in its boil water advisories plan for first nations and still allows and permits billions of litres of raw sewage to be dumped in our waterways. It has a Prime Minister who chastised indigenous protesters at an event and thanked them for their donation when they were protesting the fact he has failed to live up to his boil water advisories plan.

I would like to ask my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach what his thoughts are on that. We are putting a lot of faith in a Prime Minister who has let us down over the last seven years.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, I will be the first to let the member know how deplorable the conditions are on reserves in first nations, Métis and Inuit communities in the far north in relation to clean water. They are deplorable, and I have spoken on this fact many times.

Whether we can trust the government or not is the real question present to this House. The question is whether we as individual members of Parliament can ensure that our constituents and those we value, whom we want to ensure get good representation in this place, actually have a chance to have their voices heard and that the government puts that on record.

There is no doubt that the government is untrustworthy in the promises made to indigenous people, but as indigenous people have done so many times before, they give so much grace and strength to the process of ensuring the relationship is better. Whether it is a Conservative or Liberal government, or maybe even one day a New Democratic government, I hope every party sees that the first and most important relationship to this place is with indigenous people.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was very touched by my colleague opposite's speech because I have children myself, and we are wondering what will happen in the coming decades.

My question is quite simple. I heard the member opposite talking about how we can ensure that Canadians live in a healthy environment. I would like to know what measures are set out in the bill to create a healthier environment. I would like more details on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, I know the Bloc has made significant contributions in this place to make sure there is good policy on the environment. I thank them for that.

Additionally, I believe that two levers are most important in this bill. One is the fact that the government is finally ready to commit to understanding the impacts of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. That is critical and cannot be understated. Making sure indigenous people have a seat at the table will provide solutions.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak in the House, especially on matters related to the environment. As we know, I am my party's climate change critic. I am therefore very happy to speak about Bill S-5.

My colleague, the member for Repentigny, the Bloc Québécois's environment critic, has already informed the House of the Bloc Québécois's position on this bill. We are obviously in favour of the principle of Bill S-5 because it is high time that the federal government take steps to modernize Canada's primary environmental protection legislation, known as CEPA.

Passed in 1988, CEPA established a framework for managing toxic substances and gave ministers the authority to regulate sources of pollution. The revised act came into effect in 1999 and there have been few amendments since. That means that the legislation that is to protect Canada's environment is over 20 years old. A lot has changed in 20 years. Science has evolved, industry practices have evolved and, unfortunately, the environmental crisis has worsened.

The update to CEPA is obviously good news, but members will not be surprised to hear me say that the Quebec nation is and must be solely responsible for public decisions concerning environmental protection in its jurisdiction.

Moreover, in April 2022, all members in Quebec's National Assembly passed a motion affirming Quebec's primary jurisdiction over the environment. To be clear, Quebec's elected representatives strongly stated their opposition to any federal interference in the environment in Quebec.

Over the years, we have developed environmental law in a way that allows us to move Quebec forward responsibly and for everyone's benefit. In doing so, we have exercised all of the powers that belong to us under the division of powers set out in the Constitution of Canada. Quebec's environmental sovereignty is effective because we fully assume the space available.

The Environment Quality Act is Quebec's primary environmental protection legislation. Naturally, its purpose is to protect the environment and the living species inhabiting it.

Quebec law prohibits the deterioration of the quality of the environment or the emission of pollutants or contaminants. It provides recourse to residents affected by any offence that compromises the quality of the environment, its protection and the protection of living species. It requires that an environmental impact assessment be conducted to carry out an activity that could present a high risk to the environment. It creates a special access to information regime, governs projects or activities that could have an impact on wetlands and bodies of water, and provides criminal penalties for individuals who contravene the law.

Reformed in 2017, Quebec's Environment Quality Act allows us to meet the highest standards in environmental protection. It is complemented by other Quebec environmental legislation, including the Sustainable Development Act, which allows the public administration in Quebec to consider the principles of sustainable de-

velopment in its actions, including the principles of environmental protection, precaution, prevention and respect for ecosystem support capacity.

In Quebec, we also have an act affirming the collective nature of water resources and to promote better governance of water and associated environments, which gives every individual the right to access drinking water for hygiene and cooking and ensures that there is no net loss of wetlands and bodies of water. We also have the Natural Heritage Conservation Act, which seeks to protect the land by creating protected areas, and the Act Respecting the Conservation and Development of Wildlife, which seeks to protect wildlife from over-harvesting and their habitats from degradation.

Finally, there is Quebec's civil code, which also contains provisions to protect the environment, in addition to other laws and regulations that also protect the environment even though that is not their only purpose. Most importantly, Quebec has its Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms which, since 2006, states, "Every person has a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law."

Clearly, when it comes to advancing environmental justice or strengthening environmental protection in Quebec, it is futile to pin our hopes on the Canadian government. I am not saying that Quebec has a perfect model. We also share responsibility and need to do much more to protect the environment. What I am trying to say is that there is already a model in Quebec, because this falls under its jurisdiction.

● (1255)

I therefore invite members from all parts of Canada to focus their efforts on their provincial legislatures and urge their provincial counterparts to pass legislation that protects the environment. I encourage them to claim their rightful space in this domain with two goals in mind: to protect nature and to protect provincial autonomy, which is being undermined within the Canadian federation. If they want to draw on Quebec's environmental protection laws, they are welcome to. The provinces would do well to work together on the environment.

That being said, under the current legal framework, the federal government does have certain environmental protection responsibilities. The Bloc Québécois intends to do everything in its power to ensure that the federal government does its job properly, and one of its jobs is to modernize the CEPA. This is a necessary legislative update, and we will give the matter the full attention it deserves.

Government Orders

The Bloc Québécois is eager to work with all parliamentarians to ensure that the revised legislation best reflects the recommendations of health and environmental protection groups, as well as partners in the chemical industry who are most affected, particularly when it comes to chemicals management, the list of toxic substances, improved accountability for risk management, a comprehensive assessment of the cumulative effects of substances and mandatory labelling requirements.

My colleague certainly talked about a letter sent to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change that was signed by no fewer than 54 Quebec-based groups, including women's groups, health sector groups, neighbourhood groups and more than 200 citizens from all walks of life, expressing their deep concern about toxic contamination. They are right to be concerned, since much work remains to be done on this. I have that letter with me and would like to read a few passages from it.

As the letter says, these substances can be found all around us, whether it is in the air we breathe, both indoors and outdoors, in furniture and certain interior coverings, in our homes and offices, in our clothing and food and in a range of personal care products we use every day.

The letter mentions bisphenol A, better known as BPA, which is found in many items. It mentions that “despite their toxicity, there are still flame retardants in some children's sleepwear”. There may be toxic substances in the footie pajamas worn by so many babies.

BPA, a well-known endocrine disrupter, “can mimic or interfere with estrogen in our bodies, producing a myriad of health effects”. There are many adverse effects. I will name a few because the list is rather startling.

The effects include “altered estrogen action, early onset puberty, altered breast development and breast cancer, ovarian cysts, polycystic ovarian syndrome, uterine fibroid, altered sperm count and quality, neural and behavioural effects, sex-specific changes in brain structure, obesity and Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, altered liver function, and more”.

The letter also mentions perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. These are also very toxic substances that can be found almost anywhere and cause “cancers (testicular and kidney), hormone malfunction, thyroid disease, liver problems, immunological effects including decreased vaccine response, reproductive harms including decreased fertility, pregnancy induced hypertension and abnormal fetal development.”

I apologize to the interpreters as I read this rather quickly.

The letter also mentions that all these substances end up “in our waterways, our landfills and elsewhere” and obviously are found in our own human ecosystem, which has significant human health impacts.

Like most of my colleagues, I have received dozens of letters from my constituents and people across Quebec asking us to change CEPA to reflect the realities of the 21st century. I agree with them that we must do this important work.

In particular, they are asking that we strengthen the implementation of the right to a healthy environment. I must say that that will

not be achieved by inserting the right in the bill's preamble. The changes we make to CEPA must contribute to ensuring that we have a healthy environment.

If we examine the bill carefully, we see that it does not create a real right to a healthy environment. Sure, it is mentioned in the preamble, but the bill does not contain any provision that would make that right enforceable in the courts, unlike the right that has been established in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms since 2006, as I mentioned earlier.

• (1300)

Obviously, citizens can always count on the Bloc Québécois when it comes to protecting the environment and promoting health. Good health is essential, and we often take it for granted. We fail to make the direct correlation between the environment and health, or rather between human health and environmental health. However, that is what people like Claudel Pétrin-Desrosiers, a family doctor at the CIUSSS in Montreal East, are working hard to do. She is also the chair of the Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement and a member of the board of directors for the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. She thinks that climate change is the single biggest health threat in the 21st century and our biggest opportunity to do better. She also thinks that we need more ambitious public policies to protect our health and, obviously, I agree with her. She once said the following with regard to sustainable health, and I quote: “The best cure for the environment does not require a prescription”. Every day she sees the impact that climate change is having on the planet's health and people's health, and so she gave herself the mission of raising awareness among politicians and citizens.

I was speaking about Dr. Pétrin-Desrosiers, but she is not the only one who is addressing this issue in the public sphere. The World Health Organization has also declared that climate change is the greatest threat to human health. I want to share some of the facts that the WHO has published on its website:

Climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health—clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter.

Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.

The direct damage costs to health (i.e. excluding costs in health-determining sectors such as agriculture and water and sanitation), is estimated to be between USD 2-4 billion/year by 2030.

Areas with weak health infrastructure—mostly in developing countries—will be the least able to cope without assistance to prepare and respond.

Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better transport, food and energy-use choices can result in improved health, particularly through reduced air pollution.

Government Orders

That is the main message from the WHO. Yes, the problem is significant and people are already feeling the effects of climate change, but by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, we may be able to help mitigate those effects.

I will continue to read what the WHO wrote in October 2021. It said, and I quote:

Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity, and health professionals worldwide are already responding to the health harms caused by this unfolding crisis.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that to avert catastrophic health impacts and prevent millions of climate change-related deaths, the world must limit temperature rise to 1.5°C.

We already knew that because it is something we hear often.

Past emissions have already made a certain level of global temperature rise and other changes to the climate inevitable. Global heating of even 1.5°C is not considered safe, however; every additional tenth of a degree of warming will take a serious toll on people's lives and health.

While no one is safe from these risks, the people whose health is being harmed first and worst by the climate crisis are the people who contribute least to its causes, and who are least able to protect themselves and their families against it — people in low-income and disadvantaged countries and communities.

The climate crisis threatens to undo the last fifty years of progress in development, global health, and poverty reduction, and to further widen existing health inequalities between and within populations. It severely jeopardizes the realization of universal health coverage (UHC) in various ways — including by compounding the existing burden of disease and by exacerbating existing barriers to accessing health services, often at the times when they are most needed. Over 930 million people — around 12% of the world's population — spend at least 10% of their household budget to pay for health care. With the poorest people largely uninsured, health shocks and stresses already currently push around 100 million people into poverty every year, with the impacts of climate change worsening this trend.

Obviously, those of us who live in a country with a public health care system are a bit more fortunate, but that is not the case for everyone around the world.

I will keep reading what the WHO says:

Climate change is already impacting health in a myriad of ways, including by leading to death and illness from increasingly frequent extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, storms and floods, the disruption of food systems, increases in zoonoses and food-, water- and vector-borne diseases, and mental health issues. Furthermore, climate change is undermining many of the social determinants for good health, such as livelihoods, equality and access to health care and social support structures. These climate-sensitive health risks are disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including women, children, ethnic minorities, poor communities, migrants or displaced persons, older populations, and those with underlying health conditions.

...scientific advances progressively allow us to attribute an increase in morbidity and mortality to human-induced warming, and more accurately determine the risks and scale of these health threats.

In the short- to medium-term, the health impacts of climate change will be determined mainly by the vulnerability of populations, their resilience to the current rate of climate change and the extent and pace of adaptation. In the longer-term, the effects will increasingly depend on the extent to which transformational action is taken now to reduce emissions and avoid the breaching of dangerous temperature thresholds and potential irreversible tipping points.

● (1305)

When a credible organization like the WHO publishes this kind of report, I think it is our duty as elected representatives to take it seriously and, more importantly, to act to mitigate the effects as much as possible.

Of course, just modernizing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act alone will not solve everything, but there are still some as-

pects that deserve our attention and need to be properly defined. We therefore need to analyze those aspects carefully to ensure that the modernized act really does allow the federal government to fulfill its responsibilities in the area of environmental protection, while ensuring respect for Quebec's environmental sovereignty.

I would like to point out that the bill does include a number of elements that raise some issues of a constitutional nature. Every level of government can pass laws to protect the environment if those laws are related to an area of constitutional jurisdiction under the Constitution Act, 1867. This is what is known as concurrent jurisdiction.

Consequently, the federal Parliament can pass legislation on toxic substances given its jurisdiction over criminal matters. However, Bill S-5 is about more than regulating substances. It proposes to regulate products. It seems to me that this broadens the federal government's role. The bill proposes to allow the environment minister to require the communication of information concerning activities that could contribute to pollution.

Regulating products and activities or pollution is different from regulating toxic substances. Here is another example. Usually, when prohibitions are issued under the Criminal Code, they are accompanied by sanctions for non-compliance with the law. I do not think this is the same as issuing authorizations, much less authorizations that have conditions attached. If the federal government can pass legislation under the Criminal Code, the law should not use public policy instruments that the Criminal Code does not allow to be used. My colleagues must agree that this could be a slippery slope.

As members know, I am an environmentalist. Saving the planet, saving biodiversity and fighting climate change are important to me. I trust no one believes that I would be happy to forgo regulating pollution, far from it. I simply want the government to respect the division of powers and especially the work that is already being done in Quebec. In addition to respecting the principle, we also have to try to avoid costly administrative and regulatory overlap that leaves everyone confused.

If the government wants to pass good legislation that is supported by the parties, it has to take steps in advance to ensure that the constitutional validity of its legislation will not be disputed. Did it consult the governments of Quebec and the provinces? I would be surprised, because the bill in its current form has quite a few constitutional problems. Those need to be addressed.

Accordingly, during the study of the bill, the Bloc Québécois will ensure that there are no clauses or provisions in it that can be considered intrusions into the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. Of all the areas that unquestionably fall under federal jurisdiction, all my colleagues from the other parties, as well as the Minister of the Environment, know that they can count on us to ensure that we have the most robust environmental legislation possible. It is our duty to make sure of it. It is also our duty to reassure the public and give it what it is asking for: a real right to a healthy environment.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my Bloc colleague for a very well researched and thought-out speech. She mentioned a lot of the different toxic substances that are actually in our environment. Sometimes it can take decades before we really know the effects of that. I want to talk about one specific thing she brought up: the new right to a healthy environment. I am wondering how confident she is that the Liberal government will be able to achieve this. After all, for the last seven years, it has not met one environmental goal that it has put forward. It certainly is looking at a top-down approach, as she mentioned, and not respecting provincial jurisdiction.

How confident is my colleague that the Liberal government, in two years, will actually be able to achieve such a worthy goal when it has not achieved anything in the last seven?

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for asking such a great question.

Including the right to a healthy environment in the preamble of a bill is one thing. However, if the legislation itself does not reflect that idea, it is difficult to achieve.

I was saying that there is a link between health and the environment. Just about everything is interconnected. We must make the necessary efforts to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions; otherwise, we will not necessarily reduce the risk to human health. It is all interrelated. I think we have to act on several fronts at once.

I am not necessarily encouraged when I see how little action this government has taken over the years. I do not think we are going to get there tomorrow morning. It requires far more complex changes, but we need to start somewhere.

Modernizing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act is a good thing. However, it is clear that Bill S-5 does not address all areas of environmental legislation. I think there is still a lot more to do after this bill is passed.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I really appreciated what she said about how pesticides affect people's lives and health.

In the summer of 2021, the Liberal government decided to increase traces of pesticides, including glyphosate, in pulses and

Government Orders

berries. There was outrage, and the Liberals were forced to backtrack. At the time, they promised to be more transparent.

Today, we learned that an organization called Vigilance OGM received 229 blank pages from Health Canada in response to its ATIP request.

What does that say about the Liberals' concern for people's health and their government's transparency?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, that is another great question, and I thank the member for asking it.

It speaks volumes about several things, including the fact that it might be time to review the notorious Access to Information Act. Obviously, getting entirely redacted documents or totally blank pages is not a good thing for citizens, groups or anyone who wants more information about how the government works, regardless of the subject or field. That is one thing.

Second, regarding glyphosate, I remember seeing the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, along with several environmental groups, sounding the alarm about that, even though we often hear that opposition members do not serve much of a purpose. In the end, we got the government to back down. This shows that we do serve a purpose, because when we see that something is wrong, we point it out to the government so it can change course.

I think it also says a lot about transparency. The government seems unwilling to be completely transparent on a number of things when it comes to the environment, food and health.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, who always works hard for the environment. She is an absolutely wonderful member of Parliament.

My question is about the right to a healthy environment. During today's debate, I noticed that some members found it odd to have a right to a healthy environment.

At present, 150 countries have enshrined the protection of the right to a healthy environment into their constitutions, regulations or bills.

Is the member aware of the decision of the United Nations Human Rights Council, which recently recognized the right to a healthy environment?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I are on the same page. In fact, in my speech I was talking about what has been enshrined in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms since 2006, namely the right to a healthful environment and healthy biodiversity.

It is only natural for a nation to choose to enshrine that in its own legislation. It is good that Canada wants to do that. However, as I said earlier, it has to walk the walk so that we can truly have the right to a healthy environment.

Government Orders

When I see all the effects of toxins on human health and I see that these things could be banned by the government but have not been, I have a hard time seeing how the government can really offer the public the right to a healthy environment.

The member's question was on the need to implement this. The answer is yes. I agree with her. It is necessary to do this, just as Quebec has done.

I want to come back to the importance of respecting what is already being done in Quebec. Environmental sovereignty is an extremely important concept. Yes, we want to do more for the environment across Canada. Since we sit here, we obviously want to improve environmental protection laws, but we also have to respect jurisdictions.

• (1320)

[*English*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her support for the legislation. Yes, we can always do more. The constituents in the riding of Waterloo have a diversity of perspectives and opinions, but I have been receiving a lot of emails asking for us to advance this legislation quickly. I agree with the member that we can always do more.

Does the member acknowledge that the steps we are taking are moving us in the right direction? I will commit to working with her to do more, because we can always do more to protect the environment.

While I am on my feet, I want to say happy Bandi Chhor Divas and happy Diwali to everyone celebrating today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that Bill S-5 is a good step forward. However, I read a lot of the news in preparation for my speech today, and this is a rather complex bill in many respects. It is full of technical detail and one needs quite a lot of knowledge to understand the legislative changes that are being made. The Senate has already made a number of changes that will need to be verified at the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

I agree that we need to fast-track the fight against climate change, and I understand that this is not something that can be done at the drop of a hat. However, we need to do it as quickly as possible and do it right.

The Bloc Québécois members are prepared to work with all the other parties to improve this legislation, to ensure that it is ultimately a good bill and to make certain that everyone is in agreement. However, we cannot do this too quickly, because it would be a missed opportunity to really update this act.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot of things that helped me prepare my question. The opposition party is very constructive and raises issues that come up over time. We realize we need to deal with Bill S-5, but there are also other things the government must act on quickly.

While the principle of Bill S-5 has merit, I would like to give my colleague a chance to tell us what more we can do.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, there are so many other things that can be done to protect biodiversity.

When I hear about the government green-lighting oil exploration projects off the coast of Newfoundland—like Bay du Nord, which just got approval—and about how these projects can threaten marine species, I cannot believe it. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act is not the only environmental protection tool we have; there are other ways to take action too.

According to the World Health Organization text I shared earlier, reducing our greenhouse gas emissions can positively impact the observed negative effects of climate change on health. I think that, by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, we can achieve that.

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about Bill S-5. We on this side of the House certainly have some concerns about the bill, and I will talk about that a little later in my speech.

First, this is an environmental bill. It is the first update to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act in a very long time. Of course, protecting the environment is something that is very important and something that we should all care very deeply about. However, the challenge we have is that this is a government that talks a lot about caring about the environment, its members say lots of things about how they care about the environment, but the actual translation of that into measurable, quantifiable improvements to the environment is really almost zero. I am going to talk a little about that.

Let us talk about the carbon tax. It was brought in with enormous fanfare by the Prime Minister and his Minister of Environment, saying it was going to be the cure for reducing carbon emissions across the country. I will skip to the end of the story where, in fact, we find that carbon emissions have not gone down. They have gone up every single year under this Liberal government. I will say it again, because it is worth repeating. Carbon emissions have gone up every single year under this Liberal government, which claims to be the big defender of the environment: “We’re going to solve climate change, because we brought in a carbon tax.” In fact, it is an absolute failure.

Someone who is paying attention on the other side, or who has done some of their research, will say, no, carbon emissions went down in 2020 and things are going great. It is true that carbon emissions did go down in 2020 by 5.8%. However, it is now 2022, and some people will forget but that was at the peak of the pandemic. The economy contracted by 9% during that time. My statement is that, if this is actually the Liberals' plan to reduce carbon emissions, then just be honest with Canadians and tell us that it is their plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5% and reduce—

Government Orders

• (1325)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am not sure if the member has read the notes, but the bill before us is not about the carbon tax. Bill S-5 is about dealing with toxic chemicals, which apparently the Conservatives are very supportive of, but it has nothing to do with the carbon tax.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the intervention. I will remind everyone to try to stay relevant to the bill we are debating.

The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, some members do not like hearing the truth and want to interrupt other members when they are speaking.

Going back to my point, I was talking about the fact that the current government has such a terrible record on the environment. That is because there are a number of promises in this bill that the government says it is going to do, which I say it will not do because it has a track record to show that it does not do the things it says it is going to do. I hope that will satisfy the member who chose to interrupt.

If that is the plan, for the Canadian economy to reach its carbon tax emissions it is going to have to contract by 45%, because a 5% carbon reduction is a 9% reduction in GDP. If that is the Liberals' plan, they should tell us about it.

The other part is that the government is supposed to put more money back into the pockets of Canadians. Of course, it does not. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been abundantly clear that it does not put more money back into the pockets of Canadians. If we do the hard work, like the hard math, and I know the current government does not like to do the hard work and the hard math, and we factor in the cost of the carbon tax throughout the entire Canadian economy, it ends up costing Canadians more money than they get back from the paltry cheques the government sends them every so often. The worst part is it detrimentally and adversely affects people in rural communities, like in my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, where people have no choice but to commute long distances to work and put gas in their cars. They heat their homes with propane because that is the only option they have. Those paltry rebate cheques absolutely do not even come close to covering the cost of the carbon tax they are paying.

The Senate passed 24 amendments to this bill and I will say that 11 of them are of great concern. We have yet to hear what the government thinks of those 11 amendments, which I will come back to later in my speech.

I still want to flesh out why I think there are so many problems with this legislation and the fact that the current government will not live up to the promises in it with respect to the right to a healthy environment. I am going to touch on that.

We are also going to talk about the fact that the government put in this bill that anyone can have a substance assessed. Under the current government, we cannot get a passport. It has lost track of 500 criminals, who were subject to deportation, and does not know where they are. However, it is going to have the capacity to somehow deal with the hundreds of thousands of requests that are going to flood into the department to have a substance assessed, because

the legislation is very clear that anyone can ask for such an assessment. It is inconceivable that the current government would think that is a good thing to include in this piece of legislation.

I will talk about why I do not think the government is going to be able to implement half of the things it put in this bill. The commissioner of the environment did about 10 reports on the progress of the Liberal government with respect to the environment. Guess what. Virtually all of them got a failing grade.

Let us talk about a just transition for coal workers. The environment commissioner was very clear that there was no just transition for coal workers. In fact, they were left out in the cold. Therefore, when we hear the government saying that everyone is going to enjoy a right to a healthy environment, I have enormous skepticism that it is actually going to do that. It did not help coal workers. It talks about a just transition all the time. The government says it is going to provide a just transition for any energy worker who is displaced by any of its punitive pieces of legislation, whether it is the no-development bill, the carbon tax or anything else. The government claims it will be there for anyone who is displaced. Do members know who the first people were who were displaced? It was coal workers. Where was the government? Absolutely nowhere. The commissioner was clear. The government left coal workers with virtually nothing, but it is going to enact a right to a healthy environment and therefore all Canadians are going to enjoy this right. I do not think it is going to deliver that, because it does not ever deliver anything that matters with respect to the environment.

The other thing the Liberal government has put in this bill is that plastic-manufactured items are now in schedule 1. When the current government was first elected it said there would be no more Ottawa knows best and no more telling the provinces what to do, but that it would be this wonderful government that rules by consensus. Guess what. The provinces are now suing the federal government as a result of plastics being placed in the new schedule 1 of this legislation.

• (1330)

It is hard to talk about how many times the Liberals say they are going to do something and then actually do nothing or do the opposite. We could talk about freedom of information and this being a government that is going to be open and transparent by default, but the system is absolutely a mess as a result of what? The Liberal government. Again, it says it is going to do something, but it does not do anything or it does the opposite.

Let us talk about this vaunted right to a healthy environment. First of all, it is in the preamble, and when something is put in the preamble it actually has different legal weight from something that is actually in a section in a statute. Again, the Liberals snuck it into the preamble to virtue signal and say to people they care so much about a healthy environment that they are going to put it in the bill, except they did not put it in the bill. They put it in the preamble, which has different legal impact than putting it in the statute itself.

Government Orders

There we go. Number one is that they are not delivering yet again. It is in the preamble and not in the actual statute.

What is worse about it is that there were five years of consultation for the Liberals to come up with this piece of legislation. If all of this was so important, why did it take five years? I have no explanation. This is a government that finds it very difficult to walk and chew gum at the same time. Its members cannot do more than one thing at once. They sort of stumble from one crisis to another.

There were five years to consult to draft this piece of legislation. Now the Liberals say the right to a healthy environment is really important and they will enshrine it in legislation, but they stuck it in the preamble and now say they need a further two years to figure out what it means. This is a government that is not moving slowly. This is a government that is moving basically in reverse, when Canadians do actually deserve these things.

It speaks to the absolute incompetence of the government. It cares so much about the right to a healthy environment that it is going to consult on it for five years, then because it realizes it probably needs to get some legislation put forward, it is just going to say it will consult for another two years. Who knows what that is going to turn out to be? The Liberals have not given any suggestions on what that is going to be. They have not talked about what that consultation would entail, who would be consulted or where those consultations would take place. These are things the Liberals say they are going to do, but I have very little faith in their actually doing them.

They said there were going to be extensive consultations on plastic bans. When we talked to a lot of industry stakeholders, they were not consulted at all, so I am not necessarily sure that what the Liberals say about consultation is actually going to come to fruition.

This is what we talk about when the Liberals say in the legislation anyone can have a substance assessed. Let us think about that for a minute. That is not narrowly defined. It is as inclusive as it can be; it is anyone. Any Canadian, if this bill passes, can go forward and ask for a substance to be assessed. That is going to create a deluge of requests for assessments from environmental groups, from concerned citizens and from others.

That would mean the department, which is already busy enough with what it has to do, would become overwhelmed, and when departments become overwhelmed under this government, which is something that happens literally every other day, we cannot get a passport. We have all been through that. There were a number of constituents who got in touch with my office who said they could not get a passport and asked if we could please help. I said to them that I tried to get my son's and daughter's passports renewed for our vacation, and I could not, so our vacation was cancelled. This is how effective the government is on managing something as simple as issuing a passport.

I know I heard the minister one day in question period saying they had no idea how to anticipate the influx of applications. It is very complicated. Passports expire on five-year or 10-year increments. The math is very hard, like 2022 to 2027 or 2032. I know complex, difficult math equations are something the government

has incredible challenges with. When we look at the ability for anyone to assess a substance, how are the Liberals going to handle it?

● (1335)

The minister has not talked about it. None of the members opposite have talked about it in their speeches. It is like they have not contemplated how difficult that could be. We know they have not, because they did not contemplate how difficult it would be to issue a passport. The Liberals clearly did not contemplate how difficult it would be to keep track of 500 criminals who faced deportation orders. They are all gone. What is the explanation from the government? We have no explanation. I think maybe it is, "Oops." That is where the government is on that.

We support referring this piece of legislation to committee to be studied, but we have grave concerns about it, concerns that I am going to continue to express today. It is so easy to say one is going to do things. The government says it is going to do all kinds of things. The difficulty comes when it actually tries to implement the things it says. That is the hard part. There is an old *Seinfeld* episode in which Jerry Seinfeld is trying to rent a car, and the car is not there. He said that anyone could just take, take, take reservations; it was holding the reservation that was the difficult part.

The Liberal government can make all kinds of environmental announcements, saying it is going to do this or that, that it is going to solve climate change or reduce carbon emissions and that it is going to have a just transition for coal workers. That is the easy part. The hard part is actually doing it. That is the part the government is really not very good at.

That is what I am deeply concerned about with respect to this piece of legislation, both with the right to a healthy environment with respect to anyone being able to assess a substance, and with the fact that plastic manufactured items have been placed on schedule 1.

What is that going to lead to? This is being talked about. This is a government that likes to demonize plastics. It is in all the government's things. The Prime Minister famously did a press conference where he talked about the drink box, water bottle kind of thing that he wanted to eliminate.

Plastics are critical in our lives. We could look at the medical field. If we are going to be looking at further regulations of plastics, what is that going to mean if we go in for an operation? Lots of surgical instruments use plastics. Are we going to end up getting IVs made with wood, because we are against plastics? It is the virtue signalling that we are going to do something, again without doing the hard work of thinking it through and deciding what is actually the best course of action.

Government Orders

Virtue signalling is something the government does so often, it is difficult to keep up with. It continues to talk about its record on the environment, and again I am going to go back to the fact that it is so poor that it leads me to think that the government is not going to implement what is in this particular piece of legislation. It keeps talking about an energy transition. That is what it wants to do. That is the government's big thing, that we have to get off fossil fuels.

Let us talk a little about that, this sort of woke energy environmentalism. Germany spent a couple of hundred million dollars on trying to get carbon out of its electricity grid. Over the past 20 years, it has been doing that, and it has spent hundreds of billions of dollars. This is the path the Liberal government wants us to go down. It does not want to learn from somebody else's mistakes. After hundreds of billions of dollars, Germany has taken its dependence on hydrocarbons for electricity from 84% to 78%.

I am not an investment person, but I can tell members that is not a good return on investment. The average per kilowatt hour cost of electricity in Germany is 45¢, and here in Ontario it is 13¢. Imagine spending hundreds of billions of dollars, barely moving the needle and paying some of the highest electricity rates in the world. That is the result of those kinds of policies. That is the same policy road that the Liberal government wants us to take a trip down with respect to electricity generation in this country.

Again, this brings me back to why we have such an incredible challenge with this bill.

● (1340)

There are 24 amendments that were passed in the Senate, and, yes, there is supposedly an Independent Senators Group, but they are all appointed by the Prime Minister, so these are members of the Senate who are beholden to the Prime Minister, to a certain extent.

Is that what the government's plan is for this piece of legislation? We on this side and, I am sure, all the other opposition parties would like to know that. Does it support all these amendments?

They changed the definition of “right to a healthy environment” at the Senate. That is a significant change. Is the government supporting that amendment? We would like to know.

They made changes to “living organisms”. They made a big change with respect to the precautionary principle. I am very happy that Bill S-5 preserves the precautionary principle, but they removed “cost” from “cost-effective”. That is a very important balancing point with respect to the precautionary principle.

What is the government's position on having done that? Is it going to change that at committee? Is it going to work with the opposition to do that? We do not know.

It has been wonderful to discuss this bill and discuss Liberal failures on the environment and how I think they are going to translate into Bill S-5. I hope the government will take some of these criticisms of the bill seriously, with respect to the right to a healthy environment, with respect to the precautionary principle and, of course, with respect to how anyone can have a substance assessed.

I hope it will take these requests to amend seriously and that it will do the work in committee to make these changes so this bill can be supported at third reading.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Dufferin—Caledon shared many different comments. He definitely spoke on a range of different things. What I find fascinating is that in the last campaign, the member and his colleagues in the Conservative Party ran on a platform that actually included two carbon taxes. In addition to the price on pollution, the carbon tax, as he refers to it, the Conservative platform also planned to bury a second price on carbon in fuel regulations.

It is fascinating that they oppose these policies in the House, because when they were running and they were speaking to Canadians, their platform said otherwise. That is why we have said, time and time again, that the Conservatives like to flip-flop.

The Conservatives also like to mislead, which is unfortunate. The member refers to the environment a lot. He says that he cares about the environment, yet rather than talk about what the government is doing, would the member like to let us know if he actually believes in climate change, and what a Conservative environment policy would look like, since it is important that we protect our environment?

● (1345)

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention that the member campaigned on not raising the carbon tax above \$50 a tonne, and now it is going to go up to \$170 a tonne. I find the question a little rich.

First of all, what people campaigned on in a previous election has nothing to do with Bill S-5. I will say this, though: I am against the Liberals' carbon tax. We have always been against it.

It does not do anything. I could go on and on about it. Carbon emissions have gone up every single year under the Liberal government, every single year, except the pandemic year, when they liked to say that things were working but then they did not want to talk about the contraction to the environment.

The PBO has made it clear: It does not put more money back into the pockets of Canadians. By any measurable metric, their version of the carbon tax is an unmitigated failure. We are against it. We will always be against it. We will scrap that carbon tax once we form government under the leadership of our new Conservative leader, which we look forward to.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon refreshing when he speaks on these issues.

Government Orders

Liberal hypocrisy seems to be front and centre on Bill S-5. This is from the same government that starts talking about the need to fast-track certain projects, like LNG. It is talking about lithium without actually talking about the fact that our regulatory system is broken and without talking about the fact that one would need so much water. By the same token, where would it get the water and where would it source this lithium from?

The government talks about a so-called “right to a healthy environment”, when it is really a socio-economic factor that an official will take into account during a CEPA regulatory application. Again, when it comes to the government's hypocrisy on these issues in this bill, what does the member have to say about this?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I cannot ask for a better question than one about Liberal hypocrisy.

When we talk about the environment, the government will not approve projects in Canada, let us say a project with lithium, so that project goes on and gets done somewhere else in the world, because the world needs lithium. It goes to a country that has carbon emissions that are 10 to 15 times higher than what would happen if the project were done in Canada. It is generally a country that has lower environmental standards on all other measures of the environment. These countries have terrible human rights records and terrible employment standards for their employees. The government says it has cleaned up its balance sheet, but the global balance sheet on all those metrics gets so much worse.

There is no carbon dome over Canada. When we export our carbon emissions to other countries, along with the jobs and the tax revenue, all we do is make the world a much worse place on all those things we talked about. This is the same kind of thinking that the Liberals bring forward with the right to a healthy environment, which they do not define and no one knows what it is, and with respect to the fact that anyone can assess a substance. All these things are absolutely nonsensical.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments. First and foremost, I know there was mention made of a broken regulatory system. That system was broken because the previous government, prior to 2015, absolutely gutted that system and broke all trust in it. That is why that system was broken. That is number one.

Number two, the member talked about the government's credibility with respect to a price on pollution. I am always confused when I look across the aisle. They were for it. They were against it. They ran on it. Now, all of a sudden, they want to scrap it. I am just wondering, if our system is so bad, whether the member opposite could name for me a couple of initiatives that his government would take to reduce carbon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, it is not my position to postulate on what our campaign election promises might look like coming up in the next election. I am not the leader of the party.

However, I will say this. The unequivocal fact is that the Liberals' carbon tax is an abysmal failure. We are against it. We have been very clear and unequivocal about that. It does not reduce emissions, and it does not put more money in the pockets of Canadians.

I am going to talk again about my riding in Dufferin—Caledon. I have people who commute an hour to an hour and a half every single day to get to work. These are people who are not rich. The carbon tax is punishing them every single day they fill up their tanks with gas. When they heat their homes with propane, they are punished again, and the government does not care, because people in rural communities do not vote for the current government.

The carbon tax is punitive. It is designed for the person who lives in a downtown urban centre, who can take transit and buy their energy from Bullfrog Power or some other company that provides allegedly green electricity. Everybody else, including all the people in my riding, is absolutely punished by the carbon tax. I am against it. Everyone in this party is against it, and we are going to scrap it when we form government.

• (1350)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, obviously I would disagree with the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, and so would some members of his caucus, who favour carbon pricing.

I want to correct the record, because, I am sure unintentionally, he has misstated the progress Germany has made in reducing greenhouse gases. He used the claim that 70% of Germany's electricity was still coming from fossil fuels. It is too high, but it is 30%. Renewables represent 50% of Germany's electricity grid. The result is that, yes, it is true, Germans pay very high prices for energy, but they have reduced greenhouse gases to 40% below 1990 levels, while Canada is 20% above 1990 levels. Therefore, we should have another look at Germany's path.

I want to expand on something the hon. member talked about, which is the capacity of Environment Canada to meet the challenges under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act in Bill S-5. There was an observations paper that was attached to the amendment from the Senate. I would ask whether the member for Dufferin—Caledon noted that in that observation paper the Senate asks whether the government will expand resources to Environment Canada to be able to fulfill the act's promise.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I am going to disagree with my colleague. Where I am getting my facts from is an interview with Vaclav Smil, who is one of the preeminent thinkers on energy transitions. Vaclav Smil wrote an article a few weeks ago in the Los Angeles Times, citing exactly the study just used in my speech. I would suggest the member's statistics are wrong about Germany's energy transition.

Whether the government decides to hire more people within the Department of the Environment, it is not going to matter, because it has proven that it cannot function with the staffing levels it has. The Liberals have massively increased staffing levels across the Canadian government. Huge amounts more in resources are being donated. With a 12% increase in the number of employees across the Government of Canada, people still cannot get a passport and the government cannot keep track of those 500 people subject to deportation orders. I could go on and on about the failings of the government. More money is not the answer for the government. We need a new government that can run departments efficiently.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the member's speech, he went over the defects in the retail carbon tax. He also reminded the House and the public of every single target the government has missed on the environment. He made us see back to better days during the Harper years, so I would like the member to elaborate further on that.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I have an interesting fact: The only government, outside of a pandemic, where carbon emissions have gone down was under Stephen Harper. That is the first time. It took a pandemic that savaged our economy by 9%, a 9% contraction in GDP, for the Liberals to get a 5.8% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. I think that is their secret plan. They are just sort of whispering it to themselves. That is how they are going to lower emissions, by savaging the Canadian economy.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to say happy Bandi Chhor Divas and happy Diwali as well.

I have sat through the Bill S-5 debate, which has been riveting. I think the pages are wide awake, maybe not so much after my time.

Bill S-5 deals with the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which has not been significantly updated since it was passed in 1999. Bill S-5 is the first major update since 1999.

We agree that this outdated act needs to be updated, but we have some concerns. Throughout the course of my 20 minutes, I will speak to that. First off, it is hard for us to take lessons from a government that has failed at every step of the way in the last seven years. It has promised a lot and talk a big game, yet it has failed every step of the way. Earlier on, I mentioned that the government likes to fly the flag and say that it is here for reconciliation and that it is the environmental steward of our economy and our country, yet it is still approving billions upon billions of litres of raw sewage being dumped into our waterways right across the country.

I do not need to remind the House, although I will, that this is also a government that has waged war on our natural resource sector from day one. The Prime Minister apologized. He said that under his tenure Canada would be known more for its resourcefulness than its natural resources. That is not true. He has absolutely waged war.

I will remind the House that it was the government that brought in the no more pipelines bill, Bill C-69, which absolutely punishes Canadian producers. The government has waged war. It has sided with these third-party groups that helped the Liberals get elected in 2015. I will remind the House of that. Over 105 different organizations waged war against the Conservatives and sided with the Lib-

eral Party to get it into power, and now it is paying them back. These organizations have infiltrated even the highest offices of the PMO.

Bill C-68 was an act to amend the Fisheries Act. I debated and studied that. I stood in the House and talked about it for hours on end. That is the act to amend the Fisheries Act where we looked at the harmful alteration or destruction of fish habitats, which we showed and proved. Not one government scientist or biologist could prove that any of the changes that were done by the previous government resulted in or had harmful alteration or destruction of fish habitats.

Bill C-48, the oil tanker moratorium act, is another one where the government waged war on our natural resources and energy sector. It essentially said that any tankers coming to the west coast to get Canadian products would be banned, yet American or other foreign vessels could come. Nothing similar was done on the east coast, where hundreds and hundreds of tankers each week are bringing in foreign dirty oil into our country.

I know that we have just a short time before we get into a riveting session of question period. I am excited about that, too. I know the gallery is, and so are my colleagues. We have a lot of concerns about this, notwithstanding the 24 amendments that were passed, 11 of which I will get into when I have more time after question period.

● (1355)

The government talks a good game on climate change, yet it has failed to reach any of its targets in the seven years since it was elected. It really has no plan. It was the member for Timmins—James Bay who mentioned this. My colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands said she has many concerns about what is in this bill and that amendments need to be addressed.

However, we have heard the government say over the last seven years to just trust it and that it will deal with it in committee, yet it failed to do that. Trust is earned; it is not just given. Time and again, the government continues to burn that trust and any goodwill with not only the opposition, but also Canadians.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join everyone in Canada and around the globe in celebrating Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

Statements by Members

Diwali symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance.

Bandi Chhor Divas is known as the day of liberation. It is a celebration of human rights and freedom, marking the freeing of Guru Hargobind Sahib and 52 rajas from a long imprisonment.

Today, family and friends will get together to pray, exchange gifts, share meals and light diyas in the spirit of hope.

On behalf of the residents of Brampton Centre and my family, I wish all who are celebrating a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

* * *

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support my new Conservative leader and the results he is getting for Canadians.

Less than one month after the election, the federal Liberals threw in the towel and gave up on defending the disastrous ArriveCAN app. For many months, medical experts have told MPs that ArriveCAN could have been scrapped as early as this past spring. Instead, the Liberals held on and continued its mandatory use through summer of 2022, crushing any chance for an economic recovery for our hardest-hit tourism sector. Not only did this useless app cost Canadians tens of millions of wasted taxpayer dollars, it also cost our economy untold billions of dollars in lost tourism revenue.

Before the pandemic, the Canadian tourism industry was valued at \$105 billion. Today, it is down to \$80 billion largely because of failed Liberal pandemic policies, like the mandatory use of ArriveCAN.

At a time when many economists are predicting rough waters ahead for the Canadian economy, the Liberals continue to waste precious taxpayer money on this useless app—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint John—Rothesay.

* * *

PORT SAINT JOHN

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seven years ago, in 2015, I came to this great place on behalf of the constituents of Saint John—Rothesay with one major goal. That goal was to deliver much-needed federal investment in my riding, a riding that had become stalled under the previous government.

I wanted to deliver strategic investment that would help my riding grow and thrive, and there is no better example than that of our government's \$100-million investment in Port Saint John.

A few years ago, Port Saint John did 60,000 containers per year. In the next several years, it will go up to 800,000 containers. That will create hundreds of well-paying, waterfront jobs.

There is no better example of a government investing to create private sector investment. CP Rail and DP World will invest half a billion dollars in Port Saint John over the next several years.

Port Saint John is growing and thriving. It is an economic catalyst for my riding and for all of New Brunswick. I am very proud of my government's investment.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GUY-BÉLISLE LIBRARY

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October 15 to 22 was public library week in Quebec, which is why I am so delighted to recognize the 10th anniversary of our new library, La bibliothèque Guy-Bélisle, which is located in Saint-Eustache, in my riding, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

After being inaugurated in October 2012, the library quickly became a cultural hub for our residents. Our library can boast about 2.8 million book loans and 1.3 million visitors but, more importantly, it serves to nourish the dreams, culture and curiosity of an entire community. This library is a remarkable asset that enriches the lives of the people of Saint-Eustache.

I want to thank Monique Khouzam and Nicole Grimard, the chief librarians who have led this successful institution for 10 years. I also want to thank my friend Raymond Tessier, a municipal councillor in Saint-Eustache, who made this project possible.

Happy 10th anniversary.

* * *

● (1405)

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has all the ingredients to become a global leader in the economy of tomorrow. We have critical minerals, productive farms, high-tech companies and world-class universities. The main threat to our prosperity are irresponsible policies, such as those of the Conservatives in the United Kingdom.

This week, the opposition will once again give Canadians slogans rather than solutions. If we withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the Canadian economy will suffer and lose its momentum. Not only will our European G7 partners condemn us, they will add a carbon tax on our products at their borders. We will no longer be able to export our products. Canadians deserve responsible economic leadership.

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot afford the costly coalition between the NDP and Liberals. As winter descends on Canada, Canadians are being warned that the average price of home heating will rise between 50% and 100% this winter. Some Canadians could see home heating bills bloat by 300%.

Canadians who heat with natural gas, electricity, propane or even wood pellets are going to see home heating bills take a bigger chunk out of their budgets every month, leaving less for food for the dinner table. The Liberal-NDP plan to triple the carbon tax is making matters worse for Canadians with no alternatives for heating their homes.

Again, the Conservatives cannot afford the costly Liberal-NDP coalition and the government's insatiable hunger for taxes, and its infliction of hunger and cold on Canadians. As winter arrives in Canada, our new Conservative leader and the Conservative caucus are standing up for Canadians by fighting the Liberal-NDP plan to tax hungry people out into the cold.

SOCCER

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Thanksgiving Monday in the aftermath of hurricane Fiona, history was made in P.E.I.

The P.E.I. FC under 15 girls soccer team had the best result of any youth team in the history of the National Championships hosted in Charlottetown. They shut out the Alberta champions, beat best teams in the Maritimes and then they knocked off the London Alliance Mustangs champions from a province with 87 times the population of P.E.I. This was thanks to late-game heroics by keeper Quinn Gavin and a winning goal by Kali MacDonald in extra time playing short-handed.

In the National Championship game, a depleted P.E.I. FC side played their hearts out and gave Winnipeg football all it could handle until late in the second half. The result was silver for the first time ever.

I want to congratulate the players and everyone who did not let Fiona get in the way of this national championship and epic performance by a group of young islanders who simply refused to be outworked.

EASTVIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, opportunity brings change. That is a motto that we were talking about yesterday at the Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre when we saw young people receiving awards for their accomplishments and as a vote of confidence in their future.

There were three young people who received awards. Ahmad Arif and Ruqaiyah Chhiboo received grade 10 scholarships. They are participants and volunteers at the Eastview Neighbourhood

Statements by Members

Community Centre. Shahaddah Jack received the Youth of the Year Award. She is a journalism student and is a spoken word poet, and a very strong voice for people in her community. They all described Eastview as a safe place, a home, somewhere they gain strength to go forward.

I want to congratulate Ruqaiyah, Ahmad and Shahaddah for their awards. I want to also thank everyone, the volunteers and all the staff at Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre. They are amazing people who bring opportunity and change.

DIWALI AND BANDI CHHOR DIVAS

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas, a time we commemorate Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji for standing up for the freedom and human rights of many others at the cost of his own.

This also marks the Festival of Lights for many around the world. This celebration of the victory of good over evil sees families joining together to light diyas gather for fireworks and visit gurdwaras and temples to pray for blessings, prosperity and peace. People will also light their homes with bright lights to mark the occasion.

Let us reflect upon the lessons of freedom and human rights Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji has taught us along with making efforts to challenge the darkness in our own lives with light, to remember to take a break during our busy lives and reflect on the good we can continue to do in the world, and being the voice for the voiceless.

For all Canadians celebrating today, I wish them blessings with comfort, peace and fellowship. Happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

[Member spoke in Punjabi]

● (1410)

MAHSA AMINI

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three days after being detained by Iran's so-called morality police for supposedly wearing her hijab improperly, 22-year-old Mahsa Amini was killed. This human rights violation began a series of protests across Iran in over 80 cities, leaving over 200 people killed by security forces. This indiscriminate killing has also left at least 23 children dead.

Uqaqtittiji, Nunavummiut are gravely concerned about the marine environment in Nunavut. The opening of the Northwest Passage means more vessel traffic. This increases the risks of oil spill, for which communities are not equipped to mitigate. Arctic sovereignty is at stake. Nunavummiut are reporting changes and are being ignored.

I call on the government to resource Nunavummiut so they can defend the Arctic environment.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

LISE FAUCHER

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to recognize the great contribution of an incredible volunteer from the riding of Shefford.

Until just recently, Lise Faucher was a member of the board of directors of the Centre d'aide aux entreprises Haute-Yamaska et r gion, or CAE, where she served as a volunteer since the organization was established in 1985. Ms. Faucher spent 37 years working for the region's economic development. She served first as a board member and then as the president of the board from 2001 to 2022, the longest-serving president in the CAE's history. She even served as a representative of the community futures development corporation in Mont r gie for many years. She is a woman of action working in a man's world who cares about the survival of the CAE and supporting entrepreneurship in our beautiful region.

The CAE boardroom in Granby will be named after her because she embodies all that the organization stands for. We wish her a well-deserved retirement.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, a very close friend of the Prime Minister, said in early September that putting a carbon tax on home heating fuel would place "undue economic burdens on the people of this province." The four Atlantic premiers wrote to the federal environment minister around the same time to request an exemption on the deadline to end the tax exemption on home heating fuel. They were flatly turned down by the Liberal government, whose intent to tax the right to heat one's home reflects its cult-like beliefs that taxing the essentials of life will lower carbon emissions. The NDP coalition partners are partial to the same cult-like beliefs. According to the chair of the Council of Atlantic Premiers, energy poverty in Atlantic Canada is nearly 40%, the highest in the country.

Atlantic Canadians are counting on their MPs to stand with them when they stand to vote today on a motion to axe the carbon tax on home heating fuel.

Oral Questions

LONDON AND DISTRICT BUSINESS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to honour Tina Bax and Michelle Quintyn, who were recently inducted into the London and District Business Hall of Fame in recognition of outstanding contributions and ethics in business.

Tina is the founder and former president of CultureWorks ESL and the founder of Canada Immigration Pathway. Founded in 1998, CultureWorks was the first public-private partnership of its kind in Canada, graduating thousands to colleges and universities across the country.

Michelle is president and CEO of Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes. As CEO at Goodwill, serving across Ontario, she steered the company to a \$59-million enterprise with 1,200 employees who train and work on several platforms, including thrift/recycling, food and hospitality, light manufacturing and more.

I have come to know Tina and Michelle as titans in our community. They have made monumental impacts in their fields, and they have made London a better place to live. I congratulate them again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, winter is coming but inflation is already here.

Liberal inflation has driven up the price of food and driven up the cost of gas, and now the Prime Minister wants to make it more expensive to heat one's home this winter. Seniors across Canada could see their gas bills double because of the government's tax hikes.

If the Liberals will not listen to their own constituents, maybe they will listen to the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, who said that rural seniors will struggle to keep the heat on.

Will the Prime Minister show some compassion and vote this afternoon to cancel his plan to hike taxes on home heating?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative opposition has a golden opportunity to do this week what it did last week, which was to see the light, support Canadians and vote for a bill proposed by the Liberals to make life more affordable for Canadians. It can support half a million Canadian children with our dental plan. It can support low-cost renters with our housing plan.

Will the opposition do the right thing and vote for Bill C-31? That is what Canadians want to know.

Oral Questions

• (1420)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that the vast majority of Canadians will never see a penny of that money, but every Canadian is paying the tax hike to heat their home.

The question was about home heating. The Prime Minister wants to triple the tax on seniors for the crime of heating their homes in Canada, in the winter, in February. It is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

Will the ministers driving inflation on the front bench allow their colleagues who understand the problem to vote this afternoon to exempt home heating from their planned tax hikes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us set the record straight in terms of which side of the House is supporting Canadians when it comes to taxes. In 2015, we lowered taxes on Canadians, and the Conservatives voted against it. In 2019, we lowered taxes for Canadians again, and the Conservative leader and his party voted against it. In 2021, we lowered taxes on working Canadians, and the Conservatives voted against it. Just this summer, in 2022, when we lowered taxes on small businesses, the Conservatives voted against it.

We are voting for Canadians. We are lowering taxes. They are voting against it.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are united by a cost of living crisis that the government has created. The Liberal MPs have an opportunity to vote today to cancel the planned tax increases on heating this winter. Today, they can stand up and tell seniors across this country that they understand heating one's home is essential; it is not a choice. Their plan does not reduce emissions, and the costly coalition with the NDP just hurts struggling Canadians.

Everybody is watching. Will they vote today to do the right thing and exempt home heating from their tax hikes, yes or no?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time a Conservative gets up in this House and talks about and pretends to care about seniors in Canada, I think back to when they were in government and they forced seniors to work an extra two years before they could get their pension benefits, benefits they worked hard for and contributed to for decades. Then I think to when we took power in 2015. The party across the aisle has voted against everything for seniors in the last seven years.

Canadian seniors know who has their backs and it is not the leader of that opposition party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at an automotive industry conference last week in Windsor, the Minister of Finance publicly contradicted the Prime Minister when she stated that the federal government will have to tighten its belt in the coming months to avoid increasing inflation inadvertently.

This announcement about reducing new budget measures was a surprise to some, as the Prime Minister has been doing the opposite since 2015. The costly Liberal-NDP coalition is finally admitting that its out-of-control spending has fuelled inflation.

Can it now admit that tripling the carbon tax is a bad idea and that it increases the cost of living?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's most recent budget contains a very clear message for Canadians: They can count on us to manage taxpayers' money responsibly.

It is unfortunate that the Conservatives want to cut old age security and all of our supports for seniors, dental care and housing.

This side of the House supports Canadians, whereas the other side votes against them.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the parliamentary secretary, because what the Conservatives want is to reduce the carbon tax increase. We want to keep the government from raising taxes next year.

Yes, I agree, and we all agree: We want to lower taxes for Canadians, and taxes need to stop increasing.

Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that his government will cancel the carbon tax hike and, more importantly, that it will not increase taxes for Quebecers and Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, I respect my hon. colleague's criticism, but the Conservatives were in power for 10 years, and what did they do? They took an axe to all kinds of support measures for all Canadians. We on this side of the House will always support Canadians, and we will always keep an eye on inflation. We will be there for Canadians, including with help for dental care and housing.

The members on the other side can whine all they like, but on this side, we are taking action.

* * *

• (1425)

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the government wanted to help families with young children cope with inflation, it could simply have increased the Canada child benefit.

Oral Questions

That would have been way too easy though, so it decided to write cheques to pay for dental care for kids 12 and under. Today, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that this benefit discriminates against Quebec families. Children in Quebec will get half as much as children outside Quebec. Quebeckers have 23% of the children, yet they will get only 13% of the promised \$700 million.

Will the government fix this so that its dental care benefit does not discriminate against families in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the member for asking the question and pleased to have the opportunity to point out that children under the age of 10 and their families already have access to dental care in Quebec, but that the Government of Canada's additional investment complements the existing program, specifically in the area of prevention. Kids can get fluoride treatments, scaling, cleaning and preventive care for their gums.

All those services are now eligible for the Canada dental benefit, which, we hope, will get through committee and the Senate quickly.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals like things to be really complicated. If they wanted to help families, they could have increased supports to families, but no, that is too simple. If they wanted to help with dental care, they could have reached an agreement with Quebec and transferred money, but no, that is too simple.

Instead, they came up with this dental cheque scheme. Why is that? It is not because they wanted to do something simple or effective. It was because they wanted to please the NDP to keep their majority in Parliament. They did not really want dental insurance; they wanted majority insurance, paid for by taxpayers. Will the Liberals at least modify their majority insurance to make sure it does not discriminate against Quebeckers?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to talk about the Canada child benefit that we introduced in July 2016. Every month, it helps reduce child poverty in his riding and in mine by 40%. Every month, more than 450,000 children are lifted out of poverty, in addition to their parents, of course, thanks to the benefit that we introduced in July 2016. Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois voted against the Canada child benefit in July 2016, if I remember correctly.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a heartbreaking message from Sébastien Marin, a doctor at the hospital in Ormstown.

He wrote: "I ended my night with a patient who died right in front of me from a ruptured thoracic aortic aneurysm. That same patient had waited 16 hours yesterday at another hospital without being seen...There was nothing I could do. He died within minutes of arriving."

The patient spent 16 hours waiting in the ER even though he had a history of vascular disease. When will the Liberal government

take action and make the necessary investments to give our public health care system room to breathe?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all very much appreciate what the member just said. We are all feeling it, in the hospitals and in the health care services in Quebec and elsewhere. This is a terrible situation. We are in crisis because health care workers are in crisis and are exhausted. They have left the profession in droves. Many are sick, and many are considering leaving.

That is why, over the past few months, we have invested an additional \$2 billion in increasing the Canada health transfer to cut down the backlog of diagnostics and surgeries. We have invested another \$1 billion to take care of the people and workers in long term care. If I get to answer another question, I will add more details about the investments we plan to make.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in London, emergency room wait times have reached an all-time high. Patients are waiting up to 20 hours for care.

It is not just people in London. Canadians across the country are seeing record wait times for emergency care, as Conservative premiers continue to underfund the system. Instead of helping people, the Liberal government will not stand up against their buddy Premier Ford's cuts and privatization of Ontario's health care system.

When will the government defend Canada's public health care so that Ontarians are not waiting a full day to get the urgent, life-saving care they need?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having access to appropriate health care services is a fundamental, basic human right, recognized, as we all know, by the Canada Health Act, with conditions that ensure that the federal government provides appropriate support to provinces and territories, making sure that the services are universal, accessible and free. That is why we are engaging with provinces and territories to add to the other transfers that I mentioned just a moment, in addition to the increase of 10% in the Canada health transfers in March 2023.

* * *

● (1430)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, former Bank of Canada governor and potential Liberal leadership candidate Mark Carney told a Senate committee that the rising cost of living and inflation are domestic stories. Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem has said that inflation is home-grown, even noting that the carbon tax contributes to inflation, yet, as winter approaches, this costly coalition is not doing anything to make Canadians' lives and home heating affordable.

Will the Liberals provide Canadians relief by removing home heating from the carbon tax?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my hon. colleague in his new role. He speaks, as do the Conservatives, about the need to make life more affordable for Canadians.

They have the opportunity to do just that. This week, they can vote to support half a million kids with dental supports. They can support low-income renters with \$500 for housing supports. They can do the right thing and vote for Bill C-31 this week.

The question is this: Will they, or will they not?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, soon enough, when Conservatives are on that side, Liberals can ask us the questions.

Home heating in Canada is essential, but thanks to Liberal inflation and blocked energy projects in Canada, natural gas is up 37% and other fuel oils are up 48.7%. Liberal inflation will also see Canadians lose up to \$3,000 in purchasing power next year. Now is not the time for more taxes.

Will this costly coalition give Canadians a break and exempt home heating from their job-killing carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize that affordability is a very important issue for Canadians. It is why 80% of Canadian households get more back in a rebate on the price on pollution than they actually pay.

It is also why we are investing \$250 million to help make home heating more affordable for families across the country, by helping them move to more affordable and greener home heating sources. We can fight climate change and address affordability.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals like to try to blame everyone else for the inflation they have caused, but Canadians know it was the Prime Minister's massive deficits and money printing that has driven inflation to record highs.

It is too late to undo the inflation that the government has already caused, but it is not too late to do something about soaring energy costs going forward. Analysts are predicting that home heating costs will skyrocket this winter, where many families will be paying twice as much this winter than they did last winter just to stay warm.

Will this costly coalition abandon its plan to triple the carbon tax and give Canadians a break on their home heating costs?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we should deal in facts. Most of the G7 countries have higher inflation rates than Canada does, and that opposition supported almost all of the COVID supports they are speaking to.

As I said, more than 80% of Canadian families get more money back than they pay in the price on pollution. We are investing a quarter of a billion dollars to help families reduce their heating costs, through the implementation of things such as heat pumps, and address the climate crisis we face concurrently.

It is important to know that one has to have a plan, both for affordability and the economy, but one also needs a plan to fight climate change.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberals like to pretend that inflation is kind of like the weather, as though one could bundle up as the inflation front rolls in and mothers will line their children's pockets with extra twenties in case prices go up.

We all know it is caused when governments spend more money than it has and then run the printing presses to pay for it. The carbon tax is not working. The people who are concerned the most about climate change should be opposed to the carbon tax the most, because they have not hit a single target they have set for themselves. The Prime Minister's own watchdog has said that most Canadians pay more than they get back.

Will they abandon their plans to hike the carbon tax on Canadian families this winter?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, it is very important to address the affordability concerns. That is exactly what we are doing.

We also have to take into account the future costs associated with not addressing the climate issue. These folks will not mention the term "climate change". In fact, their leader did not mention it in six months of campaigning. At the end of the day, the costs associated with climate change and inaction on it will be \$100 billion per year by 2050. That is an appalling thing to leave to our children. Let us ensure that we are working for today and working for tomorrow.

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all Canadians and we are all proud of our country. As Canadians, we have one indisputable thing in common: We all have to keep warm in winter. It is not a luxury, it is a necessity for Canadians.

This government wants to increase the Liberal tax on carbon. In Quebec, many people heat their homes with propane. Families, business owners and farmers need propane.

Does the government believe that it is a really good idea to increase the Liberal tax on carbon when inflation is raging and winter is coming?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives can work with us in committee today. They can work with us here, later in the week, to put more money in Canadians' pockets and help them with expenses this winter.

Our plan puts a price on pollution in order to protect the planet for the future. The Conservatives can act now to support our dental care and housing initiatives. It is their duty, and it is our duty.

We will be here for Canadians. That is our plan.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Liberal government could do the right thing for all Canadian families.

We asked the Liberals to lower the carbon tax, but they did not want to do that. What they want to do instead is triple the Liberal carbon tax. Winter is coming. Canadians need to heat their homes, and the Liberal carbon tax is going to have a direct impact on inflation.

All Canadian families are being affected by inflation, so will the government give them some good news today and do the right thing by not raising the Liberal carbon tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two things are clear: The Conservatives do not believe in climate change and do not believe in lowering taxes for Canadians.

Here is the proof. In 2015, we lowered taxes for Canadians, and the Conservatives voted against it. In 2019, we lowered taxes for Canadians again, and the Conservatives voted against it. In 2021, we lowered taxes on working Canadians, and the Conservatives voted against it. In 2022, when we lowered taxes on small businesses, the Conservatives voted against it.

We are voting for Canadians. They are voting against them.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the freeze on handguns came into effect on Friday. It is now illegal to sell, buy or transfer legally acquired handguns. Some details need to be worked out, but we will make sure that the work is done. The Bloc Québécois welcomes this step forward.

Now that this step has been taken, when will the government finally get serious about illegal guns, which are used in the vast majority of shootings in Montreal?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of this government's work and the announcement last Friday that, for the first time, a national handgun freeze is being introduced. This is a very good thing and a significant step in the right direction.

I want to thank my colleague for her co-operation on Bill C-21. As for borders, we will continue to invest in adding resources to stop illegal weapons trafficking.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government itself says that handguns were the most common type of weapon used in violent crimes between 2009 and 2020. It is right, except that the handguns that were used in the crimes they are talking about are illegal guns. Those guns were obtained on the black market, not purchased at the hardware store.

We support the government's freeze on legal weapons. Now, when will it step up its fight against the trafficking of illegal weapons, the ones that have been most used in violent crimes since 2009?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to address the problem at the border. Our Bill C-21 increases penalties for criminals and gives law enforcement new tools. We will also work with the Province of Quebec by transferring federal funds.

Finally, we have a very good partnership with the United States to disrupt criminal networks and stop illegal gun traffickers.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the freeze on legal handguns is important, as I have said. However, there will be no before and after for Montrealers.

There will be no "before Friday's freeze" and no "after", because Montrealers' biggest problem is illegal weapons. The minister cannot rest on his laurels as long as gun violence goes on uninterrupted in Montreal.

Does the minister realize that claiming to solve the problem of gun violence in Montreal without cracking down on illegal weapons is like trying to empty the ocean with a teaspoon?

● (1440)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is why we will continue to invest to stop illegal gun traffickers. That is why I was in Montreal this past summer to announce a \$40-million transfer to put towards creating a prevention strategy to end gang violence on the street.

We will work with the Bloc Québécois to get Bill C-21 passed, because it is necessary.

[*English*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness politicized the criminal investigation of the worst mass killing in Canadian history. The evidence shows he pressured the RCMP commissioner to release sensitive information to further the Liberal political agenda, knowing it could jeopardize the investigation.

He then denied it all on the record at committee, and for this reason, he must resign. Will he resign today?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the member opposite is simply wrong. The independence of police operations underpins the rule of law, and it is a principle that I have not only respected, but also defended vigorously for decades.

To be very clear, as I have testified before committee, and as I have said in this House, I did not at any time direct the commissioner of the RCMP in any operational matter, including on the release of information. I did not direct her. I did not ask her. I did not even suggest that she do so.

As the commissioner herself has confirmed in her testimony before the Mass Casualty Commission, she did not receive direction from me and was not influenced by our government regarding the public release of information.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at committee, the minister said to me, "At no time did I ask Commissioner Lucki to reveal that information." I then went on to ask him if he knew about it, to which he said, "No, I did not." However, on the audio recording released last week, Commissioner Lucki says, "it was a request that I got...from the Minister's office...I shared with the Minister...it was going to be in the...news release".

The evidence is clear as day that either the minister or the commissioner is lying. Which one is it?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the House, the member opposite is quite free to engage in any speculation or fabrication she may wish.

However, to be clear, subclause 5(1) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act provides for the direction of the minister, but equally clear is that our government recognizes and respects that police independence underpins the rule of law and ministerial direction cannot infringe on the independence of the RCMP.

I did not at any time give direction. The testimony I gave before the commission was entirely the truth. It was the whole truth and nothing but the truth, as I have repeated here today.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness just stated unequivocally in Parliament that there was no interference by him or his office in the ongoing investigation into the Nova Scotia mass shooting, yet on Friday, we received an audio recording with RCMP commissioner Lucki stating that the minister's office had requested that this confidential evidence be released to the public.

The commissioner worked directly with the minister against the wishes of investigators, who warned that releasing this confidential evidence could jeopardize an investigation. The minister misled Parliament. When will he resign?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, in these circumstances, it is apparent that the member opposite's reach exceeds his grasp. The simple truth is that at no time was any direction given by me. Under Canadian law, the RCMP Act, the only person authorized to give direction to the RCMP is the minister of public safety. I held that role at the time. I

respected the principle underlying the rule of law that politics will not interfere with police operations. At no time did I give that direction.

Those are the facts as I have testified and as the commissioner of the RCMP has confirmed.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, "it was a request that I got...from the Minister's office". With those recorded words, the RCMP commissioner directly implicated the former minister of public safety with political interference during an investigation into the worst mass shooting in Canadian history. Canadians expect police investigations to be independent so justice can be done. The government should never be directing the RCMP to divulge sensitive information to push a political agenda. The families of victims deserve answers.

The minister claims his office did not interfere. Is he saying the RCMP commissioner is lying to Canadians?

• (1445)

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the independence of police operations is not only a principle I have always respected, but it is also one that I have vigorously defended for decades.

I can assure the House, as I have done previously and today—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt for a moment. I am very close in distance to the minister here and I am having a hard time hearing him. I would just ask all members, before they open their mouths, to please look to their whips and see what they are doing. If they are doing this, that means something I believe.

The hon. minister may begin from the top, please.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, the independence of police operations underpins the rule of law. This is not only a principle I have always respected, but it is a principle that I have vigorously defended over decades.

I say once again to the House that at no time did I direct the commissioner of the RCMP in any operational matter. She was not directed by me to release information. It was not asked of her. It was not suggested to her. The commissioner herself has confirmed in sworn testimony before the Mass Casualty Commission that there was no interference.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with growing fears about the looming recession, the need for strong social safety nets could not be more important for Canadians. Inflation has already made life unaffordable for most and rising interest rates will result in higher consumer debt, along with hard-working people losing their jobs. However, just last month, the Liberals allowed the temporary expansion of EI eligibility to expire, leaving workers in Hamilton Centre and across the country to suffer.

Will the government commit to making long-overdue reforms to the EI program now to ensure that workers can get the financial support that they have earned and that they deserve?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic showed us that EI has not kept up with the way that Canadians work, and we need to reform it. That is why we are working very hard to create a system that is more fair, more equal and more accessible for more workers. EI was there for workers on a temporary basis with more accessible flexibilities in the program when workers needed it most. We will continue to be there for workers and look forward to launching our plan to modernize the EI system soon.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of years and especially over this past summer many Canadians have been pushed into homelessness due to the rising costs across the board. It is no secret that this harsh reality has hit our most vulnerable the hardest.

Can the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion please tell the House what the government is doing to support homeless Canadians and offer them a better tomorrow?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for St. John's East for her important question and her strong advocacy on this really serious issue. Our government takes homelessness seriously, and that is why we are committed to eliminating it once and for all. That is also why we have doubled the federal funding for Reaching Home, Canada's anti-homelessness strategy from \$2 billion to \$4 billion. It is also why we are building 10,000 deeply affordable homes rapidly through the rapid housing initiative. This means better access to affordable housing for the most vulnerable. It also means better services and wraparound supports, which are needed. We have demonstrated that, through federal leadership, we will leave no one behind.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a company has come forward saying it did not receive a dime of the missing million dollars in the ArriveCAN scam, proving the Liberals provided false information to the House and to Canadians for spending on this app. Are the Liberals going to give Canadians the details of the real contracts

Oral Questions

for ArriveCAN, or are they going to wait for more companies to come forward and tell us that even more money is missing?

Where are the missing millions? Who got rich?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the height of the pandemic, the ArriveCAN app was an essential tool to protect the health and safety of Canadians. It did so by screening all those who wished to enter on their vaccination status.

I understand that the hon. member has brought forward a question. I can assure him that the CBSA is conducting a full review and we will provide updates to that once we have them.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the minister's office that signed off on the documents telling Canadians that they paid for that work. Now we know it is not true. Millions of dollars are missing and it is millions of dollars over budget. With the track record that the Liberal government has, Canadians know that it cannot be trusted. Whether it was the WE scandal or SNC-Lavalin, Canadians know that Liberal insiders will always get the track.

Which Liberal insider got this one? Who got rich off the Prime Minister's \$54-million ArriveCAN scam?

• (1450)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid my hon. colleague across the aisle may be getting a bit ahead of his skis on this one. Let us let CBSA do the full review. We will be entirely transparent with regard to those details. In the meantime, I want to remind him and all members that ArriveCAN was an essential tool that helped to save Canadians' lives and helped to protect the health and safety of all Canadians during the height of the pandemic. We based that decision on evidence, science and medicine, which, of course, the Conservatives continue to wage war on every day.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government spent \$54 million on an application that experts say they could have created for \$200,000. We demanded a list from the Liberal government of the contractors to see who got the \$54 million. Already three contractors have come forward to say they did not get a penny.

What is the government trying to hide, where is the money and who got rich?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already indicated on a number of occasions, CBSA is conducting a full review and will share details as it has them, to be transparent. I also want to remind my colleague that the ArriveCAN app did ensure that we were protecting the health and safety of Canadians. It ensured that we could keep the economy going. It ensured that we could provide food, fuel and, most essentially, health care treatment to Canadians.

Going forward, we will provide details when CBSA has them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is CBSA. He is the minister, so he is the one responsible for the ArriveCAN chaos.

The Liberals are putting the lucrative contracts awarded to companies into quarantine. We want to know the details.

The government paid \$54 million to develop that app, which should have cost \$250,000. Some 70 updates were needed for an app that never worked.

The question is simple. Who are the other winners of the Liberal ArriveCAN lottery?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CBSA is conducting a full review and we will provide all the details to the House as soon as they are available.

In the meantime, I want to remind the House that the ArriveCAN app was an essential tool during the pandemic that protected the health and safety of Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the summer of 2021, Health Canada was planning to authorize an increase in the amount of pesticides on our food. However, at the request of the multinational pesticide companies themselves, the government had to postpone its decision under pressure during the election campaign.

Today, Radio-Canada reported that the organization Vigilance OGM had filed an access to information request to see the study that inspired this decision. The organization received 229 blank pages. That is what transparency means to this government. It is so transparent that we can see right through the pages.

What does the government have to hide?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank not only my colleague, but also every organization in Quebec and elsewhere that is fighting to ensure that people can live a healthy life in an environment that is protected.

We acknowledge that there are obstacles to accessing this information because of confidentiality laws.

We also know that the Canadian government announced last year that the law would be reviewed in order to ensure, as the member was saying, greater transparency, better access to reliable scientific information and more openness on such important issues.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our farmers were not asking for more pesticides on our foods. In fact, no one was asking for that except Bayer, the multinational that manufactures the pesticides in question. At the time, the government was accused of not conducting any studies to justify this decision, other than the study conducted by Bayer itself.

Today, the government is refusing to disclose to Vigilance OGM the study that led to its decision. Believe it or not, it is justifying that decision by saying that the information in question was provided by a third party.

The third party in question would not happen to be Bayer by chance, would it?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again thank the member.

I would like to add to the answer that I just gave a few moments ago that Health Canada and all public servants are well aware that they need to do a solid job when it comes to quality of information, transparency and compliance with the law in that regard.

The public servants and organizations involved work together to determine whether there are any other options available for accessing the appropriate information.

* * *

● (1455)

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, folks in Newfoundland and Labrador know that I will vote for the Conservative motion not to place the carbon tax on home heating fuel. However, Chesley in L'Anse aux Clair, Geoff in Pasadena, Stirling from Davidsville, Lorna in Mount Pearl, Glad in Paradise and Tammy from St. John's are not sure if their MPs will have their backs, which their Liberal leader promises all the time.

Will the Prime Minister once again force MPs from my province to vote against the well-being of our people?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shocking. Weeks after the climate catastrophe of hurricane Fiona, the Conservatives want to take a tool off the table that would reduce emissions, fight climate change and put more money into people's pockets.

I want to assure the hon. member that we will be there to help Atlantic Canada to rebuild. We will also be there to help Atlantic Canadians transition to greener forms of energy.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a heartless answer that was.

In June, Liberal MPs from Atlantic Canada voted against my bill to form a pinniped management act, against the wishes of their constituents. These same folks are now faced with a tripling of the carbon tax on home heating fuel, and they simply cannot afford it.

Will Atlantic Liberal MPs vote to exempt all forms of home heating fuel from the carbon tax, or will they give Atlantic Canadians the cold shoulder?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are focused like a laser beam on affordability and the cost of living challenges of Canadian families. That is why it is so important that the price on pollution and the climate rebate puts more money—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am not sure what happened on the weekend, but everybody came back really rambunctious. I just want to remind everybody to calm down.

The hon. parliamentary secretary, go ahead from the top, please.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, eight out of 10 families will benefit, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It is very good news, and about a week and a half ago, cheques started arriving in people's mailboxes. They will now arrive quarterly. That is going to help Atlantic Canadians. It will help all Canadians with the cost of living and with cash flow.

May I say, there is a triple benefit. It would reduce pollution, drive innovation and, importantly, put more money in people's pockets.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sad facts are this: Grocery costs are up over 10% and home heating costs are up 54% from a year ago. Seniors are now having to choose between rent and feeding themselves. They are opting out of home insurance, which they desperately need, again, so they can feed themselves.

Premiers Furey and Houston have reached out to the government, literally begging them for relief for Atlantic Canadians and the extra \$1 billion that they will have to pay for home heating costs by 2030.

Will the Prime Minister and the costly coalition with the NDP end the tax on home heating?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives spend time focusing on slogans, we are focused on helping seniors. The only thing tripling is the misinformation spread by the leader of this opposition party.

I can say first-hand that home heating oil is expensive, and that is why we are delivering funding to help folks make the switch to efficient and more affordable ways of heating their homes. It is why we are doubling the GST tax credit. They can heckle as much as they want. They just do not want to hear the answer about all the things we are doing for affordability for Canadians and seniors who are vulnerable.

Oral Questions

• (1500)

[Translation]

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are also being affected by rising inflation across the globe. Our government remains committed to this fight and is constantly looking for solutions that will help Canadian families.

Can the minister tell us how important it is to pass Bill C-31, which will help Canadian children have access to affordable dental care and bring much-needed relief to those who are having a hard time paying their rent?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for his work and for stressing that oral health care really is part of essential health care.

That is why we are very pleased with the progress being made towards passing Bill C-31, which will help families and 500,000 children avoid hospitalization because of widespread infection and reduce the costs and risks of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and gastrointestinal illness. It will ensure that children have the dental care they need and reduce the cost of living for families concerned.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with temperatures dropping below zero degrees across the country, people are turning on the heat, but seniors are telling me they do not know how long they will be able to afford to keep their homes heated with the Liberal tax hikes on the way.

With natural gas and heating oil representing more than 60% of Canadian home heating, will the costly coalition with the NDP back off tripling the carbon tax?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the previous Conservative leader, just one year ago, everyone on that side of the House supported a price on pollution. The member for New Brunswick Southwest recently endorsed a carbon price for his province. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills made the carbon price a centrepiece of his leadership campaign in 2017. Everyone on that side of the House is now vehemently opposed to a carbon price.

The Conservatives have been consistent and I have to hand it to them: They are consistent flip-flopers.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals must be unaware that Canada gets cold in the winter. The hot air coming from that side of the House will not heat people's homes.

A homeowner in Campbell River, B.C., recently told Chek News that their home heating costs would increase 80%, from just under \$1,400 a year to almost \$2,500, if the government pushes on with more tax hikes.

Will the Liberals do the decent thing, stop the pain and cancel the tripling of carbon taxes?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives across the way never talk about the costs of climate change. In the member's province of B.C., climate change is killing people and ravaging the economy. About 600 people died under the heat dome last year. It was a \$9-billion impact to the local economy.

Climate change is real. Lives are real. These costs are real. We have a plan to reduce emissions, build community resiliency and create the clean jobs of tomorrow.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Quebeckers, especially those living in rural areas, heat their homes with oil, whose price has doubled since last year. Many Canadian and Quebec families must make tough choices in order to cover the costs of food and housing, in addition to paying their heating bill, because people in Quebec and Canada have no choice.

With winter quickly approaching, we are asking the government to do one simple thing, and that is to cancel the carbon tax on home heating bills. Will it do that?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that climate change is real, which is why we have put a price on pollution. It is very important to have a mechanism that will help us contain climate change. We have seen the forest fires and the floods. We have seen the pressure that insurance companies are putting on the average person here in Canada. That is why we are taking action on inflation with a multibillion dollar plan to help Canadians. That is what responsible government does.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety announced that a national freeze on handguns has come into effect as one of the many steps the federal government is taking to get guns off our streets, tackle gun violence and keep Canadians safe.

Eileen Mohan, whose son was tragically gunned down, said she was rejoicing at seeing this announcement in her lifetime. She said the government was choosing life over death.

Can the Minister of Public Safety update the House on this important step forward in the fight against gun violence?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for all of her advocacy on this important subject matter, which has impacted not only our hometown of Toronto, but communities right across the country, rural, urban and suburban.

I am so proud of the work of this government. Last Friday, for the first time in our country's history, we announced a national handgun freeze. This means that going forward it will be illegal to buy, sell or transfer handguns right across the country. What is also important is that members recognize that this is part of a broader plan whereby we are going to buy back assault-style rifles and get them out of our communities. We are going to continue to invest at the border, and we are going to stop gun crime before it starts.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they were popping corks in the minister's office when the Supreme Court announced it would not reopen the St. Anne's residential school file, but this issue is not going away. The justice department suppressed 10,000 pages of police evidence of rape, abuse and torture of children in that awful institution, then lied in the hearings and spent millions on lawyers all the way to the Supreme Court. There is no reconciliation in Canada without justice for St. Anne's.

Will the minister stand up and tell us he will meet with the survivors and establish a credible mediation process?

Look at me when I am talking to you about these St. Anne's survivors.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

I can appreciate members' wanting dramatic sound clips, but that was not acceptable.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this should not be about me or anyone else in the House of Commons. At this point, there are a lot of survivors, particularly the survivors of St. Anne's, who are hurting in light of the judgment of the Supreme Court. I have asked my department to re-examine 11 of the cases, particularly sensitive student-on-student cases. We will be approaching the court monitor to re-examine those cases in particular.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Liberals think they can support workers and EI and still raise payroll taxes while small businesses in Canada fight to survive. The Prime Minister does not agree, or at least he did not in 2013. On June 5 of that year, the then member for Papineau asked a question on behalf of Dustin from Calgary, noting that EI premiums were to rise by \$50 and that it was a “direct payroll tax increase”. The member asked why the government then was doing that to Dustin and every other working Canadian.

Does today's Prime Minister care about Dustin, or has he thrown him in the dustbin?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the hon. member cares deeply for small businesses, as I do, and I want to remind him not only that they are the backbone of our Canadian economy, but that what we have been doing is cutting their small business taxes and helping them thrive through the pandemic on this road to economic recovery. I want to assure the member that we are going to keep working very hard for Canadian small businesses, just as he does in his riding.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1510)
[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TAX EXEMPTION ON HOME HEATING FUEL

The House resumed from Thursday, October 20, consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:08 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Carleton relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1525)
[English]

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

(Division No. 197)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson

Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Scheer
Seeback
ShIPLEY
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Business of Supply

d'Entremont
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Kelly
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Perkins
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 116

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)

Routine Proceedings

Cormier
 Dabrusin
 DeBellefeuille
 Desilets
 Dhaliwal
 Diab
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 El-Khoury
 Fergus
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fragiskatos
 Freeland
 Gaheer
 Garon
 Gaudreau
 Gerretsen
 Gould
 Guilbeault
 Hanley
 Hepfner
 Housefather
 Hussien
 Iacono
 Ien
 Johns
 Jowhari
 Kayabaga
 Khalid
 Koutrakis
 Kwan
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Larouche
 Lauzon
 Lebouthillier
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McPherson
 Mendicino
 Michaud
 Morrice
 Murray
 Ng
 Normandin
 Oliphant
 Pausé
 Plamondon
 Qualtrough
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Savard-Tremblay
 Schiefke
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Ste-Marie
 Suds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Van Bynen

Coteau
 Damoff
 Desbiens
 Desjarlais
 Dhillon
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Ehsassi
 Erskine-Smith
 Fillmore
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser
 Fry
 Garneau
 Garrison
 Gazan
 Gill
 Green
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Idlout
 Jaczek
 Joly
 Julian
 Kelloway
 Khera
 Kusmierczyk
 Lalonde
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lattanzio
 LeBlanc
 Lemire
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacGregor
 Martinez Ferrada
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McKay
 McLeod
 Mendès
 Miao
 Miller
 Morrissey
 Naqvi
 Noormohamed
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Petiipas Taylor
 Powlowski
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Sgro
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Sorbara
 St-Onge
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thompson
 Trudel
 Valdez
 van Koevorden

Vandal
 Vignola
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Zarrillo
 Vandenberg
 Villemure
 Weiler
 Zahid
 Zuberi— 202

PAIRED

Members

Blois
 Cooper
 Jeneroux
 Maloney
 Rood
 Carr
 Dong
 Lake
 Perron
 Sheehan— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, could you clarify for the benefit of the House whether the leader of the NDP's vote ought to count since he was not wearing a jacket when he voted?

The Speaker: The member's vote came through electronically, but that is a very good point and I thank the hon. member for bringing it up. Some of us missed that.

I want to remind hon. members that if they are voting, even if it is remotely, or should they have to speak in the House, they will have to at least have their jacket on for the vote. They do not need a tie, but they do need a jacket on to vote. We will have to strike the vote of the hon. member for Burnaby South.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled "Overcoming the Barriers to Global Vaccine Equity and Ending the Pandemic".

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

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are pleased to submit a dissenting report. We thank the witnesses for their work.

Our dissenting report makes a number of important points. We note, for example, that the Canadian government has primarily distributed doses of AstraZeneca that were not recommended for use in Canada. We sought to understand how the government could justify recommending against a vaccine for Canadians while distributing it to the developing world. It is not entirely surprising that this inconsistency may have contributed to vaccine hesitancy.

We also note that companies sought indemnification clauses that would protect them from being sued by people in developing countries in the event of vaccine injury. The indemnification clauses involved a no-fault mechanism that was funded by states, not by industry, and we believe that an honest reckoning with the reality of low vaccination uptake in certain quarters should have taken a serious look at some of these issues.

Again, we thank the witnesses for their important work.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I seek unanimous consent to table a supplementary opinion.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Science and Research in relation to the motion adopted on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, regarding top talent, research and innovation.

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

I would like to thank all members and witnesses who participated in this study.

* * *

● (1530)

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-300, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, the Defence Production Act and the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act (Canadian products and services).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this place today to introduce my bill, and I want to thank my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for his support, for seconding this bill and for his work as the NDP critic for procurement.

My made-in-Canada bill, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, the Defence Production Act and the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, which is quite the title, would create legislation to give Canadian-made goods and services preference for federal procurement contracts.

I also want to thank the former member of Parliament for London—Fanshawe for this bill. She brought forward a similar one, and she did so because she saw successive Conservative and Liberal governments making decisions on trade deals and government procurements that did not put Canadian workers first. Certainly, Londoners and workers in southwestern Ontario know how harmful those decisions can be, as we saw the hollowing out of manufacturing jobs in our region.

Routine Proceedings

As the representative for London—Fanshawe, I have been so overwhelmed touring my riding to see the potential and future of manufacturing there. There are incredible companies coming up with innovative products in my riding, and I am always honoured to represent them, fight for Londoners and fight for Canadians, their prosperity and their jobs. I believe this bill would provide them protection and future success.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, presented to the House on Friday, April 29, be concurred in.

I appreciate the opportunity to open debate, a debate that I understand will be, by unanimous consent, continuing this evening, on the sixth report, which deals with the ongoing injustices facing Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims and the work that we need to do as a House in response to it.

I am grateful for the work of the immigration committee. This is a unanimous report that highlights many important issues, and I want to start the debate by reading points from the report into the record and then discussing them.

The report states:

In light of the fact that Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China face an ongoing genocide, and in light of the fact that those in third countries are at continuing risk of detention and deportation back to China, where they face serious risk of arbitrary detention, torture, and other atrocities, the committee calls on the government to:

- a) extend existing special immigration measures to Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, including the expansion of biometrics collection capabilities in third countries and the issuance of Temporary Resident Permits and single journey travel documents to those without a passport;
- b) allow displaced Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in third countries, who face risk of detention and deportation back to China, to seek refuge in Canada;
- c) waive the UNHCR refugee determination;
- d) and the government provide a comprehensive response by letter to the committee within 30 days.

This motion follows an important step taken by the House about a year and a half ago when the House voted to recognize the Uighur genocide. It was a unanimous vote of all who voted in this place. As members will recall, cabinet abstained and still has not declared its position, but the vote that will take place on this motion, because it is a vote to agree with this report, will provide cabinet and the government with another opportunity to declare their position with respect to the Uighur genocide.

Routine Proceedings

I reflect as well on the fact that much of this conversation was started in the House with the recognition of the genocide motion, but there has been much more discussion in the international community and evidence that has come out since. Just recently, there was the report of Michelle Bachelet. There were significant efforts to influence that report and there were significant limitations with respect to the work she was able to do, but, nonetheless, very damning conclusions came out of that report.

Various analyses have shown forced sterilization, systemic sexual violence targeting Uighur women, people being taken away and put in concentration camps, clear violations of the UN definition as it pertains to genocide and states that are party to that have an obligation to recognize and respond in those cases. This report recognizes and reaffirms that.

The focus of this report is on other measures that the House and the government need to take in response to these events. I want to focus on the ones in this report, as well as other additional measures that can and should be taken.

Following that recognition, even while the government has still not declared its position, other members of Parliament have been trying to put forward constructive initiatives that respond to the question of what Canada can do to advance the issue of justice and human rights for Uighurs. There have been a number of different areas where proposals have been put forward in the House.

This report speaks on additional immigration measures that have been put forward, and I know that later this week we will be having the first hour of debate on Motion No. 62. I should have made note of my colleague's constituency name before, but my colleague from somewhere in Montreal is proposing that and we will be debating that for the first hour on Wednesday. We are seeing a number of different initiatives on the immigration front.

We recognize the reality that Uighurs in China obviously often struggle to get to safety, but, increasingly, the efforts of the Government of China to have influence beyond its borders are creating greater and greater challenges, escalating pressures on refugees who have fled, maybe thought they were in a safe place and are now facing intimidation and persecution that is being pushed on the countries where they are resident as a result of pressure from the Government of China.

As it relates to third countries, it is worth mentioning the case of Huseyin Celil, who is a Canadian citizen detained in China. This was a case where he did not travel to China. Mr. Celil was in Uzbekistan, but was taken from Uzbekistan and sent back to China, where he has been detained for over a decade and a half. Underlining that is the fact that we need to recognize how CCP pressure on third countries can lead to people being sent back and facing human rights violations in the process.

• (1535)

Canada can be a place of safety for these folks in the Uighur diaspora who have left China but who are still facing the risks of potential persecution and repatriation in the countries where they are.

That is why Canada should be looking at strengthening special immigration measures. Our view on this side of the House is that

we need to recognize the important role played by private sponsoring organizations and a strategy for responding to persecution and supporting victims of human rights abuses should involve collaboration between governments and private sponsoring entities.

We need to recognize that there may not be resources within those private sponsoring entities to cover all of the needs that exist, and there could be vehicles for joint sponsorship. There could even be cases, perhaps, where the government provides the funding but organizations on the ground here in Canada play a specific role in welcoming newcomers.

All of the data suggests that those who are privately sponsored have a greater level of success once they are here in Canada, so we should look for opportunities in the process to engage private sponsors, such as mosques, churches, synagogues, faith groups, community groups and civil society, to help people acclimatize to coming to Canada. We recognize that this is not just a question of state policy, but the process of welcoming refugees is a collective effort that all Canadians can be involved in. I think, in many cases, people from different backgrounds and different experiences want to be involved, and they certainly get a lot out of it.

I want, as well, to discuss some of the other measures that we need to be taking about, coming out of where we were a year and a half ago.

I have sponsored a private member's bill in this place that comes from the other place, from Senator Ataullahjan. Bill S-223 is a bill that would combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The bill would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without consent. This is a private member's bill that would have Canada doing what it can to combat this horrific practice of forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

I do want to note that, unfortunately, the progress of Bill S-223 has been stalled. It has been sitting before the foreign affairs committee for months and months. We have not been able to get it adopted and sent back to the House. In fact, I was not originally scheduled to be here in the House right now. I was scheduled to be testifying before the foreign affairs committee, but at the last minute, the meeting scheduled to conduct hearings on Bill S-223 was cancelled by the Chair. That has further delayed the process of bringing this bill forward.

The bill to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking is pertinent now because we are hearing more about Uighurs being victims of this practice, but it is something that has been going on for decades. In particular, the Falun Gong community has highlighted the abuse of forced organ harvesting and trafficking and how it impacts their community.

It has actually been 15 years that parliamentarians have been working on a bill to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. Borys Wrzesnewskyj was first to bring one forward. Irwin Cotler also had a bill.

Routine Proceedings

Since I was elected in 2015, I have been working on this with Senator Ataullahjan through the last three Parliaments. This bill has passed the Senate three times, twice in its current form. It has passed the House once in its current form. It has been studied multiple times by Senate committees and by a House committee, so I think it is time that we finally get it done, if we are able to end the logjam around it at the foreign affairs committee. It should not be about any one individual. This is a bill that will save lives if it is passed. I hope we are able to get it done.

A lot of work, as well, has been done on this issue of forced labour. There are significant concerns about how Uighurs are victims of forced labour and, in general, how Canada's laws to combat forced labour are totally inadequate. There is much more work that needs to be done. Another bill before the foreign affairs committee, also with an unclear timeline around it, is Bill S-211, a bill from a colleague on the government side. It has broad support in the House, and Conservatives supported fast-tracking it at second reading, but it is, again, not moving forward at the moment.

We need to move forward with these bills that are currently before the foreign affairs committee. Bill S-223 and Bill S-211 are two excellent bills. One is on organ harvesting, and the other is aimed at addressing an issue of forced labour.

● (1540)

Bill S-211 would create a reporting mechanism. It is an important step forward, but the other thing we need to do is recognize that in the Uighur region, for example, there is a very significant, very large issue of forced labour. I support measures, such as the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in the United States, a bipartisan piece of legislation, that would recognize the particular issues in that region, and perhaps in other regions, where there are really significant and coordinated state-pushed efforts to have forced labour. We need to specifically designate those regions.

We need to look at, for instance, Bill S-204, a bill put forward by Senator Housakos that is not in the House yet. It is still in the other place. That bill would impose a ban on the import of any goods coming out of Xinjiang or East Turkistan, the region where Uighurs are in the majority. The goal of this is to recognize the reality that so much of what is produced and exported in that region is tainted by slave labour. We need to have an approach that recognizes the particular risks in this region and targets that region as well. That is another issue that we need to move on legislatively and there may be other measures we can consider that involve the designation of specific regions. This would target the specific regions in the world where we know there is a very high level of forced labour and a high risk that goods coming out of there will have involve slave labour.

There are many mainstream brands that people will be familiar with, that they may use products from, that import products from that part of the world. It is very concerning. The government announced a new policy on combatting these imports, but, in fact, there was only one shipment that was ever stopped and it was subsequently released. Therefore, we are clearly lacking in this area, and there is much more work that needs to be done.

In terms of some of the legislative proposals that are coming forward, I want to also recognize Bill C-281, a bill that had its first

hour of debate recently and has its second hour of debate coming up soon. It is from my colleague in Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Bill C-281 is the international human rights act. It contains a number of measures that would push forward Canada's response on international human rights, including requiring the minister of foreign affairs to table an annual report regarding the government's work on international human rights, include listing, as part of that report, prisoners of conscience, which is of particular concern.

It would also create a mechanism by which individuals could be nominated for sanctions under the Magnitsky act and a parliamentary committee could pass a motion suggesting that someone be sanctioned under the Magnitsky act. If that motion were to pass, the minister would be obliged to provide some kind of a response. This parliamentary trigger mechanism for Magnitsky sanctions has been adopted in other countries. It is very important because a Magnitsky sanctions tool, though a powerful tool, still leaves the discretion entirely in the hands of the government.

There have been many countries around the world where there are serious human rights abuses, and the government has actually failed to sanction anybody from that country. There has been very limited use of Magnitsky sanctions in response to the Uighur genocide. That is why I support this proposal from my colleague to have a parliamentary trigger mechanism, so that a parliamentary committee could, if not compel the government to sanction someone, at least compel the government to provide some kind of a response with respect to why they are or are not considering moving forward with a sanction.

These are some of the measures that we have moved on, from the act of recognition by Parliament a year and a half ago to now, trying to propose concrete, constructive measures that would see Canada play a greater and greater role in combatting this ongoing injustice. We have talked, of course, about the immigration measures that are called for in this report as well as immigration measures that have been put forward in other initiatives that we have seen. We have talked about the issues of forced organ harvesting and trafficking and the legislation that has been put forward on that.

● (1545)

We have talked about different kinds of trade measures, such as those contained in Bill S-211 from Senator Miville-Dechéne, as well as Bill S-204 from Senator Housakos. Bill S-211, which is the general reporting mechanism requiring companies to be involved in reporting on these issues, also has the designation of particular regions of concern and the issues that come out of those. Then there are the other measures in the International Human Rights Act from my colleague, in Bill C-281.

Routine Proceedings

As such, we have seen many different legislative initiatives. I guess one thing to acknowledge that they all have in common is that they are all private members' initiatives, so we are seeing a flurry of activity from individual members, many from our side, many from the Senate and some from other parties as well. However, we have not really seen any government legislation that is aimed at closing the gap, and I think members understand the processes of this House and the long and arduous journey every private member's bill has to make. I have seen it myself in the work I have done on the organ harvesting and trafficking issue. I work on a piece of legislation, and every time it is actually voted on it is unanimous, yet there are so many steps it has to go through, little amendments here and there, that it ends up not getting done.

We are in the third Parliament in which I have worked on this bill, and it has been attempted in two previous Parliaments as well, so there is this long journey private members' bills have to go on, and the risks are the same for other good private members' bills that are responding to urgent and present human rights concerns. That is why the government should take a look at some of these initiatives and maybe consider putting forward proposals that advance them through government legislation.

There is so much more that needs to be done on this issue of forced labour, like even getting it out of government procurement, never mind addressing the import of products of forced labour that come into the private sector. We are relying on private members' legislation to do that job, and we should support these private members' bills, but the government should be willing to lead on this and provide really comprehensive solutions.

One of the areas the government can particularly lead in combatting the injustice facing Uighurs is in working more closely with our allies on combatting the importation of products made from forced labour. There is obviously a lot of tracing and data work that is required in terms of blocking out products made from forced labour from coming into Canada, and this is why we can benefit from sharing information with our allies. If we have consistent laws and are sharing information around forced labour, then we can be more effective working in collaboration.

In fact, we have already started down this road by recognizing as part of our trade deal with the United States and Mexico an obligation around combatting forced labour, but Canada needs to now live up to that obligation. We can share information. We can adjust our policies to really strengthen the work that is required to prevent products from forced labour from coming into this country.

In conclusion, I want to recognize the incredible work that has been done by the Uighur community in particular, but more broadly by other communities, like the Muslim community in general and many other communities that are coming alongside as allies in support of justice and human rights, who have been advocating on these various points related to the injustices the Uighurs have faced.

The information has very clearly been exposed, despite the best efforts of certain actors to suppress it. It is now widely known: the existence of a campaign to put people in concentration camps, forced sterilization and systemic sexual violence. The subcommittee on international human rights two years ago heard brutal testimony from survivors about what had happened, and I reflected at

the time on this quote from William Wilberforce, who said, “[Y]ou may choose to look the other way but you can never again say you did not know.”

Members of Parliament answered that call; the subcommittee on international human rights was unanimous and the House was unanimous, but the cabinet has still been silent and unclear, so this motion would provide the cabinet with an opportunity to vote again on the question, since this motion would reaffirm a recognition of the genocide.

It would also go further. We are not waiting for the cabinet; we are pushing forward with measures that are required in terms of pushing for additional immigration measures, and I have talked about the need to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking, the need to bring in new trade measures and the important additional measures in Bill C-281.

• (1550)

I hope members will support this concurrence and the other measures that are urgently required to stand with our Uighur brothers and sisters, who face so much injustice in China as well as threats even after they have fled.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have more of a question on process. Recognizing the importance of the subject matter, we will be having a further debate on it later on, after the House has dealt with government business, I think at around 6:30 p.m. or 6:45 p.m.

The question I have for the member is this. There are literally dozens of reports that standing committees bring forward. Is the member of the opinion that the report he is tabling today is something we are going to see more of coming from the official opposition, with respect to other reports? Why would the member bring this report before us today as opposed to suggesting it be a take-note debate, an emergency debate or something of that nature? It is more of a process question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, of course members are welcome to pick up on whatever themes they think are most important in the conversation, but the opportunity to raise issues of concurrence is an important part of the process here. We have, I think, an understanding today about the majority of this debate taking place into the evening. This is the kind of dialogue that has happened with respect to this report.

Fundamentally, it is a good report and something we should be talking about. It was a unanimous report at the immigration committee. It is an opportunity to highlight right now, as well as this evening, some of the important measures that are required to stand with the Uighurs and try to combat the injustice that is being visited upon them.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my colleague for bringing this issue forward, because he is giving the Liberal cabinet an opportunity to stand up for a group that is being systematically traumatized by the act of forced organ removal. It is something that disgusts everyone in this House, and we have voted on it in the past.

I wonder why the member thinks it is taking so long for the Liberal cabinet to embrace this issue and start implementing some things we could do quite simply here in the House that would make a real difference for Uighurs around the world.

• (1555)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, we will see how the vote on this proceeds tomorrow. Following that vote, there will be votes on other measures.

There are sometimes instances where the government may not want to proceed with something but also not want to talk about it. For example, we have the issue of forced organ harvesting and trafficking before the foreign affairs committee. We think we should move that issue forward. I will give the Liberal members credit that every time the issue has been brought to a vote in the House, they have voted in favour of that bill, yet we are not seeing a will to move it forward. If the foreign affairs committee had been going forward, I would not be here in the House speaking on this issue, but at the foreign affairs committee testifying on Bill S-223. However, the chair cancelled that meeting arbitrarily without consulting with other parties, which meant I was not able to be there and we were not able to move the bill forward.

I hope members of the government will reflect on why that meeting was cancelled, because bills like Bill S-223 are important bills on forced organ harvesting and trafficking that should be moving forward at the committee and are not. There are other bills, like Bill S-211, where a lot of work is required but things are being slowed down.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I totally agree with the points my hon. colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has made that we cannot turn away or pretend we do not know about the genocidal treatment of Uighur Muslims in the People's Republic of China.

I wonder if he thinks that at any point his party would be open to a thorough review of how this country became beholden to the People's Republic of China when the previous Conservative government and the cabinet of Stephen Harper accepted a treaty that will last for decades, calling for the protection of corporations of the People's Republic of China in a superior fashion to the way Canadian investors are treated in China.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, we may have an opportunity in future to debate in greater depth the particulars of the issues the hon. member raised. I agree that Canada needs to stand strong on issues of human rights. I agree that Canada needs to resist the potential threat of foreign interference. Respectfully, I do not think her characterization of that agreement is accurate. There have been and there should be good-faith efforts to protect human rights through dialogue. Obviously, those good-faith efforts have not borne much fruit in recent years in the context of dialogue with the Chinese leadership. I may agree with the principle behind what she is saying, but I do not think it accords with the particulars of the agreement she is speaking about.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the issue of process. In the answer the member gave, he said that if the foreign affairs committee was meeting, he would not have been here. He would not have wanted to have the debate we are having

Routine Proceedings

now. That kind of begs a question. Not to take anything away from the importance of the issue that the member raised, but this could be about Bill S-5 or the dental plan that we are trying to get through the House during government business. We have even approached the opposition in terms of having some extra hours set aside if we could get an agreement to pass this type of legislation.

Does the member not feel any obligation whatsoever, during the time that has been allocated for government business, to see movement on government legislation? For example, would he support the passage of Bill S-5 today, legislation that the Conservative Party supports?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I look forward to speaking to Bill S-5 when the time comes for that. The member misstated what I said in that I believe this is a debate that should happen and that we would benefit from having happen. I simply pointed out, as well, that Bill S-223 is an important piece of legislation that relates to the rights of Uighurs and was scheduled for the foreign affairs committee, but the foreign affairs committee was cancelled.

This is actually the time that exists for concurrence motions. That is why we are discussing a concurrence motion. The Conservative Party was very clear well in advance. We communicated to the government and publicly, in this morning's *Globe and Mail*, that we intended to move a motion of concurrence during the time of the parliamentary day that is set aside for concurrence motions. That is why the Chair stands up and says, "Motions," and people who have motions move those motions. That is how the process works.

The member is trying to delegitimize concurrence discussions when in fact concurrence is part of the process. It is a way of building on work done at committees to affirm the importance of things committees propose and to have those things adopted by the broader House.

• (1600)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know that the forced organ harvesting that is happening in these communities is something the member has been raising awareness about for as long as I have known him.

I am just wondering if he can outline a little the situation around the forced organ harvesting that is happening in northern China and just how the airports are participating in that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure working with my colleague from Peace River—Westlock. I know the issues around forced labour and human trafficking are ones that he has worked on for as long as he has been in this place as well.

Routine Proceedings

This is an issue that has been going on for decades. There was a detailed report done on it by David Matas and the late David Kilgour, two Canadians revealing the prevalence of forced organ harvesting in particular, as part of a system set up, sadly, by the Chinese Communist Party. Other countries have responded to this information by adopting legislation to combat organ harvesting and trafficking, yet Canada, even though it was Canadians who revealed this, has been behind in adopting such legislation.

Let us recognize the legacy of these Canadians who unveiled this information and finally adopt legislation to move forward in playing our part in combatting forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made earlier today, the debate is deemed adjourned.

Accordingly, debate on the motion shall be resumed later today at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition today in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has been before the House in various forms for approaching 15 years now. The bill was supposed to be considered at a meeting of the foreign affairs committee happening right now, but the meeting was cancelled at the last minute without consultation by the committee chair.

The petitioners want to see Bill S-223 passed as soon as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that they are to talk about what is in the petition. I am sure the issue about the meeting was not part of that. I just want to remind members that they are talk about what is in the petition and not anything that it is not within the petition.

FALUN GONG

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition, especially following the discussion by my colleague on his concurrence motion pertaining to things that many of us in the House care about and would like to see an end to.

Canadian lawyer David Matas and former Canadian secretary of state for Asia-Pacific David Kilgour conducted an investigation and concluded that the Chinese regime and its agencies throughout China had put to death a large number, in the tens of thousands, of Falun Gong prisoners of conscience. Their vital organs were seized involuntarily for sale at a higher price. Therefore, the petitioners request the Canadian Parliament and government pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the Chinese Communist regime's crime of systemically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, to amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

• (1605)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition today that a colleague has already tabled. The petition is on Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat the terrible practice of organ harvesting and trafficking. It has been before the House, as many of us have heard, for the last 15 years and beyond. Unfortunately, it was supposed to be at the foreign affairs committee today, but the committee cancelled its meeting.

The petitioners want to see Bill S-223 passed as soon as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure if the hon. member was in the House when I mentioned it, but I am sure the part about not being at the committee was not part of the petition. I want to remind members that they are to talk about what is in the petition and nothing else.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to table a petition about Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat trafficking in human organs.

This bill has appeared in various forms in the House of Commons over the past 15 years at least, and I think we need to pass it. This petition urges us to pass Bill S-223 as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to table a petition. The Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting have received about 1.5 million petition signatures, over 50 countries, presented to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, calling for immediate action to end the unethical practice of forced organ harvesting in China and are calling for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong.

The petitioners call upon all parliamentarians and all political parties to do what they can on these very serious issues.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition today in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

The bill has been before the House in various forms for approaching 15 years. The petitioners want to see Bill S-223 passed as soon as possible.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition today in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has been before the House in various forms for approaching 15 years. The petitioners want to see the bill, Bill S-223, passed as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling this petition in support of Bill S-223, which seeks to combat trafficking in human organs. This bill has been debated in the House for almost 15 years now in various forms. The petitioners would like us to debate and pass Bill S-223 as quickly as possible.

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I too wish to table a petition today in support of Bill S-223, as many of my colleagues in the House from all parties have. It is a bill seeking to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking that has been before the House for, as my colleagues have said, over 15 years. The petitioners want to see Bill S-223 passed as soon as possible.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions to present today.

The first petition I want to present is from people across Canada in support of Bill S-223, a bill that seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. This bill has been before this place for over 15 years, and the petitioners are urging the Parliament of Canada to move quickly on proposed legislation so as to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs that might be removed without consent, as we have heard. I am happy to present that petition.

• (1610)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I want to present is from Canadians across Canada who are concerned about the Liberal Party of Canada's election promise to revoke charitable status from pro-life organizations such as pregnancy crisis centres, which counsel young women and men and save countless lives every year. Revoking the charitable status of pro-life organizations is the first step to the politicization of charitable status. People are calling on the Liberal Party to not go forward with this, and they are calling on members of Parliament to oppose this at every turn.

FORCED LABOUR AND CHILD LABOUR

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I want to present is from Canadians from across the country who are in support of Bill S-211, the supply chain reporting bill. They state that modern slavery is deeply embedded within our Canadian economic supply chains. Approximately 152 million children are in child labour and 20 million adults are in forced labour. Approximately 20 billion dollars' worth of goods imported each year are at risk of being produced through modern slavery. They also state that large companies are not re-

quired to report measures taken to prevent modern slavery in their supply chains.

As such, these petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to pass Bill S-211, an act that would enact the fighting against forced labour and child labour in supply chains act and to amend the customs tariff, and when and if it is passed by the Senate, for it to be sent to the House for consideration.

COVID-19 MANDATES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians from coast to coast who are concerned about the government's overreach during the times of COVID. They are asking for an end to all COVID-19 mandates, for everyone who lost their jobs due to COVID-19 mandates to be reinstated in their jobs and a return to prepandemic life.

AGE VERIFICATION SOFTWARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is from Canadians from across the country who are looking for age verification software. The petitioners are concerned about vulnerable Canadians who are not adequately protected on social media platforms and online platforms from potential exploitation. The petitioners note that age verification can determine the age and identity of users and prevent exploitation. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to commit to defending vulnerable persons and for the government to enact age verification legislation.

NORTHERN RESIDENTS TAX DEDUCTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the final petition today is from the folks from Fox Creek and Swan Hills. These are two towns in northern Alberta that are just below the northern living allowance cut-off. They are within 15 miles of that line, yet they are some of the most remote communities in northern Alberta. They are calling on the government to extend the intermediate prescribed zone in Alberta down to their two communities, given the fact these are truly remote communities. Swan Hills is one of the highest elevation communities in North America and, therefore, lives with winter longer than most communities. They are calling on the Government of Canada to include Fox Creek and Swan Hills as communities within the prescribed intermediate zone and allow the residents of these communities to claim the residency deduction for living in northern Alberta.

OPIOIDS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of people from my riding. They cite that over 27,000 Canadians have died since 2016 due to preventable drug poisoning from a toxic drug supply.

Routine Proceedings

They cite that our current drug policy has proven to be ineffective in the prevention of substance use and exasperates its harmful effects, and that the war on drugs has resulted in widespread stigma toward those who use controlled substances. The war on drugs has allowed organized crime to be the sole provider of substances. They cite that problematic substance use is a health issue that is not resolved through criminalizing personal possession and consumption.

Petitioners call on the government to reform drug policy to decriminalize simple possession of drugs listed in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act; to provide a path for expungement of conviction records for those convicted of simple possession; with urgency, to implement a health-based national strategy for providing access to a regulated safer supply of drugs; to expand trauma-informed treatment, recovery and harm-reduction services and public education awareness campaigns throughout Canada; and to support the health-based approach to substance use act.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions to table before the House.

The first petition highlights concerns about the protection of conscience. It notes that coercion, intimidation or other forms of pressure intended to force physicians and health care workers to become parties to something that goes against their conscience, such as euthanasia or assisted suicide, should not be allowed. It would be a violation of the fundamental freedom of conscience.

There are a number of other key facts highlighted in this petition, including that if somebody has a conscientious objection to a procedure or an act, there are likely others who would carry it out. Therefore, the undersigned call upon the Parliament of Canada to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience for physicians and health care workers from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer for assisted suicide or euthanasia.

• (1615)

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is about a proposal put forward in the Liberal Party of Canada's 2021 platform to deny charitable status to organizations that have convictions about abortion that differ from the Liberal Party's views. This could jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that have a different opinion. This mirrors the values test used in the past by the government to discriminate against worthy applicants for the Canada summer jobs program.

Petitioners believe that charities and other not-for-profit organizations should not be discriminated against on the basis of their political views. They should not be subject to a politicized values test. Therefore, they call upon the House to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another values test, and to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next two petitions I am tabling both deal with human rights issues in Afghanistan. Some of the particular issues cover a slightly earlier period.

The petitioners on the first petition highlight the persecution of Hazaras that goes back well over 100 years, sadly. There are instances of Hazaras being targeted and facing all kinds of genocide and persecution. That persecution was an issue before, but it has become much worse since the Taliban takeover.

Petitioners want the government to support Hazaras and other minorities in Afghanistan as they are victims of Taliban violence and also recognize past acts of genocide. Petitioners call on the government to formally recognize the 1891-93 ethnic cleansing perpetrated against Hazaras as a genocide and to designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day.

The next petition deals with the rights of the Sikh and Hindu minorities in Afghanistan. Sadly, many of these signatures were gathered prior to the Taliban takeover, at a time when it would have been more realistic for the government to take action.

Petitioners ask the government to create a special program to allow vulnerable minorities from Afghanistan in the Sikh and Hindu communities to be sponsored directly to come to Canada and call for engagement from the government on that persecution issue. As for the Hazaras, we are seeing escalation and worsening of that persecution.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will table my last petition on forced organ harvesting and trafficking in support of Bill S-223. This bill would make it a criminal offence for persons to go abroad and receive an organ taken without consent.

It has been before the House in various forms for 15 years and petitioners are hopeful this Parliament will be the one that gets it done.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I should apologize to the folks in the gallery, because this is probably not the day to come and listen to a debate. Bill S-5, as riveting as we try to make it, probably does not have the most riveting debate.

I just will recap, as I was cut short prior to question period, some of the concerns we have with Bill S-5. I will say that the Conservatives are going to support sending Bill S-5 to committee, but there are some concerns. The number one concern we have is trusting that the government is going to do what it says it is going to do, because as we know and have seen for the last seven years, it has failed on a number of its promises and has not delivered on a number of its promises.

The carbon tax has done nothing but make things more unaffordable for Canadians. It has done nothing to cut emissions. As a matter of fact, emissions have gone up every year with the imposition of the carbon tax. The Liberals have waged war on our natural resource industry and energy sector.

There is no doubt that I live in an area ravaged by wildfires, drought and flooding. We have to take concrete action on climate change, and what the government has done is stand up and say all the right things. However, it has literally done nothing. I introduced into the record some bills that have waged war on our natural resource sector and energy sector, making it more difficult for them to compete on the world stage. As a matter of fact, the Liberals have landlocked Canadian resources in many ways and have failed to secure a softwood lumber agreement. They like to say it was all due to the previous government, yet every time something happens, they fail to take responsibility.

The Liberals are in government, and I will perhaps pre-empt our colleagues across the way as to some of the questions they are going to ask. They are going to ask where the Conservatives' plan is for climate change. They are in government at this time, and they have had seven years to come up with a plan, yet they have failed to do so.

Bill S-5 deals with the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, or CEPA, which has not been significantly updated since it was passed in 1999. Bill S-5 would be the first major update since 1999. It recognizes that every Canadian has the right to a healthy environment and requires the Government of Canada to protect this right, which I do not think anyone on this side would disagree with. What we do disagree with is that it is going to take the Liberals an-

Government Orders

other two years to figure out what that means. What does it mean for every Canadian to have the right to a healthy environment? Now they are going to study it for another two more years.

One thing that is always challenging with the government is that it tells us and Canadians, "Just trust us. We'll get it done." We should just trust, when we send a bill to committee, that it will consider the amendments and flesh out all the details in parliamentary committees. However, we have seen time and time again that the government fails to take up any of the considerations the opposition gives.

I am in the health committee right now. As a matter of fact, we start in 10 minutes. We are studying Bill C-31, a bill that has been rammed down our throats, although I think it is well intentioned. It is the rental and dental bill, and I will remind Canadians that we have essentially been given by the government and its costly coalition with the NDP two hours to study this piece of legislation and question the ministers. It is predicted that up to \$10 billion is going to be spent on it, so there are just two hours of study on a piece of legislation that is very important.

• (1620)

I know members are going ask what I have against our most marginalized communities. I live in an area and jurisdiction where rent is very, very expensive. I am not disagreeing that the amount of money they are going to give, which I think is \$600 or \$500, will help for perhaps a week of rent in our neck of the woods, but what happens to Canadians who are struggling the rest of the time?

The Liberals come out with these schemes, and all we are saying is, "Show us a plan." They have had seven years to deliver on plans, and I will remind them again that when we are talking about environmental protection, the government, after seven years, still continues to approve dumping billion upon billions of litres of raw sewage into our waterways. In 2017 alone, an estimated 167 billion litres were pumped into the waterways. Just this April, Quebec had a massive issue in Quebec City, I believe, where over two days in April, 21 million litres of sewage were dumped into the St. Lawrence River every hour. Again, every hour, 21 million litres of raw sewage were dumped.

Bill S-5 also deals with, and muddies the water a bit on, provincial jurisdiction. Again, the government, as we have seen over the last seven years, likes to ram things through. It is ham-fisted in its approach to legislation.

We know that Bill S-5 takes aim at the plastics industry and now lists plastic in schedule 1. While the Liberals have taken the word "toxic" out, substances that are regulated are still referred to as toxic. The plastics industry has some concerns with that.

Government Orders

When I talk about plastics, I will be the first to admit that when I was on the fisheries file, I was staggered when I saw the amount of plastic waste in our oceans. At any given time, there are about 5.25 trillion macroplastic and microplastic pieces floating in our oceans. Yes, we have to do things to combat that and have to be smart about that. There is no disagreeing with that. However, let us remember some of the important parts of society that plastics and the plastic industry contribute to.

In the health care field, plastics have been widely used to create medical tools and devices, such as surgical gloves, syringes, insulin pens, IV tubes, catheters and inflatable splints. These products are created for one-time use and help prevent the spread of dangerous diseases by eliminating the need to sterilize and reuse a device.

There is enhanced safety. The durable nature of plastics allows for its application in the creation of medical safety devices, such as tamper-proof caps on medical packaging, blister packs and various medical waste disposable bags.

Regarding increased comfort, previously, the health care industry used metal or metallic medical devices, especially in the field of prosthetics. I have a prosthetic in my knee right now that I am dealing with, which is something I am very well aware of. Owing to the durability and versatility of plastic, it is now used as a replacement for such medical components.

Regarding innovative applications, since plastic can be moulded per the requirement of a specific application, it has also been used to develop new medical devices. Also, the cost effectiveness of plastic means that it can not only be mass-produced at a cost-effective rate, but allows for a wider range of applications, making it a worthwhile investment.

Regarding the benefits of plastic, while I am not up here defending the plastics industry by any means, given what I said earlier in my speech about plastic waste and the microplastics that find their way into our oceans and waterways, there are benefits and advantages of plastics in terms of greening our industry and cost effectiveness.

An EU study, which I have in front of me, says that 22% of an Airbus A380 double-decker aircraft is built with lightweight carbon fibre-reinforced plastics. That saves fuel and lowers operating costs by 15%. It also lowers the emissions of that aircraft.

• (1625)

About 105 kilograms of plastics, rather than the traditional materials in a car weighing 1,000 kilograms, make possible fuel savings of 750 litres over a lifespan of 90,000 miles. This reduces oil consumption by 12 million tonnes and, consequently, CO₂ emissions by 30 million tonnes in the European Union alone.

If we look at renewable energies and the use of plastics there, we know that pipes, solar panels, wind turbines and rotors all use plastic and petroleum components in them as well. When we look at cutting our greenhouse gases and making sure our homes are greener and more efficient, double-glazed windows are essential for energy-efficient homes. They have a minimum of 35 years of life and are easily maintained.

There are a number of things we can all agree on. The things that we disagree on and have concerns about are the 24 amendments the Independent Senators Group, which we know is not so independent as it is appointed by the Prime Minister and the government, brought forward.

It is challenging for us to trust what the Liberal government is going to say. I have been here for seven years. This is my seventh anniversary of being an elected member of Parliament, and I came here not so jaded. I have good friends on the other side, and I will say that there are good people on all sides of the House who come to Ottawa with the best intentions. However, sadly, what we just saw for the vote on the Conservative opposition day motion put forward by my hon. colleague from Calgary Forest Lawn is that only one Liberal member of Parliament voted in favour of it. He stood up for his constituents.

I will remind people that this is about the government tripling its carbon tax and making things more costly for those who live in rural and remote areas and depend on heating oil and propane to heat their homes. Canada is the only G7 country to have raised fuel taxes during the period of record-high global fuel prices, and energy analysts have predicted that Canadians could see their home heating bills rise by 50% to 100%, on average, this winter.

When this was brought up in question period, the parliamentary secretaries and the Minister of Environment stood and asked what the Conservatives have against the carbon tax, especially when the good folks on the east coast have just gone through such a horrendous natural disaster with the hurricane that took place, the 100-year storm. I heard one of my Liberal friends say there were 100-foot waves. It is unbelievable. The pictures and images are just incredible, yet the Liberals are not concerned about the cost of living, which has become unattainable for those living in rural and remote areas. Things are getting harder and harder, and even Liberal premiers are appealing to the government to do whatever it can to cancel its planned carbon tax hike and make things more affordable.

I will remind Canadians that on January 1, they are also going to wake up to a payroll tax, with more money being taken away by the Liberal government. All it has done is make things harder and harder. The Conservatives will agree to pass Bill S-5 to get it to committee, but we have some serious concerns.

Government Orders

• (1630)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was trying to square some of the comments in the hon. member's speech, particularly the one around us not doing anything for climate change but ramming things down people's throats. I was thinking of what we have done on climate change with the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change that we introduced and the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act that we introduced. I was on the environment committee when it worked on that and am still on the environment committee, where we will be studying this bill if it gets directed to us.

Climate change and health vulnerability are brought together in a Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health report that the committee just received. It looks at the assessment of human health impacts of climate change. It is important that Bill S-5, as the member has mentioned, makes a bridge between human health and the right to a healthy environment and the other programs we have introduced around climate change.

Could the hon. member expand on that, please?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the concern we have is that it says every Canadian has a right to a healthy environment, but the Canadian government needs another two years to study that. What does that mean?

Our riding has gone through some horrific wildfire seasons, as well as drought and flooding. We have had the whole gamut of the climate change issues facing Canadians, and really facing people from coast to coast to coast. I have seen how it impacts Canadians mentally, physically and financially. We have to make sure we are doing things for the best interests of Canadians. We have to make sure that we can deliver on a plan. The government has never put forth a plan, and it is failing to do so again.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill S-5 contains a number of clauses, and I would like my colleague to comment on one of them, section 99. What this does is expand provisions requiring those who manufacture, process, sell at the retail level, import or distribute a substance or a product containing a substance to inform the public of any risk the product poses to the environment or human life or health. Basically, people must be informed of any danger.

Conservatives often talk about “green oil and gas”. Is green oil and gas less harmful to the environment and human life and health than conventional oil?

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I am going to apologize to my hon. colleague across the way. I do not know whether it was the translation, but I did not hear all of his question.

I am not the expert on Bill S-5. I do know that we have some serious concerns with it. As we move forward, it is incumbent on all of us to make sure we are working collaboratively with our friends across the way to whatever extent they are willing to do so. They

say they are willing to listen to amendments. I do not know whether my friend is part of the environment committee, but I hope that he brings that question to committee when it is discussing this further.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, we can have a lot of debate about the motion the Conservatives put forward. Of course, we put forward an amendment to change it to “GST”, which we would have supported, and they chose not to. The member is from B.C., and he knows how much more meaningful that would have been for people in our communities.

Just to come back to the bill, we know that nine out of 10 Canadians are finding chemicals in their blood or urine, which are having huge impacts on their health. I wonder if the member agrees that we need to amend the bill to include mandatory labelling of hazardous substances in consumer products, a provision that would stop companies from hiding from the public which toxic substances are in the products people purchase.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my understanding of this bill is that it would put into place a provision that anybody could bring forth a concern about a toxic substance and an assessment on that substance would be developed within 24 months to determine whether that substance is toxic.

While I am not familiar with the statistics the member rambled off, that is the challenge of using facts and figures with that. Perhaps not everyone who is in the debate has access to those same statistics to debate it or discuss it. However, it is concerning. I believe she said that nine out of 10 Canadians are finding toxic substances within their blood or urine. That is something that needs to be studied at committee and discussed at that time.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, for my hon. colleague from Cariboo—Prince George, it is such a joy to hear such a thoughtful speech that really looked at Bill S-5 and what is wrong with it. I totally agree with the member that it is not adequate for the government to promise us a right to a healthy environment and then tell us it will take two years to figure out what that is. Let us hope we fix that.

With respect to the question on plastics, I want to put to the member that, in order to regulate plastics at all, the government is using the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, and I believe it is using it appropriately. The concept of CEPA toxic has been used for years, which is not the common-sense meaning of toxic.

When the government uses the power it derives through CEPA, it uses it in an overly restricted way, so it is only prepared right now to not really deal with the threat of ocean plastics. It is in very limited circumstances, and certainly not ever getting into the hospital use of single-use plastics. Looking at forks and straws is as far as it has gone. I offer that to the member as a comment to see if that gives him any reassurance.

Government Orders

• (1640)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, this bill also puts in place the precautionary principle. It is one I have seen, and I am very well aware of it in other pieces of legislation we have studied. It gives the power to the minister of that file to take extraordinary measures when he or she deems it necessary.

We always want to make sure we are putting the right tools in place. What we have seen using the precautionary principle in the fisheries file is that decisions were made to limit fishing in certain areas without consultation with local stakeholders, those who would be impacted the most, so there is a concern with respect to that. However, I take what our hon. colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands has said. She is always one who has thoughtful representation, and I appreciate it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the wildfires in his area and the weather events that happened on the east coast. I am genuinely unsure where the Conservative Party is when we talk about that being a result of climate change. I wonder if the member could share with the House if he believes that climate change is real and that those events are a product of climate change.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the hon. colleague across the way knows where I stand on that question. As a matter of fact, I said it in my speech. We are dealing with extraordinary events due to climate change, such as the wildfires we saw in our neck of the woods and the floods we have seen. We had incredible weather storms, the tsunamis, the flooding we saw in the lower mainland and the hurricane we saw on the east coast.

The fact of the matter is that our climate has been changing, and we have to adapt as we move forward. We have to have a real plan. A carbon tax is not a plan to combat climate change. That is what we are saying on this side. What is the plan for the government to combat climate change?

It always wants to push that back and ask us what our plan is. We would like to remind the Liberals that they have been in government for seven years, and they have failed every step of the way to meet any targets they have set. They have failed to do the things they have promised Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

I am pleased to rise to speak today on Senate Bill S-5, the strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act. This is the first major reform of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act since 1999. Obviously, modernizing it was long overdue.

Bill S-5 proposes some major additions, some of which may go beyond the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces. In order to understand this bill, it is important to remember that parliamentarians have spoken out on several occasions on the subject, and that there are clear expectations about what should be included in this bill. That said, the government reiterated its desire to strengthen

this legislation, and the minister decided to ask the Senate to sponsor it, which is a sign of good intentions.

What can we expect from a government on the environment?

In Quebec, for example, the government is working to apply environmental protection laws and regulations; reduce water, air and soil contamination; protect biodiversity and save species and habitats; assess industrial projects and manage residual materials; and much more. We can see that Quebec knows how to defend its environmental interests and that it does not need Canada's help to promote and protect Quebecers' fundamental rights.

What should we expect from citizens, such as business people, when it comes to the environment? We must encourage citizens and business people to actively participate in the development of a healthier environment. Citizens can take smaller steps on a daily basis to reduce their environmental footprint by recycling and consuming as few polluting and toxic products as possible. Business people can take bigger steps. I am thinking in particular of building owners. All too often, building owners do not want to invest to make their properties more energy efficient, although there are effective solutions out there.

Consider Dany Bonapace, a citizen in my riding of Abitibi—Témiscamingue. Last year, for example, he told the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology that we could use artificial intelligence technology to manage energy needs, develop systems to reduce energy consumption and optimize the use of the energy produced. We can implement solutions to reduce our energy consumption and produce renewable energies such as wind and solar power. Buildings can store energy in batteries and take part in energy sharing infrastructure networks. Digital technologies offer numerous possibilities.

The federal government could set an example by accelerating the work to make its buildings more energy efficient. It could also introduce penalties to the subsidies given to companies whose buildings are not energy efficient. We also need to use renewable energies to ensure we run mining and forestry operations in an environmentally responsible way. Mining and forestry companies must themselves begin to produce renewable energy.

These are some of the actions that citizens, business people and industries are already proposing in Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

What about Bill S-5? More specifically, what are some of its objectives, and how will they affect Quebec? One of its major objectives is to establish the right to a healthy environment. We are not fooled by the Liberal government's claim that the modernization of the act creates the "right to a healthy environment", a partisan claim that is not worth much.

If the government were serious and politically bold, it would propose a round of constitutional negotiations with the federation's partners in order to add this right to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms already establishes that a person can seek an injunction to ensure that their right to live in a healthful environment is respected. It is therefore clear that the federal government could learn from Quebec and that Quebecers do not need the federal government to guarantee them a healthy environment.

However, there are opportunities for co-operation in Bill S-5, in particular concerning a regulatory framework for dealing with toxic substances. For example, the Bloc Québécois would like to collaborate with all members of Parliament on the management of chemicals and toxic substances, assessments of the cumulative effects of toxic substances, particularly among vulnerable populations, and mandatory labelling requirements.

• (1645)

I would also like to take this opportunity to say that I asked the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology to conduct a study on the recycling industry. This will make it possible to propose solutions and make recommendations that we can then debate in the House.

It is important to remember that Bill S-5 reflects the recommendations of health and environment groups as closely as possible.

There is also the whole issue of transparency. To be able to collaborate with health and environment groups, we absolutely need more transparency. Information must be more accessible and more widely publicized. There must also be significant public participation in the assessment of industrial projects, because that will help significantly reduce the level of skepticism toward businesses and governments. Moreover, we continue to demand that first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples be part of the process from the outset.

Although the Bloc Québécois supports it, the bill should not be an excuse for the federal government to impose environmental requirements on Quebec. Quebec has often said that it opposed any federal action in environmental issues on its territory, and it is important to recognize Quebec's jurisdiction in environmental matters. As I said earlier, Quebec is a leader in environmental protection, and its commitment to renewable energies, its conservation efforts and the quality of its environmental regulations are exemplary. For these reasons, we are prepared to share the Quebec government's knowledge and strengths with the federal government in order to achieve the universal objective of environmental protection.

I will also propose two actions that could also enhance an environmental bill. When she spoke before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, Laure Waridel suggested that we focus on environmental taxation. We could include such measures in legislation aimed at ensuring a healthy environment. We are talking about internalizing the environmental and social costs of products and services by applying the polluter pay principle, for example.

Representatives of Enerkem also appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology as part of its study of the green recovery, and spoke about the waste management sector, which has developed advanced recycling technology, advanced bio-fuels, and renewable chemicals produced from biomass and non-recyclable residual materials.

Government Orders

All of these new technologies require considerable research and development, as well as private and public capital investments. There will need to be an international strategy to foster the development of innovative waste management solutions.

According to what Mr. Chornet told us, Europe and the United States have implemented regulations fostering the use of second-generation biofuels, or green chemicals. As a result, it is more profitable for Enerkem to sell products in California and Europe, since regulations there encourage businesses to opt for green chemistry. Mr. Chornet believes Canada needs to establish the necessary conditions to encourage project implementation and biofuel consumption in order to benefit from the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions associated with green chemistry. Those are just some examples.

In conclusion, environmental protection transcends borders. It is a global phenomenon that all of us need to address. Bill S-5 will help Quebec reach the environmental targets it has already set, but there needs to be collaboration with the federal government. That is why I and my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the bill.

• (1650)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech. It is always interesting to hear our colleagues from Quebec share Quebec's vision. Quebec has long been a leader in the fight against climate change and environmental conservation.

In my riding of Châteauguay—Lacolle, as well as in the neighbouring riding, the protection of endangered species is a very important issue. Five or six years ago, the federal government was asked to intervene to protect an endangered species, the tiny chorus frog.

Does my colleague think it is important for the federal government to be able to intervene like this from time to time?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague of the supremacy of the provinces', and therefore Quebec's, environmental legislation.

This being said, there is something I always find somewhat bizarre in certain fundamental environmental debates. I am thinking in particular about Gazoduc's GNL Quebec project. In Quebec, the general public, the media and members of Parliament were more concerned about the possible impact on the fjord's whales than the possible impact on people's health.

I think we need to think about this and make human health a priority when we undertake environmental or industrial projects.

Government Orders

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, in his speech, the hon. member mentioned that, in his opinion, the provinces have priority when the matter affects their territory directly. It is important to understand that, on this side of the House, we respect provincial jurisdiction.

Last week, the Minister of the Environment severely condemned a project that is 100% under provincial jurisdiction. He even said that he was going to conduct an investigation, when there are already environmental investigations under way. This involves the third link.

The official opposition severely condemned the Liberal minister's remarks, saying that it was a bad habit among Liberals to meddle in affairs that do not concern them and to lecture the provinces, suggesting that the people in Ottawa are better informed than the people in Quebec. This is not true at all.

We think that Quebec has full authority over environmental matters when it comes to the third link. Does my colleague agree?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his question. It will be interesting to see what project the Quebec government proposes.

I think that the Quebec government's expectation is very clear: The federal government should provide financial support and nothing else. The decisions must be made by and for the provinces.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about retrofitting buildings, especially, and lowering energy there, which is something we certainly agree on as New Democrats. Even the Conservatives had it in their platform, so it is something we all agree on.

The government, through Natural Resources Canada, put out the greener homes grant so people could retrofit their homes, lower their emissions and save money when it comes to home heating. However, I got an email from Tom, in my riding, who is one of many. He said, "Greener homes is a great program on paper and helps to motivate homeowners with energy-efficient upgrades, but if I knew the process would be this long and arduous I likely would not have applied. It needs to be fixed. Please help." He cannot even get a call back. He has been waiting for months for his refit program.

Can my colleague speak about how important it is that when people do the right thing, the government follows through and makes sure they get the rebate quickly so they are encouraged to invest in clean energy?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, that is an entire area in which not much has been done. I am talking about building energy efficiency. That is why I thought it was important to mention it in my speech.

Yes, efforts are being made, especially in Quebec. Hydro-Québec's Hilo project is one example. Just imagine how much ener-

gy we can recover. When I arrive home in my electric car, I can plug it in.

It is more difficult as a member of Parliament, considering our schedule, but an ordinary citizen who gets home at supper time could plug in their car, and the battery's energy could be used to prepare a meal or wash the dishes at a time of day when energy is in high demand. At the end of the day or during the night, the house would charge the electric car. This energy sharing is possible. It would be more energy efficient and would benefit everyone.

There are, however, set-up costs, and the government could give us a hand with that.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are here in the House to discuss Bill S-5, or the strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada act. This bill originated in the Senate this time, and it is being sponsored by Quebec Senator Marc Gold. We are at second reading stage.

Bill S-5 seeks to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which dates back to 1999 and is commonly referred to as CEPA. This act would replace the Food and Drugs Act and repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act. This bill, which is not a complete overhaul of CEPA, seeks to amend CEPA in order to recognize the right to a healthy environment, consider vulnerable populations and the cumulative effects that may result from exposure to toxic substances, create a system for regulating toxic substances, and create a system for assessing and managing the risks that drugs pose to the environment.

Of course, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the principle of Bill S-5.

I would like to remind members that the Bloc Québécois believes that the Quebec nation is the sole authority over public decisions regarding the environment and the Quebec territory.

Until we achieve independence, however, certain environmental protection responsibilities fall to the federal government under the current legal framework. It is clear that the legislation needs to be modernized. There has not been an update in more than 20 years, since 1999.

Canada has fallen very far behind other nations. No one is surprised, really. Canada has never managed to meet a single climate target and is lagging far behind the rest of the world in the fight against climate change. I am not surprised that Canada has such outdated environmental legislation. It is unfortunate and sad, but that is how it is.

In 2017, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development published a report containing 87 recommendations. One of those recommendations was to recognize the right to a healthy environment. Let us not be fooled, however. The Bloc Québécois did not fail to notice the partisan claims inserted into Bill S-5.

Elements pertaining to the right to a healthy environment are found in CEPA's preamble, but their scope remains very limited. This means that they have no impact on other Canadian laws. While the bill would add the protection of this right to the federal government's mission, the proposed amendments would not necessarily create a true fundamental right to live in a healthy environment. To have a real impact, this right would have to be entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In 2006, Quebec introduced the right to a healthy environment in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: "Every person has a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law." This right was entrenched in our laws in Quebec in 2006.

In Quebec's political context, the Quebec charter, unlike CEPA, is quasi-constitutional in scope, no matter what our colleagues from other parties believe. Quebec does not need Canada's help to promote and protect Quebecers' fundamental rights.

Over a year ago, on October 8, 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council recognized that having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right and called on "States around the world to work together, and with other partners, to implement this newly recognized right".

In a statement, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights "called on States to take bold actions to give prompt and real effect to the right to a healthy environment".

• (1700)

Over 100 countries have already recognized this right constitutionally, while Canada is just getting around to including it in a law that does not have any real scope. That is not surprising coming from a country that is addicted to oil and gas, but it is obviously very disappointing. It is not surprising, but it is disappointing.

Enshrining the right to a healthy environment in law is a good first step, and the Bloc Québécois welcomes that. That is why we will support Bill S-5.

Bill S-5 contains a number of technical aspects that should be carefully examined by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. This modernization should truly enable the government to fulfill its environmental protection responsibilities while respecting Quebec's sovereignty over vulnerable populations, chemical management, the list of toxic substances, the strengthening of risk management accountability, the overall assessment of the cumulative effects of substances, and mandatory labelling requirements.

The Bloc Québécois wants to work with all parliamentarians so that the repealed act reflects the recommendations of health and environmental protection groups and chemical industry partners as well as possible.

For these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will be vigilant in studying this bill.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill S-5.

Government Orders

This bill aims to modernize the entire environmental protection framework, and we understand full well that this is a shared responsibility. How does my colleague see the federal and provincial governments working together to protect this right to a healthy environment?

• (1705)

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, we must work together, that is for certain. As we know, the environment is very important to us in Quebec, and we are ahead of the curve, as my colleague mentioned earlier in a question to one of my colleagues. We are very aware of this issue. Perhaps it is in our genes, but we are highly aware.

In 2006, Quebec passed legislation similar to the bill we are discussing in the House today. Clearly Quebec is interested. Clearly Quebec will co-operate. Until we become independent, we are part of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing we do not talk enough about when we talk about the right to a healthy environment is indigenous people and food security, and the impact climate change is having on indigenous peoples.

Where I live the headline in Chek News today was "Drought destroys wild mushrooms in Vancouver Island forests". These mushrooms are chanterelles and various different mushrooms. We have never, in history, not had chanterelles, but they are basically wiped out. The smoke is so bad we can barely breathe on the west coast. In terms of precipitation in the Comox Valley, they have had five millimetres from August to October, when it is normally 194 millimetres. In Port Alberni, where I live, there has been 6.6 millimetres of rain, and normally we have 332 millimetres of rain by now.

Maybe my colleague could speak about the climate emergency that we are under, the lack of urgency from the government, and how it is impacting both local food security in his community and indigenous people and the important non-timber forest products they rely on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, I like my NDP colleague. I appreciate his questions and his compassion.

His question covered a lot of ground. He started by talking about indigenous peoples, then disasters in British Columbia, then climate issues and so on. That is all very important to me, I have to say. I know it is also deeply important to him too. These are some of the issues he brings to our attention every day.

Government Orders

All I can say is that, although this is a big bill, it lacks substance. It is big, it is late, but it is here, and we will support it, as will the NDP, I imagine. There is so much to do. He mentioned the Liberal government, and it is clear that the government is not walking the talk as it buys pipelines and drills in the Atlantic. What it says does not line up with what it does. I know exactly where he is coming from with that question.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on something. If Quebec were a sovereign state, how far could it go in protecting and strengthening the environment and a healthy Quebec?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Madam Speaker, it would be wonderful to have all the necessary levers. Some countries are doing a great job in that regard. One that comes to mind is New Zealand, whose example we could easily follow. Quebecers are a straightforward people, and we could use the revenues we already have in a straightforward manner, without having this damned federal government that keeps putting obstacles in our way.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am quite pleased to take part this evening in the debate on Bill S-5 on the environment, especially since it has been nearly three weeks since I was named the official opposition critic on the environment and climate change. I want to thank my leader, the member for Carleton, for trusting me with this exceptional mandate.

It is also exceptional to all Canadians, especially to our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren because they are the ones we need to think about when we consider taking action regarding the environment and climate change.

I am weighing my words. I am the climate change critic because climate change is real. Humankind, men and women, have contributed to it and humankind, men and women, have to participate in mitigating climate change and the impact it has on humanity as a whole and on the planet.

I also want to commend my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon. I have had the honour of working with him for nearly two years. He used to be the environment and climate change critic. He was very helpful and instrumental in the entirely acceptable and honourable transition between my previous duties regarding industry and the ones I am tasked with now regarding the environment and climate change.

• (1710)

[*English*]

The debate today is about Bill S-5, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act.

[*Translation*]

Bill S-5 is a technical bill that also provides a vision for the environment for the next 50 years. The bill also updates the regulations that have been in force since 1999. It goes without saying that we needed to make some major changes. We should also remember

that this bill is more or less the same bill that was introduced as Bill C-28 in the previous Parliament.

Speaking of the previous Parliament, more than a year ago, the current Prime Minister called an election one fine summer day when he decided that it would be a good idea to spend \$630 million of taxpayers' money on an election that resulted in a House of Commons that was essentially the same. In the middle of a pandemic, when he said that we had to focus on the fourth wave, \$630 million was spent. When we were in the midst of a fourth wave, the Prime Minister called an election, with the result that today, one year later, we are debating exactly, or just about, the same bill that had already been debated in the House of Commons. If it seems today that the government is not acting quickly enough on the environment, this is proof. The Prime Minister called a \$630-million election so that the House of Commons would end up in about the same position, and now we need to start Bill C-28 all over again.

It is rather surprising that the government decided to go through the other chamber. We know that we have a bicameral system, which means that there are two chambers, the House of Commons and the Senate. Both have the same legislative power. They both have the same power to tax citizens. The government decided to bring back Bill C-28 but through the Senate this time. Then, the House of Commons needs to examine it. All of this is normal and above board, and I am not in any way trying to call into question the legitimacy of the upper chamber. On the contrary, I greatly appreciate the serious and rigorous work that senators do. They are able to work in a less partisan manner because they do not need to get re-elected. We therefore understand that it is exactly the same thing, but we are still rather surprised to see such an important bill originate in the Senate where there are no ministers, rather than in the House of Commons like normal. I guess I should say "as usual" because there is nothing abnormal about a bill originating in the Senate. I would not say that.

This bill was amended 24 times. The initial bill, Bill C-28, was introduced again almost word for word in the Senate. The Senate examined it and made 24 amendments. We will have the opportunity to come back to that later, but in our system, it is important to understand that when the Senate makes amendments, the House of Commons must approve them.

If the House does not agree, the bill has to go back to the Senate so that the Senate can say whether it does or does not agree. If it does not, then the bill returns to the House. That can happen many times. Generally speaking, according to parliamentary tradition, a bill is passed in the House of Commons and then it goes to the Senate, which can make amendments. If the Senate does make amendments, then the bill returns to the House of Commons. If the House rejects the Senate's amendments, then the version of the bill passed by the House of Commons returns to the Senate. Usually, the Senate passes the same version, otherwise we can be playing ping-pong for a rather long time, and that may not necessarily be for the good of Canadians. We will see how things go with this 65-page bill.

Basically, as members were saying, this bill is an update of the Environmental Protection Act, 1999, which sets out general priority areas of action for the environment. We are wondering whether we should continue in that direction or whether things should be done differently. The bill talks about how everyone has the right to a healthy environment and about considering vulnerable populations.

When speaking of vulnerable populations, the first words that come to mind are "first nations". The Conservatives' vision is that first nations must be and are partners in prosperity. When we undertake environmental projects, projects to develop our natural resources, projects that develop what we have on our land for the benefit of all Canadians and humanity through the intelligent use that we must make of it, we have to ensure that first nations are partners in prosperity.

In that regard, I would like to cite the example of natural resources in Quebec, which is a part of the country that I know well, to say the least. I am going to share a secret that I want everyone to keep under wraps. In my seven years in the Quebec National Assembly, I have always had a keen interest in natural resources, which I liked to call "natural riches". Our resources are clearly riches when they are developed intelligently and respectfully.

Earlier I was listening to my colleagues and friends from the Bloc Québécois rightly talk about Quebec's expertise in green energy and renewable energy. Look at the hydroelectric projects. Let us not forget that Hydro-Québec was founded in 1944 under the leadership of the government of Joseph-Adélar Godbout. Then, in the 1950s, there was a lot of development involving this natural wealth that was the natural resources and the power of hydroelectricity. In 1949, the Beauharnois plant, which was managed by Hydro-Québec, doubled in size. In 1951, work began on the first major dams in the middle of the forest, the Bersimis-1 and Bersimis-2 dams, inaugurated in 1953 and in 1956.

In 1954-55, very serious work began and studies were conducted on the two major rivers in Quebec for their extraordinary potential for hydroelectricity, the Outardes and Manicouagan rivers. In 1958, the Government of Quebec gave the green light for the major development of the seven main hydroelectric power plants that we have on the Ottawa river and the Manicouagan river. Everyone remembers Manic-5. Work there began in 1958.

The was also true for Carillon in 1959-60. The Carillon plant is an interesting example because, as early as 1959, the government had indicated to Hydro-Québec that the plant was to be run by

Government Orders

French Canadians, as they were called at the time, in other words, Quebecers. It was the first time that Quebecers were responsible for the development of a power plant, and it was inaugurated in 1962, if I am not mistaken.

In short, a great deal of potential was developed in the 1950s and 1960s with the work that was done. I mention this because, in 1965, there was an agreement between the Quebec government and the first nations where the Manicouagan-Outardes project was located. A financial agreement was reached in 1965. It was worth barely \$50,000. Six years later, when the Quebec government, under Robert Bourassa, launched the massive project in James Bay, the first nations there were not happy and held large demonstrations to ensure that they would be included as partners in those projects. After years of good faith negotiations between the first nations and the government of Premier Robert Bourassa, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement was established.

• (1715)

I may be wrong about that, which is fine because it will give me a chance to learn more about our national history in Canada, but, to my knowledge, that was the first time there was such a lucrative agreement between equals, a partnership for prosperity between a government and first nations.

That agreement set the bar. In just 10 years, the parties moved from a \$50,000 agreement to a permanent agreement for prosperity with positive economic outcomes for first nations and for the Quebec nation in the hundreds of millions of dollars. To us, it is clear that first nations are partners for prosperity in natural resource and environmental project development. I hope my colleagues will forgive me for going off on a bit of a tangent, but I do think it was somewhat interesting.

Getting back to Bill S-5, let us talk about the toxic substances list. This is the central element of this bill, which addresses the rules for assessment, ministerial powers and products that can become toxic. We all need to realize that science has made incredibly rapid progress, which is a good thing. What was being done 10 years ago is obsolete; it is already outdated. We have to constantly adapt and update our techniques for properly developing and identifying products that are now toxic. Used one way, they may not necessarily be toxic, but if they are toxic, we have to be sure of it and know exactly where they will end up. That is what this bill takes on while at the same time cutting red tape and redundancy.

Government Orders

There was a lot of environmental work happening as well, and some environmental rules overlapped. I would like to mention that responsibility for environmental issues is shared between the provinces and the federal government, and everyone must act in good faith. The federal or provincial governments must not duplicate one another's work or do something twice in order to say they did it while the other did not. We must be effective and we must be partners. Our leader and our party have been very clear on this.

We know that the Quebec government, through its premier, announced about a month ago that it wants to revive major hydroelectric projects. However, that does not necessarily mean building a new power plant in the middle of the forest on a river that is not currently developed. It could also mean refurbishing current facilities or taking a river with an existing dam and building a second one next to it. That is exactly what happened with Manic-5 in the 1970s. Another outlet was created on the west side, and it was named Manic-5-PA. A second power plant could be built off an existing dam to produce energy, not as much as the first, but still quite a bit.

These are projects that we believe in. If the government has the will to forge ahead, we have full confidence in the province's environmental assessors. There is no need for federal assessments in this case in order to accelerate access to this green energy, this hydroelectric energy.

That is why it is also important to update all the products related to the environment and human activity, especially chemicals. We fully support this update. It needs to be updated.

Where we do have concerns, however, is regarding how to go about updating it. This could lead to agreements that might undermine future efforts. It is important to understand that decisions in this field must be based on science as much as possible. They must be as rigorous as possible, and they need to take into account all the technological and scientific advances that are being made to identify a particular product. A particular product may be toxic initially, but when better treated, when properly treated and placed in the right location, perhaps it can be a creative source. We need to be careful in how this is defined. Nevertheless, the industry also needs to be aware of this situation and think about how to remove a product that is toxic today but could be made non-toxic later on with proper and effective treatment. This needs to be proven.

• (1720)

I am going to talk about risk management, but first I want to talk about the general principles that we agree on.

We agree with the principle of the right to a healthy environment. That goes without saying, although I might add that this is nothing new. I learned that this morning by doing some research and talking to some people who are a lot more familiar with this file than I am. The state of Michigan enshrined this fundamental principle in law in 1970. They did that over 50 years ago in Michigan, a very industrial state in the heart of the United States. That description of Michigan is a bit of an understatement since Michigan is home to so many industries, including the auto industry. That state enshrined in law the principle of the right to a healthy environment in 1970. To my knowledge, it has not gone bankrupt yet. Yes, we can live like that.

The same is true of Yukon, which enshrined this principle in its legislation in 2002.

As I said earlier, Bill S-5 seeks to reduce the red tape and the duplication of work for the shared provincial and federal jurisdiction. As long as everyone agrees, as long as work is not duplicated and, most importantly, as long as neither government steps on the other's toes, I am sure everything will go well.

That is why, as I stated earlier and mentioned in a question to my Bloc colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, we have confidence in the provinces, whether for Hydro-Québec projects or the third link project.

Let us come back to the issue of risk management.

It is a very delicate situation that deserves to be well known. Canada has laws concerning risk management that are among the best in the world. We are known and renowned for that. It is nothing new because the chemical and petrochemical industry has existed in Canada since Confederation. We have always been a leader in development, but also in risk assessment, especially over the past 50 years.

Canada is a world leader in risk management in several areas. I had the pleasure of describing the development of Quebec's hydroelectric sector in detail and the major projects that were implemented in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and on James Bay. Our expertise in hydroelectricity is world renowned.

The same goes for carbon capture. Here in Canada, we have developed techniques and made some cutting-edge technological and scientific breakthroughs. We should be proud of this knowledge, which we can export, because pollution is a global problem. Other places in the world do not have the same stringent standards as Canada, and unfortunately, pollution travels.

In Canada, we have champions in the areas of green, solar, wind and hydroelectric energy and carbon capture. Let us be proud of our accomplishments and our national success stories. Let us also be proud of what we are capable of doing to export them. This creates wealth for our country, but above all, it creates wealth when we share our expertise with the rest of the world so the entire planet recognizes and agrees that Canada is a leader in many fields and that its leadership will benefit all of humanity.

When a pollutant like CO₂ arrives at the border, it does not bother with the ArriveCAN. It wastes no time crossing the border and coming straight into our country.

Canada is not the only country facing major problems because of climate change. Canada has valuable expertise, and we need to spread the word. We need to champion that expertise.

Government Orders

I want to come back to Bill S-5. I have one minute left and just enough time to say that 24 amendments have been proposed and we have concerns about nine of them. They are the ones we think create more problems and more red tape, so we should be more wary of that.

In closing, for us as Conservatives, climate change is real, humans are partly responsible for it and they must make the necessary efforts to correct the situation. Since this government came to power and implemented the Liberal carbon tax, pollution in Canada has not decreased. On the contrary, it has emptied the public's wallets and people are not getting their money's worth, contrary to what the Liberals say. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has said as much.

• (1725)

For us, the environment is first and foremost about reducing greenhouse gas emissions through research and development and access to green energy. We want to accelerate the implementation of projects and promote Canadian expertise.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member across the way. I am looking forward to working together with him on the environment committee. I also congratulate him on his new posting with respect to the environment.

As the hon. member was speaking, I was thinking about some of the practicalities of having a national collaboration on environmental protection. Companies like Rio Tinto Alcan, which is in British Columbia and Saguenay, are doing wonderful work in both places. How important is it that we have a standard that the provinces, the territories, indigenous people and the Canadian federal government all agree on so businesses doing business across Canada can all be working toward the same environmental protection standards?

• (1730)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I welcome the comments of my colleague. Yes, we will work together hand in hand for the future of this country and on environmental and climate change issues.

What the member has highlighted is something I truly believe in. The private sector knows how to deal with pollution, not the government. Those people are the ones who know how to address it. They know where the problem is and how to solve it because they are researchers and scientific people. They know what they are doing with respect to that.

I am very proud to see that, from coast to coast, big companies are getting involved more than ever with respect to reducing pollution. First of all, the best energy is the energy we do not use. It is the greenest energy. Therefore, if we reduce our demand for energy, if we see the fact that when we do something we create pollution, we could achieve great things. However, first and foremost, it is not the government who knows how—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, first I want to congratulate my colleague, who is now the environment critic. That is a big file, so bravo.

I was listening to him earlier and I was reminded of Bill C-225, which I introduced in 2020 and which gave Quebec precedence with respect to environmental assessments. My Conservative colleagues' penchant for oil is rather troubling. If there were ever an oil or gas pipeline project that did not suit Quebec, I wonder whether my colleague would agree that Quebec's prerogative should be respected.

Earlier he said that he had confidence in Quebec and in Quebec's legislation regarding the third link. I remember a Conservative project involving an energy corridor. Should that energy corridor be subject to Quebec's environmental assessments? If that did not work, would my colleague agree that Quebec's rules and laws take precedence over—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I am pleased with my colleague's question, but I am a bit upset that he did not use the word "skeptical". Generally when he hears a Conservative member, he says he is skeptical, so I am a bit upset, but I think he will have another chance. Obviously I am just teasing my colleague.

The question he raises is very important, especially when it comes to pipelines. The member must know that Jason Kenney did not invent pipelines. There have been pipelines in Quebec since 1942. Do members know how many kilometres of pipeline there currently are in Quebec? The answer is nearly 2,000. Do members know that there are currently pipelines under the St. Lawrence River? There are not just one, two or three. There are not just five, six, seven or eight, either. In fact, there are nine.

Does the member know that, in 2012, Quebec launched a brand-new pipeline? That pipeline is not in a so-called remote region, with all due respect to the people who do not live in city centres. This is a St. Lawrence pipeline that starts in Lévis and goes to Montreal, spans 248 kilometres, 630 different lands and crosses 26 waterways in the St. Lawrence River. This pipeline has been in place since 2012 and operates so well that no one is aware of it and no one talks about it.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on becoming the environmental spokesperson for his party, and for that reason I will listen with care to his answer to my question.

Government Orders

A recent study from Environmental Defence found that 30% of products in well-known dollar stores contained heavy metals, such as lead, and toxic chemicals. Studies have shown that nine out of 10 Canadians have been found to have endocrine-disrupting chemicals, which have been used widely in consumer products, in their bloodstream. Would the member support improvements to this bill to require the mandatory labelling of hazardous substances in consumer products so that Canadians know what dangers they are exposing themselves and their children to?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, first of all, we would like to see what the amendment is precisely. I am quite sure the member would do it correctly, and we will study it very seriously when he tables the amendment.

Obviously, when we talk about a toxic situation, we do not want to see people having access, freely, to some difficulty. There is a lot of debate on that, but first and foremost, we have to study it based on the scientific proof. The more scientific proof we have, the more research we do, the better we are. When we talk about the environment, there are great steps that we have moved forward on in the last decade and in the last century, and I really believe that, in Canada, we have the scientific people to achieve great things together.

• (1735)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question has to do with the plastic industry, and my concern is with the virtue signalling of this government.

For example, 93% of the plastics that are going into the ocean come from 10 rivers, and none of them are in Canada. However, we are moving to paper straws, for example, from plastic straws. Now, the life cycle of a plastic straw is 1.5 grams of CO₂ compared to the paper one, which is 4.1 grams of CO₂. There maybe a well-meaning purpose here, but the government is not looking at the science.

Could the member comment on the virtue signalling versus the concrete action that needs to be done for Canada with the bill before us?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, my colleague is a doctor, and I am very pleased to see him here in the House of Commons.

Based on the member's question, I think we have a responsibility, first of all, as citizens. Do we need to have access to something that is polluting? This is what we have to keep in mind. Do we need it, or can we do things differently to reduce our footprint of pollution?

Yes, government has a responsibility, as does business, and scientific people can help us to make a good choice, but first and foremost, as Conservatives, we believe in the individual freedom of choice of the people, and this freedom of choice also calls for responsibility. As citizens of the world, we shall be very protective of our environment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, having a right to a healthy environment is really what Bill S-5 is all about, and there are a number of initiatives in there to advance us on that.

However, the member opposite made reference to indigenous issues in the province of Quebec under Premier Bourassa and being very sensitive to that. However, one of the calls for action that I believe could technically be incorporated into the legislation is the obligation to work with and consult indigenous communities. I wonder if my colleague could provide his thoughts, in thinking of a healthy environment. Would it not be absolutely wrong for any political entity in the House to not recognize the value of that consultation and incorporating UNDRIP into the legislation?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, consultation does not give veto rights, which is why we have to work together hand in hand and be sure that each and every person who is involved in a project are partners in its prosperity.

Again, I will give the great example of the agreement of the Government of Quebec and first nations in 1975 for the James Bay project. It was huge. It was almost half a century ago, and we may have achieved that kind of agreement before, but as far as I am concerned, this was the most efficient deal that we had between a government and first nations.

We did that in 1975, but just 10 years before, in 1965, the Quebec government gave \$50,000 to first nations, and that is not the way to do it. However, 10 years later, we achieved great things. Yes, as long as I will be here, and as long as we have those kinds of projects, I will always work hard to ensure that first nations—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will resume debate with the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have worked on the Canadian Environment Protection Act since before its first reading in the late 1980s. I was in the office of the minister of environment, so I know the bill quite well. It is with the greatest and most profound sense of sadness that I see what we have before us, because so many opportunities to modernize and do what needs to be done are lost.

I fervently hope that this bill, which comes to us from the Senate, will be significantly improved at committee. Many members have spoken to areas that need improvement, and I want to emphasize the ones I can in my time.

I would like to preface my remarks by saying that a lot of what we have discussed today on Bill S-5 has been about the climate crisis. I want to identify that I think the Environmental Protection Act has tools we can use to address the climate crisis, tools the current government is not using.

Government Orders

I want to make a point that is not made very often in this place, and that is that, when we talk about the climate crisis, we are incorrect when we classify it as an environmental issue. The U.S. Biden administration has correctly classified the climate crisis as a security threat. There is much that we need to protect in our environment, and this bill speaks to a number of areas that are not specifically about climate, but that create tools we could use. We should use those tools in part four, and I will speak to that later, but we should stop assuming that, when we talk about the climate crisis, that we are talking about an environmental threat. We are talking about a threat to the survival of human civilization.

Looking at what we have before us in Bill S-5, on protecting the environment, I want to approach it in three categories. The first is what is missing. The second is what is wrong in the act, and the third is what is better because of some amendments that were recently made.

What is missing is a long list. This is a big act. When it was bought together, as I mentioned, back in the 1980s, it took a number of bits of different legislation on ocean dumping, clean air and commercial chemicals and lumped them together. We called it the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

It has served us well. It has survived a Supreme Court challenge. I want to return to that, but one of the things that is missing in this act is that not all sections of the act are being reviewed or amended, which means that if we, as parliamentarians, see an opportunity to improve something that is in the existing Canadian Environmental Protection Act, we cannot touch it in committee. It would be outside the scope of the act.

For instance, we can look at part six, which deals with ocean dumping and genetically modified organisms. Here we are, the only country on earth that has regulated and approved genetically modified animals for human consumption, and we are not modernizing that section of the act.

We have, in fact, approved something called AquaBounty Atlantic salmon, which is genetically engineered. We should be looking at the genetically modified organisms part of part six, but we are not.

Another part that is missing is the right to a healthy environment. It is mentioned, yes, and we have talked about it. A number of members have mentioned the gaps there, including, very recently in this debate, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Here is the problem: The government says that it is going to create a right to a healthy environment, but it will not be enforceable. A right that is not enforceable is no right at all.

This point has been made by many who have looked at the act, including the very important observation note that came to this place, attached as a note from the other place, where they studied the bill and made amendments. They said that we cannot have a right to a healthy environment if we leave in place all of the barriers to enforcement that exist in section 22 of the act.

We have to get to that. We cannot have that ruled outside the scope of what a committee gets to look at.

What is wrong? My gosh, I never thought that, in 2022, we would have a climb down from the advances in environmental protection brought about by the Mulroney government. In 1988, the act was better at listing toxic chemicals than what we have in front of us right now.

If members think I am angry, I am. I am appalled.

● (1740)

Schedule 1 in the current act, as it has been since 1988 when it got royal assent, says that it is the list of toxic substances. The title is “List of Toxic Substances” in schedule 1. Here we have this proposal from the current government to take that away and not use the term “List of Toxic Substances”. The climbdown to a two-list category is absolutely wrong-headed and baffling. It also undermines the constitutional underpinnings of this act.

We should look at the fact that in 1997 the Supreme Court of Canada, in the case of *R. v. Hydro-Québec*, found that the Canadian Environmental Protection Act was within federal jurisdiction specifically because it used the criminal law head of power in dealing with toxic substances.

If we take out the word “toxic”, we are going to get constitutional challenges. We have already seen some industry coalition folks start talking about it last year, when we saw the first version of this act. I am going to quote from a blog from a very important group. The expert NGO on this is the Canadian Environmental Law Association, and its lead counsel, Joe Castrilli, said this: “[L]egislative drafting should always try to avoid playing with constitutional fire.” This is a big mistake. This is very wrong.

Another problem we have is that since the year 2000, of the substances listed for pollution-prevention planning, only 25 out of 150 have seen pollution-prevention plans. Therefore, we are failing to meet the expectations of Canadians. We are listing something as a toxic substance and telling Canadians, “This is a threat to your health and we want to see pollution-prevention planning, only we are not going to make it mandatory. Oh no, it is something you can do if you feel like it and you are in an industry that is producing toxic substances.”

That is so far from good enough. The need for pollution-prevention planning on chemicals that are dangerous to our health, that cause cancer and that cause birth defects does not bear repeating. We have to fix this, please. We have to make pollution prevention mandatory. We also have to create the opportunity for governments to do the research that needs to be done, not as an opportunity that the minister has, but as a requirement: The minister must do this research.

Government Orders

We have looked at a number of areas in this bill where much more needs to be done. We have to make sure we delete the section that would create a two-list system and make sure the list is defined, as it has been since 1988, as a list of toxic substances. Let us not undermine that, and let us strengthen pollution-prevention planning.

Let me just close on what is better. I have covered what is missing and what is wrong. What is better, thanks to the other place, is the strengthening around issues of vulnerable populations. Additional language is very much appreciated.

I have a private member's bill, and I have had the honour to see it supported in this place. It has now passed second reading. It is going to the environment committee, and many of the specific amendments that were just made in the Senate really helped put us on the road. The bill I am speaking of is Bill C-226, to confront environmental racism and create programs in environmental justice.

Much of what we have before us now gets us ahead on how we create programs that are forward-looking to promote environmental justice. One of them, of course, will be to join the 150 countries around the world that already have legislation that requires a right to a healthy environment. We are not inventing something here. We should know how to do it, and we should not wait two years.

We also have very specific guidance here in what we have before us in Bill S-5. It is better. It has good definitions and good sections on how we protect individuals in vulnerable groups from toxic substances.

We can do better than what we have before us in Bill S-5. We have waited 20 years to look at this bill again. It was always good legislation. It always could have been better. We cannot let it get worse. We cannot allow it to be weakened in this place in the year 2022. Let us improve this bill in committee.

• (1745)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, much has been said in this debate about the Progressive Conservatives of the seventies, eighties and early nineties, and the incredible work they did to protect our environment. As I listened to the member speak, I could not help but reflect on the fact that she was actually a senior policy adviser to the then minister of environment back in the mid-eighties, when Brian Mulroney tackled huge challenges like the ozone layer and acid rain.

Can she take this opportunity to reflect on those years of Progressive Conservatives and expand on whether she thinks the Conservative Party today is coming from the same place the Progressives, like Flora MacDonald and Brian Mulroney, came from in the eighties?

• (1750)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, it was one of the greatest privileges of my life as a non-party member. I was never a Conservative, but that government did great work.

I have to say that I am not sure any of the parties are as good on the environment now as they were in the eighties. I do not want to make this comment partisan, but there is no question in my mind

that the Liberals in the 1980s, whether it was the Liberal environment minister in Ontario, Jim Bradley, who pushed so hard on acid rain, or the Liberal environment minister from the province of Quebec, the honourable Clifford Lincoln. All these individuals who were leaders in the movement, whether New Democrats, Liberals or Conservatives, were stronger then than now.

I would say that what has intervened is the rise of corporate rule and the fact that many people in politics defer to corporations and polluters in ways that our leaders then, like the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, would never have done. We should reflect on that too.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Green Party for her speech. I want to get her input on the idea of competitiveness.

She knows I come from a community that does a lot of manufacturing with plastics. We try to make cars lighter and integrate it into the manufacturing. My concern is the way plastics are being treated in this bill. Inadvertently, we may be driving the pollution to other parts of the world.

For example, I brought up that 93% of the plastic going into the oceans is from 10 rivers, and none of them is in Canada. There is the Yangtze River in China, for example.

The carbon footprint for the lifetime of a plastic straw is about 1.5 grams, whereas for a paper straw it is 4.1 grams. We are putting in these policies that may affect our competitiveness here in North America.

What is the member's advice to make sure we do not have that pollution leakage to other parts of the world, like China, because of our policies being too strong or different here?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I would like to reassure the hon. member for Oshawa that there is no way in this world that we could accuse the Liberal government of being too strong with its actions on single-use plastics.

We have an appallingly weak set of regulations. Nothing in any government announcement or in this act will reduce the use of lightweight plastics in the manufacturing of durable goods. Nothing.

We do know that if we change the way this act is worded, we undermine its constitutionality. I can tell the member that none of those 10 major rivers has anything to do with the plastic contamination that we find on our shorelines in Canada. We need to take action under CEPA. We need to list and regulate the use of substances like polystyrenes for uses like floats and wharfs. They should be banned. They are contaminating our waterways and our wildlife, and, ultimately, they are poisoning us.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke a bit about the right to a healthy environment.

Government Orders

Can she share more about the implications of that right being only in the preamble of the bill, as well as these words about it being balanced with other factors, including economic ones?

What are the implications of this so-called right being balanced against other factors?

Lastly, would she share more about how this could be improved in future stages of the legislation?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I love the hon. member for Kitchener Centre. We are each half of our caucus.

The Senate did improve this by removing the balancing. It said it can be limited by factors that would normally be used to limit any extended right, but the bill has improved in that area. The right to a healthy environment is no right at all if it cannot be enforced. We have to take the barriers out of section 22. We have our work cut out for us as parliamentarians, regardless of political stripe—

• (1755)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize, but we need to resume debate.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here speaking to Bill S-5. Although I have some major concerns about it, it is an important step that we are taking and I look forward to seeing the next steps that are completed.

I live in a rainforest. One thing we are very sure of in my area of the world is that things in our area are usually wet, even when it is very, very hot. We have now lived through several months of having hardly any rain, so we are now in a situation in my area where we are in a drought. We cannot do any kind of burning, because the risk of forest fire is too big. That is because there is a change in the environment that is having such a meaningful impact that all Canadians should be very concerned.

I know the people in my riding are very concerned. I remember one day it rained here in Ottawa. Because I am from an area with a rainforest, I really enjoy rain and was happy to see it. I had so many constituents reach out to me and say they would really appreciate it if I could bring the rain home with me. It is something we can laugh about, but it is also something my area is very concerned about.

As we move forward on any bill that says we need to recognize the right to a healthy environment, I am all in. I want to be part of that, and we need to do better. We know that across this planet over 150 countries have made this commitment. They have legal obligations they are accountable for. Canada still has not taken that step, so we need to see that action. A lot of Canadians are watching what is happening and want to see action that means something.

Quite honestly, we keep seeing something in this place that is not taking the next step. I will be talking about the Canadian Environmental Protection Act today, which I will keep calling CEPA. This bill would amend CEPA to recognize the right to a healthy environment, confirm the government's commitment to implementing UN-DRIP under the act and strengthen the chemicals management plan,

including the need to take into consideration vulnerable populations and cumulative events.

It has been more than 20 years since this has been done, and modernization in this day and age could not be more important. It could not be more of a priority. These last few years, in my riding, we have had some challenging times. I talked about one earlier, but I also want to talk about the fact that not too long ago we saw the ZIM Kingston incident in our area, where there was a significant spill of about 109 containers. Of those containers, about four washed up on shore in my riding.

Just in case people do not understand, my riding is very remote. A lot of those beautiful beaches along the coastline are hard to get to, and people do not see them often. When one starts receiving images from constituents showing a beach full of plastic toys and refrigerators, one feels very concerned about it. When we look at this, we know contamination is not only having an impact on our bodies, and I will talk about that in a bit, but also having a significant impact on the oceans around my area.

In the last few months, in the late spring, I was over in Savary Island, which is one of many communities in my riding, picking up waste. It was huge. The community came out and people were cleaning up the beaches and pulling things out of the ocean. I had an opportunity to talk to Catherine and Paul, and we had chats about nurdles.

For those who do not know, nurdles are tiny little pieces of styrofoam. I am going to use that word, because most people are familiar with it. They get everywhere. If one has ever had the experience of trying to clean them off the beach, one realizes how hard it is. What is even more concerning, of course, is that it continues to contaminate the ocean atmosphere for fish and other wildlife, and that really concerns me.

I think of the work the community has done on having petitions sent to the House, which I have been happy to read for this place, to talk about how we are going to start to address that and make sure there is not that waste in the marine environment and in some of the industries out on the water. I thank Angela from Fishing for Plastic, who has also been a big part of that.

• (1800)

One of the things that concerns me about this bill is what we have seen in the Senate. We saw a letter that went to the Senate from some of Canada's biggest polluters, and they are trying to block amendments. They are trying to say do not go that far. At some point we have to decide. Are we going to continue to hope and wait to see if some sort of miracle will happen and we will not be in this environmental crisis that we are in right now, or are we actually going to take action?

Government Orders

I know there is a lot of push. There are a lot of industries telling us that we cannot take that next step, but I think it is absolutely important that we do.

We know that CEPA is Canada's main law to regulate toxic substances. We know that we are seeing more and more indicators that there are toxic substances in a lot of things, and there is not a lot of accountability around what they are. That means in our communities we are using things that may cause harm and we just do not know about it.

Those are some of the things we need to address. We know that the Senate did make some positive amendments. I really appreciated their removing some of the troubling language around the right to a healthy environment. It should be balanced with relevant factors.

Again, it seems like a simple choice for me. I know that not all of my friends in this place agree, but at some point either we are going to choose a healthy environment and put investment and support into moving in that direction or we are going to continue down the same path that we are on. It is not a safe path.

There are some things that I am very concerned about in this bill, some troubling weaknesses and loopholes that we would like to see amended. I talked earlier about strengthening the right to a healthy environment and not seeing limiting factors, and how that right is applied is really important. We also need to see some work done ensuring that toxic substances' assessments are kept up to date as the scientific understanding of risks evolves and exposure increases.

Why I think this is so important is that businesses are really good at knowing the rules. I appreciate that. That is their job, to know the rules, but they can often find ways to move around them. We need to make sure, as we move forward with CEPA, that there are assessments happening rigorously through time so that we can always keep up to date with that scientific understanding so that we are mitigating those risks. I think everybody in this country understands how important that is.

We also need to improve public accountability and require clear guidelines and timelines for the management of toxic substances. This is just about accountability. I talk to everyday Canadians. I have talked to, in my riding, some people who are very environmentally aware and have very specific notions of where they want to go. I have also talked to people who just want it to get better and they do not know what to do with that information. One of the things I hear from them is that they do not feel like the systems are clear enough for them to be able to understand it as an everyday Canadian. They are busy. They have a lot of things happening. I think it is important that we have that public accountability, and it should be not only public but accessible.

I will talk about this forever. I have served a lot of people with different challenges, whether it be in their ability to speak a language because they have come from another country, a lack of education or a developmental issue. Accountability and accessible information has always been one of the biggest challenges, so I hope to see that as well.

I also think it is important that there is mandatory labelling of hazardous substances in consumer products. We are still seeing a lack of formal understanding here. This is something that is not in the bill that I think needs to be amended. We need to make sure that we are transparent with people.

Of course, we need to address pollution hot spots in this country. We have to acknowledge as a country that they are often in indigenous, racialized and low-income communities. This is something that all of us should take into serious account. This bill, at this point, does not deal with this in a way that I think is as powerful and meaningful as it could be. We need to address this issue. We need to take accountability for the fact that environmental distress and indigenous justice, racialized justice and low-income justice are totally intersectional. They are a place that we need to take accountability and start addressing this in a more meaningful way.

As I said, I am going to support this to be sent to committee. I certainly hope to see all parties work together to get some of this important work done, because it needs to be accessible. Everyday Canadians need to understand the rules so that they can hold to account the corporations that will be working within those rules.

• (1805)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member was speaking about plastics and the need to curb our usage of those plastics. The reality of the situation is that the very first piece of plastic that was ever made is still in existence today, and it will likely be hundreds if not thousands of years before it is no longer around.

We continually hear the narrative from the Conservatives that we need specialized plastics in certain types of aircraft; therefore, we cannot get rid of plastics and we should abandon all hope of even trying to pick the low-hanging fruit. The reality is that, although with some types of aircraft there are specialized plastics that we still need right now, we do know that other things like straws could be replaced with other options.

Would the member not agree that, even though we cannot move forward with some of these specialized plastics that we need, there are other areas we could look to curb plastic use and plastic consumption?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I do agree, but I also think that part of this is understanding there is innovation in this country. When we look at what is happening in our environment, it seems that it is often a discussion of right now change or no change at all. I think there is a progression that needs to happen, but that needs to be really invested in and the rules need to be in place.

I agree. I think we need to do our work. I have heard from some folks from the disability community who have said to me really clearly that there are some uses of plastic that are really important to them, and we need to listen to those voices. However, there is so much innovation that needs to be invested in. Quite frankly, we need rules put in place in this country so that it pushes innovation. Things do not get done if there is not a rule that they have to meet, so let us make sure those rules are in place so that we can get to that innovation.

Government Orders

I believe it is possible, because a long time ago none of us thought we would be flying in a plane but we are. Let us see what innovation can happen in the next while.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the right to a healthy environment. I know she talked about some of the changes that the Senate made. However, I find it really important. The member mentioned that it should be clear what the rules are. When we use the term “right” in this place, we could open up the Constitution Act, 1982, and see the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, where they are very clear and they are laid out.

I would just like to find out if the NDP member would agree that what the government has put in Bill S-5 and is billing as a “right to a healthy environment” is a fraud. Again, a right is something that is enforceable. This is something that, through the CEPA process, a bureaucrat would determine, through other socio-economic factors, this so-called “right to a healthy environment.” A right is either a right or it is something else.

Would the member stand in her place and tell us whether she agrees it is an actual right or an outright fraud?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I just want to remind the House. I know it has been a long time, but back in 2016, I put forward a private member's bill that was on the right to housing, which I wanted added to the bill of rights in Canada. What we are looking at right now, of course, is so many people unhoused across this country and no accountability on a federal level. There is no mechanism for people to step up and say that this is not being done.

Do I think the Liberals could do better on this language? Absolutely, I do. Will our party amend that? Absolutely, we will. Do I think that Canadians deserve a right to a healthy environment? I absolutely do, and I am willing to stand in the House and vote for that any day of the week.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and I appreciate how much environmental issues matter to her.

One thing I want to know is why the agreement between the NDP and the Liberals is based on issues that fall under provincial jurisdiction. Also, since they were so focused on provincial issues, why not include the environment too?

Now that the blank cheque is signed and the agreement is in place, my colleague will have to support the many gag orders that the Liberal Party will impose under the guise of strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada.

What are my colleague's thoughts on the Liberals' decision to resume oil exploration by approving Bay du Nord and on the fact that they seem to be doing anything but protecting the environment for a healthier Canada?

• (1810)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I agree. As a very proud Canadian, even with the many challenges that this country faces, I am willing to face them with the people of my country. It is impor-

tant that we work well with the provinces and territories, but we also have to make sure that there is a set of standards. New Democrats are continuing to push the government, forcing it, quite frankly, into doing things that we feel will make a significant difference in Canadians' lives, and I will continue to do that. The environment is really struggling, but we need to stand up and do it right, collectively as a country.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill S-5, a very important and much-needed piece of legislation to revise and strengthen the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999. It has been over 20 years since this act has been updated, so we really need to get this legislation through and make sure we have a good conversation about all aspects of it.

This act has a long title, but its real impact is best conveyed in the short title, which is “strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada”. There are so many constituents in my green riding of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, green due to its spectacular rains, outdoor spaces, trails and kettle lakes, not necessarily because of its political persuasion, who are advocates for stronger environmental protection. They are champions for preserving green spaces, people like Sue Walmer, Jan Oudenes and Isobel Ralston, who were in Ottawa this week for a summit on the vital work of land trusts. They are activists fighting to protect Canadian health through regulating harmful substances like Gloria Marsh from the York Region Environmental Alliance, champions of greater efficiencies in buildings to reduce carbon emissions like Walter Bauer, and those fighting for animal welfare through strengthened animal protection regulations like Wayne King and Judith Goldberg.

There are many more in my riding and many people across our country. We know it is not limited because studies have shown that nine in 10 Canadians are concerned about children's exposure to toxins in consumer products, for example, and impacts on wildlife, such as birds and fish. There are 92% of Canadians who agree that Canada should recognize Canadians' right to live in a healthy environment. That is why I am proud, as an environmentalist and a member of the environment committee, to fight for Bill S-5 and the fact that we are recognizing that every individual in Canada has a right to a healthy environment.

[*Translation*]

These amendments to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act represent the Liberal government's promise to devote more energy to current environmental issues. Environmental issues and Canadians' well-being go hand in hand, so these issues call for a comprehensive approach.

Government Orders

[English]

Let us talk about one of the main components of this bill, the right to a healthy environment. It is the first time this language has been introduced into federal legislation and it was one of the key themes of the 2017 environmental report. It builds into the framework of Bill S-5 core principles, such as environmental justice, intergenerational equality and non-regression. It is a key step in ensuring that all Canadians will have recourse if they feel their health is at risk.

The language also heavily integrates indigenous concerns and consultation into the process of environmental stewardship, drawn on language from and ensuring Canada's commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP. It would require the minister to develop an implementation framework, and the process of developing this framework would be open to public consultation and input from Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This would ensure that this right under this act would address many of the concerns that have been raised here today.

One of the aspects of the bill that has not been discussed so far is the reduction of animal testing. As an animal rights activist myself, I feel that this is a very important aspect. This would address our commitment to end animal testing and reliance on animal testing. We know that there are times when this is necessary, but we are making a commitment to only use animal testing of vertebrates when absolutely necessary and to work on making sure that there are alternatives so that we no longer have to test toxic substances on animals.

Canada and other key international partners, such as the United States and the European Union, are moving toward phasing out animal toxicity testing where possible. It is an issue of concern for many Canadians, such as, as I mentioned, some of my own constituents and me. It is a sign of our government's commitment to increasing the use of non-animal testing methods. I have consulted and talked to numerous parties about this change, including Animal Justice, the Humane Society International and Humane Canada.

We are also working on the mandatory labelling of products containing toxic substances. We are committed to this and we are going to be working on providing a complete framework as to how this should best be done and making sure that imported and domestic products are required to have the same kind of labelling.

● (1815)

There would be a new regulatory framework for the substitution of chemicals. There would also be new categories to highlight areas of concern, like carcinogenic and mutagenic substances and substances that are harmful to reproductive health.

We are going further with this bill, and I know that my dear friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands mentioned that she had some concern about this. I am really looking forward to working with her and other members at committee, as we bring this bill forward, to make sure that all concerns are addressed and that the bill really does address the concerns of all Canadians in this area and many others.

I am committed to a Canada that protects our health and the health of all of us. We need to get this bill to committee so we can study it further, look at the amendments the Senate has made and ensure we get it through and update the 1999 legislation.

I feel it is very important that we continue to work together, continue to work across levels of government and continue to work with all parties to ensure that this commitment to having a healthy environment and healthy Canadians moves forward. All the good things about this bill should be built upon. Let us get it through so that we finally update the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999.

I am happy to answer questions.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's positive comments on the bill, but I think she may know, as others do, that one of the things I really want to see is mandatory labelling of heavy metals and toxic chemicals on consumer products, which is not in the bill at present. As I have referred to several times in this debate, we found that in dollar stores, lots of the products that have been tested contain heavy metals and toxic chemicals.

Would the member's party be willing to consider amendments that would make mandatory labelling of these consumer products available to parents so they can decide what they are going to expose their families to?

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, I think that is a very important issue, and knowing what substances are in these products is important. There is language in the bill addressing this and it will be studied further. I look forward to having that conversation in committee and to trying to strengthen this bill as much as possible.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for talking about how she is prepared to work with the opposition to try to make changes to the legislation as it goes to committee. That is a good sign.

We see in the legislation the scheduling of toxic products. It talks about how to put products onto schedule 1 or schedule 2, but what it does not talk about is how we take them off when scientists find out that a product is no longer toxic.

Would the member be prepared to move forward with putting in legislation that would change that to allow steps to be put in place to make certain that toxic products that are no longer considered toxic can actually be removed?

Government Orders

• (1820)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, I am willing to work across the aisle and willing to work with anyone to improve the environment and address issues that will lead to a healthier Canada. There is language in this bill about removing substances when they are no longer used in Canada, and I certainly hope that toxic substances are no longer being used in Canada. I think that would address the member's concern.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill mentioned animal testing specifically in her speech and that there is language in Bill S-5 that moves in the right direction. Specifically, there is mention of encouraging the development of other alternatives.

I wonder if the member could comment more on whether she feels this is sufficient and/or if more could be done.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, I am a believer in “better is always possible”, so I think more can be done. I think we need to look at this carefully.

I have a dear friend who is suffering from ovarian cancer. She is a doctor of veterinary medicine, and currently there is testing being done at the University of Guelph on cows that have ovarian cancer. In some cases, when there are no options available, I support testing on animals, but I think we have to do everything we can to find substitutes and to only use this testing when it is absolutely necessary. I would like to strengthen that as well.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her work on the environment committee.

What piqued my interest is when she talked about working across the aisle and trying to do better things for Canadians and the environment by working with the opposition. I would ask her to consider this. How can we look across the aisle and work with the opposition when on a daily basis we get such a kickback every time we try to come up with an environmental initiative? It gets very frustrating, from my point of view. I would be interested in the member's thoughts on how we might be able to break through.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy: Madam Speaker, I guess hope is eternal and something is always possible. I know that at the environment committee, in working with members of all parties, we try to find common ground.

I do not want to have debates about whether climate change is real, as we are far beyond that, but I believe we can work together to try to move forward, because everybody feels that a healthier Canada and a healthier environment are good not only for Canadians but for all citizens around the world. I hope we can work together.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House today as we debate Bill S-5, a piece of legislation that would make significant changes to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, otherwise known as CEPA. CEPA has not had any major modifications made to it since it was passed in 1999, so there are a lot of aspects of this bill that would have major impacts on the lives of Canadians and on

industry, especially as they relate to certain substances and materials.

When people think of the word “legislation”, they expect wording that is clear and concise. Given that bills are eventually enshrined into our laws, it is reasonable to assume that much thought and intention has gone into the words that are being used, and that there is no opportunity for confusion or room for interpretation that could lead to problems for the government in the long term.

One part of the bill that falls under that category, in my view, is the right to a healthy environment, which is in the preamble and not in the legislation. I want to be clear that all of my Conservative colleagues and I firmly believe in and support the right to a healthy environment for each and every Canadian. We are so fortunate to live in a country that contains so many different ecosystems and is filled with natural beauty from coast to coast to coast. It is understandable that we want to be sure that our healthy environment is present and thriving all across the country, not just today but for future generations as well.

The challenge with this is that it is undefined. Having wording that is open to interpretation on such an important matter like this could create issues down the road. If this piece of legislation needs to be revisited years from now because of a lack of clarity, it will cost the taxpayer money. The ideal situation would be to add a definition now or when the bill goes to committee to ensure that we are not going to run into any issues and that there is clarity over what this important right really means.

We also want to be sure that the use of vague terminology without a proper definition does not potentially lead to litigation. I do not believe that this is the intent of the bill, so this needs to be tightened up to provide absolutely certainty regarding the definition.

I bring this up because most Canadians watching this are expecting to see us around a table working out some good legislation. In fact, the Minister of Agriculture is quoted as saying the “real role” of the opposition parties is to improve legislation and programming. Hopefully the government is prepared to make some amendments to this going forward, with consideration given to our feedback.

It sure sounds good in the media to say that this right is important and is a priority, but if there are no measures for progress and no benchmarks outlined in the legislation, how is anyone going to know that we have actually done the work? It seems like including the right to a healthy environment in Bill S-5 is more about getting a good sound bite than actually improving the lives of Canadians and our environment.

Another thing that I am concerned about with respect to this particular part of the bill is that it gives the minister two years to come up with an implementation framework for the right to a healthy environment, when we know that it took five years just to consult with the public. If this is an essential right, why is it going to take so long for the minister to come up with a simple definition of what this right looks like? To me, it cannot be a priority if it is going to take years to come up with a framework around the issue, let alone the time it would take to actually implement it.

Government Orders

Why does the government struggle so hard to do more than one thing at a time? This part of the bill is yet another virtue-signalling policy that does not do a single thing to help the environment and does a disservice to Canadians. What the Liberals do not understand is that this needs to be done correctly, transparently and in a timely manner, something we have learned the government is unfortunately incapable of doing.

Another aspect of the bill that I have some concern about has to do with plastics, specifically with the word “toxic” being removed from the title of the schedule but still being referred to everywhere else in the legislation. Again, this creates confusion and a lack of clarity for anyone who might read the bill going forward. It also seems to me that the time and money being spent on this would be put to better use if they were invested in things like recycling and clean technology, rather than vilifying an industry and product that every single person in the House uses every day.

Just think for a second about how essential plastics are in our day-to-day lives. The houses we live in, the cars we drive, the public transit we take and the technology that allows us to do our jobs, like phones and computers, all rely on plastic.

• (1825)

Plastics are also irreplaceable in many fields of medicine and science, and without them, we would not have had the necessary PPE that was used during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as things like IV lines, IV bags, intubation tubes, feeding tubes, syringes and valves, respirators and ventilators, oxygen masks, rehabilitation equipment and suction cups, not to mention the children's toys that placated families when they were sitting at home and isolated. While I understand that plastic is not perfect, it makes no sense that our government continues to vilify a product and an industry that continually makes our lives better and easier, and allows us to live as comfortably as we do.

I was fortunate to be given a tour of the Heartland Petrochemical Complex near Fort Saskatchewan while it was in its development stage, and as of July 5, it was officially opened. In fact, the Minister of Tourism and Associate Finance Minister was in attendance.

This polypropylene plant will generate 65% fewer GHGs than average global plants. It also uses air cooling and not water cooling, which reduces water use by 80%. This facility will result in food packaging, textiles, health care products, medical supplies and more. Furthermore, it is able to reduce GHGs as it now has two carbon capture and storage units, and it is building a third, thus protecting the environment. It avoids shipping propane via truck, train and ship to overseas producers who will create the plastic beads that are shipped back to Canada. This reduces emissions and the risk of safety issues. Let us not forget that this government gave \$49 million for this complex.

I would like to speak to Senate amendments 17 and 18, which would create new obligations for industries that use living organisms in their work.

The new obligations would require both the minister and the industry to conduct private consultations for each living organism produced in Canada. I am no laboratory scientist, but I was a regulator at an industry for many years before becoming a member of

Parliament. One thing that I firmly believe, based on that experience, is that the industry should regulate itself. As soon as the government starts getting overly involved, things start getting complicated to the detriment of the industry and the taxpayer, due to the extra level of red tape and the inherent cost associated with it.

While there are areas of Bill S-5 that do cut red tape, which I am certainly supportive of, these particular amendments would do the opposite by creating a redundant process. In my view, the government should be focused on making things clearer and more straightforward through the removal of these extra, unnecessary steps, rather than adding more. We know that the bill is not much more than an effort to modernize bureaucracy rather than one that is focused on environment policy, so I am unsure as to why the government would want to increase the burden for the industry, which already does a world-class job with its public consultations.

Furthermore, this additional step would not do anything to improve the already stringent safety measures that are used by the industry today. Doing double the consultation does not equal double the safety or protection against harm. It would also have the potential to set a dangerous precedent for chemicals in general, which is something that is a major concern. Ultimately, we need to realize that there are existing regulatory processes and practices in place, and that the people who are best placed to carry out these practices are the experts, the industry.

The last part of the bill that I want to touch on is the provision that would allow for any person to request the minister assess whether a substance is capable of becoming toxic. I believe it is essential that all appropriate safety measures are taken with respect to substances, but I have serious concerns that this policy could open the door for hundreds if not thousands of requests given the wide scope of it.

This government has a dismal record when it comes to clearing backlogs, as I am sure many veterans who have been waiting years for their disability benefits could tell us. The last thing they need is yet another backlog to clear, which would also likely come with financial implications and cost to the taxpayer due to the need to hire more people to assist in processing these requests. It is a mess waiting to happen, and I strongly encourage that this measure be reconsidered so that we can avoid yet another bureaucratic nightmare.

Government Orders

The fact of the matter is that, while this government tries to convince everyone that it is the ultimate champion of Canada's environment, it has missed every single emissions target it has set, and has only hurt hard-working Canadians through ineffective policies such as the carbon tax. My constituents have zero trust left in this government's ability to make life better for them, so I do hope that the Liberals will listen to the feedback given on Bill S-5 and make the necessary changes for this piece of legislation to do the job it is intended to do.

• (1830)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives keep talking about this as though it is as a government bill. I would remind the member that the burgundy shade on the screen where it lists the name of the bill, along with the S in front of it, means that it came from the Senate. It is not a government bill.

Nonetheless, the way the Conservatives are approaching this is that as we have to use so many plastics nowadays, therefore we may as well give up and assume that plastics are inevitably going to be as abundant as they are now forever.

Yes, I am aware, and I am sure most people are aware of the fact that just about everything in this room has some degree of plastic in it, but does that mean that we cannot at least strive for a better world? If we know that plastics are so bad, that the very first plastic ever created is still in existence today, and the harm they are doing to our environment, why would we not at least try to do better? Why can we not at least look for ways to do things differently, even if it means that today we are still going to be using plastic? Why can we not look toward a future that has less plastic in it? Would the member not agree that is a good thing?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, knowing the level of knowledge this gentleman has, I am sure he is well aware of the fact that the original legislation was put forward by his government back in the last Parliament and that the Senate has proposed some amendments to it. The unfortunate part is that, although some of the amendments being proposed may have good steps, some of them do not, and those steps need to be taken as we move forward.

With respect to plastics, I would agree with the member if someone had the knowledge to come up with another product, but at the present time we are moving propane and other dangerous chemicals via ship, truck or train, and putting the lives of Canadians at risk when we could actually be producing it here in Canada. We can produce these nice wee pebbles that can be used to produce many products that we need, such as the parts we need for our vehicles, our new electric vehicles, or other items we have in this country.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that commonsensical speech.

I know how important health is to him. I know how much he wants to see his children, his grandchildren and perhaps, with luck, his great-grandchildren grow up and be happy in a world where their health is not constantly at risk.

In his speech, he talked about wording that is vague and, yes, some of it is vague.

What suggestions would he make in committee to tighten things up so the bill is clearer and can be implemented more quickly?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed working with my colleague on the government operations and estimates committee and what she brought to the committee.

She is right. I have two grandchildren, and I am so proud of them. My youngest grandchild is only four months old. I want to see them have something here as we move forward, and those are steps that need to be taken. That is what I think part of this legislation needs to have, and I love to hear comments on that from the Bloc and the member on the Liberal side who talked about working together. Those are the steps I think need to be done. We need to sit here, put those issues out there and banter back and forth, because that is what the public expects us to do and wants us to do.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. He is a good friend. I really appreciated working with him on OGGO when he was our previous chair.

I am really grateful that my colleague voted for my Motion No. 51 back in 2018 to tackle plastic pollution and reduce plastics in our environment. He supported the banning of straws and different plastics. Does he not agree that we have a duty to ensure that, when there are chemical ingredients that are known or suspected to cause cancer or harm the reproductive or endocrine systems, it should be mandatory to require the labelling of hazardous substances in consumer products, which is what we are calling for in this bill? Would he support an amendment to support that?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, we need to look at the aspect of plastics as we move forward. I agree that there are steps that can be used to utilize that, but it ultimately comes down to people doing the—

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

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, the intervention that was made previously was interesting. I just heard a comment in one of the questions from somebody who is often heard in the House about how this is not somehow a government bill. I would just like to put on the record that the government's representative in the Senate moved this bill. It went through that process in the Senate with some amendments, some of which are concerning. I am certainly now glad to have the opportunity to enter into some fulsome debate.

Being that I represent what many, and even I, would refer to as oil country, many would suggest somehow that I do not care about the environment. In fact, those accusations have been made in this place. I would like to set the record straight on a number of fronts. I care deeply not only about our environment, but also about our planet's future. I would emphasize that by articulating a couple of things.

One is that I am the fifth generation to farm in Alberta's special areas. For those who listening, and I am sure there are many, who do not understand some of the dynamics around farming, if one does not take seriously the responsibility for conservation, environmental preservation, land management and soil management, one does not succeed in farming, let alone survive six generations. I know that I am proud every moment I have my kids come and ride with me in the combine or the tractor.

Second, the next thing I would like to articulate is something that many in this place, I have heard throughout the course of this debate, would suggest that supporting Canada's oil and gas industry is somehow oppositional to supporting a strong environment. In fact, a comment was made earlier about how supporting a plastics industry in this country is somehow oppositional to supporting a clean environment. I would like to articulate very clearly how that could not be further from the truth.

I am proud to represent an area, as I said, that has a strong legacy of oil and gas production, much of which goes into creating not only the fuel that powers the planes we fly in and the vehicles we drive but also so many of the things in our lives that include petrochemical-based products. The fact is that in Canada, we have good environmental legacy on that.

Something that needs to be pointed out is that, in Canada, we are the best at talking about why we have the emissions frameworks and all of those other things surrounding it, so we can not only talk about being good on the environment, but also know that we are good on the environment. So many places around the world refuse to even account properly for their impact on the planet, whether the impact is of emissions, ground contamination or a whole assortment of some of the challenges that come out as a result. We have much to be proud of in this country.

It frustrates me. I do not exaggerate when I say that I hear daily from many constituents who are frustrated by the left's attitude. That is the Liberals, the New Democrats, the Bloc and the Greens. I hear how frustrated many constituents are at the ignorance that is displayed toward the standards that we have in this country.

As we approach Bill S-5 and some of the concerns I have surrounding a number of the regulations, and further concerns about

some of the amendments that were made in the Senate, we need to ensure that we are talking to the stakeholders involved and not have unintended consequences by passing legislation that would change regulatory frameworks, which may not have immediate consequences but could have long-term implications, and not just for Canadian industry. We need to ensure we understand all the aspects of that.

I am so proud of how my constituency has stepped up when it comes to being an environmental leader around the world. To emphasize that, Red Deer Polytechnic, formerly Red Deer College, has a team that included a former constituent of mine from Stettler. As I was walking into the debate here, my constituency assistant sent me an article talking about how this former constituent was a part of a team that had won an award for how they were able to reduce emissions in the production of things like solar panels.

• (1840)

I have numerous examples of how there have been emission reductions in the energy industry and world-class quality products in terms of water management, being able to take even tailings pond water and make it so pure that it could be used for drinking water. There are so many examples, including carbon capture, utilization and storage. The fact is that we can have even carbon-negative oil in this country.

The reality is, and I will end on this, the world simply needs more Canada, whether it is our resources, our ideas or the standards to which we accomplish so much. Whenever we talk about the environment, I am tired of having to apologize for the fact that I come from an area of the country that knows how to do energy and agriculture well, both of which by their very nature are offensive to many.

We do them well. In fact, I would suggest we do it the best in the world. It is time for us to be proud of that, and not only within this place, but to make sure that we take those lessons learned and promote them around the world. If we do so, Canada and the world wins.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1845)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 6:44 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, the House will now resume debate on the motion to concur in the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are many ways I could start my comments with respect to the debate on the motion that was moved earlier today after question period, but I want to highlight the importance of the day itself for a moment or two. One might think that I am going to talk about Diwali, because today is in fact a very special celebration. However, there is something else that should be highlighted, which is the fact that it was 77 years ago today that the Charter of the United Nations was formed.

When we think of the issue of human rights, the Liberal caucus believes in the future of the United Nations as a shining beacon for the world when it comes to the issue of human rights and dignity of the person. It is important that we recognize this and the fact that Canada is a charter member of the United Nations, which we should take a great deal of pride in.

In approaching the debate that we are having this evening, I do not want to do anything that would minimize in any fashion whatsoever what has happened to the Uighur people and the Turkic Muslims. The severity of what they have had to endure over the years is significant. Whether it has been individual countries or the United Nations that have looked into some of the things that we often hear about, we all take it very seriously. We all understand what is taking place and the issue of propaganda that is out there, so I do not want to take anything away from it and I will get back to this.

First and foremost, I want to talk about the reason we are having this debate today. The Conservative Party, over the last number of years, has used concurrence motions not as a way to raise an issue, as its members often try to imply when they bring forward the motions, but as a way to prevent debate on government business, which is why I asked the mover of the motion why he chose to bring forward this motion. In his response, he said that, if things had taken place in the foreign affairs committee, he then would not have had to move this particular motion.

I will talk about Bill S-223 in regard to the illegal harvesting of organs, as members of all political parties have supported that legislation. However, what we see is a Conservative Party that is in every way trying to prevent the government from advancing important legislation.

It is just like we saw moments ago with Bill S-5. Members will recall that last week we were ready to debate Bill S-5, but the Conservatives moved a motion of concurrence to talk about yet another issue during Government Orders on a day when there was government business. They will not move one tomorrow because that is an opposition day, but today is a government day. Therefore, they moved a motion to have the debate on the Uighurs and Turkic Muslims and what is taking place in China. Why? It is because they do not want the government to advance important legislation

• (1850)

I cite Bill S-5 because the Conservatives are actually voting in favour of it, even though last week they tried to prevent it from being debated. Again, today, they tried to prevent it from being debated. The government suggested that we have 20 minutes or a half an hour of debate on the issue and then continue the debate after the House finished government business at 6:45 p.m.

I do not say this lightly. It could be said that the most precious commodity we have inside the House of Commons is time. There is never enough time to debate all the things that need to be debated inside the House. A good example of that is Private Members' Business, let alone government legislative business and all the demands on it.

If we are going to debate human rights, which in essence is what the Conservative Party wanted us to debate today instead of debating Bill S-5, which they support, there are other issues we could have debated regarding human rights. I am thinking of what is happening today in Ukraine. There have been so many allegations, substantiated in many ways, of things like torture, rape and mass killings. Defining "mass" is another challenge in itself, but that is something that is taking place today in a war in Europe.

I suggest that on a human rights scale, much like dealing with the Uighurs and the Turkic Muslims, it is an important issue. Both deal with human rights issues. If the Conservatives really wanted to have a debate on human rights, I think what they should have done was bring forward an opposition day motion. Had they done that, they could have highlighted a number of different issues.

Depending on where one sits and the area one might represent, one might bring a different perspective of human rights and what is happening around the world. If someone were to ask me to pick an area that I would like to talk about when dealing with human rights today, there is no shortage of areas. I think one of the areas that we could definitely give more attention to would be to what is taking place in Ukraine. What about the Iranian refugee situation, where protesters have been killed, not dozens but hundreds? Allegations of all sorts are taking place there. I suspect we would have had members in the House standing and wanting to talk about that. There are so many people, so many MPs, who are still touched by people like former Senator Dallaire and what took place in Rwanda. Others might want to go back to World War II and the genocides that took place.

What we see around the world is truly amazing. One would think we would learn from it. That is the reason why I say the future is the United Nations. That is something the government of the day works with every day. We have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Foreign Affairs who actually sent out a release. If it had not been for that release, I do not think I would have realized that it was the 77th anniversary of the United Nation.

• (1855)

It is through those multilateral relations, an alliance of like-minded nations, that we are going to be able to make the world a better place for humanity into the future. At the end of the day, I would have preferred to have that type of debate on the floor of the House of Commons during an opposition day motion or even a take-note debate this evening. The Conservatives could have raised the issue and said, instead of moving concurrence on a report, let us have a take-note debate on human rights violations and put in the request for what they wanted emphasized.

Routine Proceedings

We are very aware of what is taking place in China. Today and last week, I presented petitions regarding the illegal harvesting of human organs. I made reference to the fact that there are well over a million people around the world who have signed a petition calling upon governments at all levels to recognize what is taking place with the Falun Gong. These are the types of things that should be debated and need to be debated. I do not question that, but there are forums for us to ensure that takes place.

Where I take objection is when the official opposition, in the name of debating human rights, brings forward a concurrence motion in order to prevent substantial legislation from being debated. That is what we see from the Conservative Party time and time again.

The Conservatives have sent a message through their behaviour on Bill S-5, even though they support it. The message is that, if the government wants to pass S-5, it is going to have to go to the NDP or the Bloc, and the NDP or the Bloc are going to have to support us in bringing in time allocation. Otherwise, the Conservatives are going to continue to filibuster, unless we shame them a little.

That is the reason we are having this debate this evening. It is not because there was a consensus among all parties to talk about human rights, but rather because of an irresponsible opposition that will do whatever it can to try to frustrate the legislative process during government business.

If we look at the substance of the legislation, Canadians having a right to a healthy environment is within the legislation description. We could talk about other pieces of legislation. There is legislation that would provide children 12 and under the opportunity to have access to dental care. We could also talk about supporting renters by making their rent a little more affordable.

Conservatives do not want to have those debates because they oppose them. I believe they oppose that legislation. Maybe we can take that into consideration, at least in part. The Conservative Party likes to say it is a minority government and it has a responsibility, but so does the official opposition. The official opposition also has a responsibility to ensure there is some functionality inside the House. They were not elected to prevent all forms of legislation and hold them up.

● (1900)

I understand what it means to be in opposition. For over 20 years as a parliamentarian, I was in opposition. Hopefully, I will get that same time in government. The point is that, as an opposition party, the Conservative Party has fallen off track by believing everything it does needs to be obstructive and prevent the government from being able to pass anything, whether it is good or bad. This is until it comes to a point in time where the Conservative Party is embarrassed and shamed, or maybe even, like with the GST, it actually changes its opinion and supports the legislation. In fairness, there have been a couple of instances where that has taken place.

I would really encourage the Conservative opposition, when it says it wants to debate something, to allow that debate to take place. If there is something its members would ultimately like to see take place and they feel frustrated by government, there are other alternatives and other tools.

When we talk about the Uighurs and Turkic Muslims and what is happening to them, we need to get a sense of what it is, because most people do not necessarily have that understanding. They hear there are issues surrounding human rights violations. With a very little amount of research, one can easily get an appreciation on the types of things we are actually talking about.

It is estimated the Uighur population is in and around 12 million people. If we put that into the perspective of Canada, Canada has 38 million people. Imagine 12 million people, and I have not done the math but I suspect it would be all of western Canada plus, being suppressed and all sorts of violations taking place against human dignity and against basic human rights.

We often hear of the issue of genocide. We often hear how the government of China is in complete denial, saying it is more about propaganda by people who are against China. We see the results of other nations, the United Nations and others, that have been working with and listening at the ground level. When we talk about the uniqueness of the Uighur people and the degree to which it is getting the necessary attention worldwide, I think the world could be doing more. There is a need for us to collectively work within the United Nations and with other like-thinking allied countries to continue to put pressure on China.

I made reference to the Magnitsky act, which is legislation the United States first brought in based on what took place in Russia many years ago. It is the idea of sanctions and the idea of the world recognizing this. Many other countries, including Canada, have actually adopted similar legislation, recognizing there is always room for us to do more.

I will continue to do what I can. I would encourage members of all political entities to recognize what I suspect is a common value Canadians share: our rights, which are embodied in our Charter of Rights. Our Charter of Rights and the rule of law are things that matter to Canadians, and we should be sharing these with the world.

With those few thoughts, I appreciate the time to speak.

● (1905)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was, bar none, the worst speech in this context that I have ever heard delivered in this place. The member—

Ms. Heather McPherson: You were not here for it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): May I remind hon. members that we do not mention presences or absences in the House.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member for Edmonton Strathcona seems to be unaware of the fact that we can watch a speech from outside of the chamber itself.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I just ruled that we do not mention presences or absences. We do not need to elaborate on the subject. Could the hon. member just continue with the question, please?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there were discussions among parties beforehand. There was an agreement to adjourn this debate to the evening, so it would not take place during Government Orders' time in the hope that we could have a substantive conversation about the fact that, in the world's second-largest economy, the government is committing an ongoing genocide.

Instead of addressing those very real issues, the member chased all kinds of rabbit tracks, asking why we were not talking about other issues. However, when we talk about those other issues, such as the last time we had a concurrence debate on Ukraine, the member said we should not have been talking about that either. Every time we try to raise these human rights debates, this member has some reason to suggest why we should not be talking about them. Meanwhile, we have an agreement among parties to discuss this in the evening, and then he comes in the evening after the time normally set aside for Government Orders and he still complains about the fact that we have a concurrence motion going on.

This is an extremely serious issue. We have people from the Uighur community in Ottawa advocating this week. This is an issue that requires urgent discussion. Could the member find it in his heart to spend some time learning about the issue and actually speaking about the issue, instead of all this gobbledegook nonsense?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in many ways the member is wrong and misleading the House.

If we take a look at it, the member knows full well what he is doing if a member says well in advance he is going to bring forward another concurrence motion, as the member did last week, in order to prevent debate during government business. The member would not stand up on a concurrence motion during an opposition day. Maybe the member could tell the House when he has stood up during an opposition day on a concurrence motion.

I have been around far too long to be manipulated by that member or other members who try to give an impression that is misleading to Canadians and exploiting the issue of human rights. That is in fact what the member is doing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I have to disagree with my colleague about the timing of this discussion. As I listened to him, I wondered how many more people have to be raped and abused in concentration camps and how many more organs have to be stolen before we realize it is time to adopt this motion so that 10,000 to 15,000 people can have the rights enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and see their children grow up and live with hope.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as I said at the very beginning, this is not about belittling or trying to minimize the severity of the issue.

The issue is all about time management in terms of what takes place on the floor of the House of Commons. If we were to follow the logic that some might try to say, which is that we need to have more debates, it would be virtually endless. For example, if we say we would have an additional 20% across the board, on opposition

days, government days, to have more debate time on human rights issues, then I would be a little more sympathetic. However, to try to give the impression that what is taking place this evening inside the House is going to have an impact on what is such a critically important issue is somewhat disingenuous.

If we really and truly believe that, then why was it not suggested in a take-note debate or an opposition day motion. Then there would have been more debate on the issue.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1910)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. Another member is asking a question.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I apologize for earlier drawing attention to the fact that there were no members of the official opposition in the House for the member's speech. I apologize for saying that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, on a point of order—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is apologizing for saying something.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, she is doing indirectly what she cannot do directly, and she knows it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are going into debate right now. I did call it when it happened.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, we speak often about family-friendliness. My daughter is in town, and I was in the lobby with her, listening to the speech—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Honestly, this is really getting into debate. We are not going—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, for the member to try to make a grand point—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not going to start debating. We know that we cannot talk about who is in the House and who is not, period. It is not a subject for discussion.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona on a question, please.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I recognize that for many of us, having our family in town is a very special event. My son, Maclean, is in town today. My nephew, William, is in town. Of course, I will not be seeing them this evening because I am participating in this debate.

Routine Proceedings

However, the importance of what is happening in China with the Uighur people is vital. I was part of the subcommittee that brought forward this report. I wonder if the member could talk a little about the motion that we will be debating tomorrow on the Uighur genocide and the impacts that debate will have on how our Parliament can move forward.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to note that the standing committee had a good, thorough discussion in regard to the issue and then presented it in the form of a report. The report has some wonderful thoughts that we could share with the House. For example, it reads:

a) extend existing special immigration measures to Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, including the expansion of biometrics collection capabilities in third countries and the issuance of Temporary Resident Permits and single journey travel documents to those without a passport

In other words, our standing committees do phenomenal work, and I think at times that gets lost. I would like to think there are all sorts of forums in which we can have the type of debate that is necessary, so that as a House of Commons we can speak not only to Canadians but in fact to the world. A lot of that good work takes place in our committees.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated that the member worked into his speech on this motion this evening the importance of the United Nations in multilateral work. It is the definition of multilateral work that we have a United Nations and that we are able to work within it even in times when the world is in graver crises than we have seen, I think, in my whole lifetime. We are closer to nuclear war, and we have more conflicts around the world.

I would ask the hon. member whether the United Nations cannot do more to speak out and to ensure that we protect the Uighur Muslim population from genocide.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the question, because from a personal perspective and that of my Liberal colleagues, we understand and appreciate the important role the United Nations plays in our world today. I believe we will be a better planet, the stronger the United Nations is. The work it does in regard to human rights and dignity for individuals is so critically important.

If, in fact, we are going to learn from history and try to build strong pathways to minimizing human rights violations, then we need to have institutions like the United Nations. That is why, as a government and no matter what political stripe we happen to be, we should be very supportive of the efforts taking place through our United Nations.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for highlighting the functioning of the House of Commons and the importance of the debates we have here.

When I was coming to the Hill today, I was prepared to talk about Bill S-5. I told my community that we were going to be talking about Bill S-5. I sit on the environment committee, and I wanted to hear what other members were going to say about Bill S-5. However, when I came into the chamber, we were not talking about Bill S-5.

In order for us to prepare as parliamentarians, could the hon. member talk about how we could do a better job at setting agendas and sticking to agendas?

• (1915)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question.

I would suggest that one of the ways we could be encouraging is on certain legislation, in particular legislation where we have what appears to be all-party support, which is where all political parties are going to be voting in favour of the legislation to at least go to committee. I think it is exceptionally helpful, and I did this when I was in opposition: We would give a clear indication that we would have *x* number of speakers, or we would anticipate a certain number of days so that we could better plan for it, and if there was a need to sit on an evening in order to get something passed, then we were open to doing that.

This allows members like my friend and colleague the opportunity to share with constituents if they want to tune in and watch or to come in and participate by viewing the debate in the public galleries. It just allows for better functionality of the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I feel like a bit of an impostor speaking on this topic tonight, especially since the person who told me about the issues facing the Uighurs is the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. This topic is a major concern of his, which is clear from the political action he has taken. Technically, it should have been up to him to make this little presentation. Unfortunately, he is not here—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the hon. member to remind him not to mention the presence or absence of another member in the House, even if it is done with the best of intentions.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I am sure he will not mind.

It goes without saying that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of all measures seeking to protect Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China by resettling them in Canada. We are prepared to go even further. As a result of the member's discussions with some Uighur groups, we think the motion needs to be improved. We need to increase the number of refugees the committee has asked the government to approve, through this motion, from 10,000 to 15,000.

As I said earlier, without mentioning his absence, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean made a point of talking to all the members of our political party about what is happening to Uighurs in Xinjiang.

I would remind the House that it was the Bloc Québécois that drew attention to the Chinese genocide by trying to amend a motion moved in February 2021 in an effort to force the government to demand that the Olympic Games be moved from China. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in that endeavour, and the government settled for a diplomatic boycott, which had no effect.

Routine Proceedings

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean moved the amendment and the motion in 2021 to clearly demonstrate that China was trying to use the Olympic Games as propaganda. Unfortunately, the government did not denounce the situation as firmly as we would have liked.

I also want to highlight the participation of the member for Lac-Saint-Jean in a meeting in Prague with the Uighurs at a time when the member's motion on the possibility of moving the Olympic Games was recognized. I know that the member for Lac-Saint-Jean will be in Belgium next month, once again to support the Uighurs.

Now that I am done praising the member, let us move on to other matters.

I believe that the government is demonstrating a lack of courage on the issue of the Uighurs. It is rather ironic to see that Motion No. 62 was moved by the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard even though that Liberal member is part of the very government that hesitated to acknowledge the Uighur genocide. I remind members that the Prime Minister and ministers did not want to recognize the genocide. They did not speak up.

Something rather unfortunate happened earlier. I really like the member for Winnipeg North, but I get the impression that he was being excessively partisan when he pointed out what he felt were the Conservatives' misguided intentions by making this debate about an issue as vital as the situation of the Uighurs. What the member for Winnipeg North is doing is engaging in partisanship.

We could accuse him of the same thing, since his government preferred to resort to subterfuge because it did not want to offend China. I was texting with the member for Lac-Saint-Jean earlier and he was telling me that some Uighur people are listening to the debate we are having right now and they are very disappointed with the government's response.

If we do not want to play partisan games, then we cannot use something like a genocide to say that this issue is not important and can be put off until later. I really like the member for Winnipeg North, but that was completely unacceptable to me, and I think that is the message that the Uighurs want us to pass on to the government today.

In my opinion, lack of recognition is a big problem for the Uighurs. I recently read *La leçon de Rosalinde*, a book written by Mustapha Fahmi, a former university colleague and Shakespearean expert. A Shakespearean expert is always interesting. He gave a definition of recognition that I want to share with you.

● (1920)

I will quote Mr. Fahmi, as follows: Recognizing a person or a community does not mean recognizing their existence, let alone tolerating them. Recognition is a complete and unmasked presence before the problems of others. In other words, to recognize someone is, above all, to recognize their pain and suffering.

I want to focus on this quote from Mr. Fahmi. I like the bit about recognition being a complete and unmasked presence. I get the impression that the government was not unmasked in dealing with the Uighurs. Why did that mask not come off? It was because the government never allowed the executive, the ministers and the Prime

Minister to offer this recognition to the Uighurs. It wanted to score political points with China, for strategic and economic purposes.

In my opinion, recognizing someone cannot involve this subterfuge of lying low to avoid strategic or economic setbacks. That holds especially true with this situation the Uighurs find themselves in. I say that because I was able to meet with some Uighur activists through the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. The recognition I would like to offer today is to those activists, especially to Mehmet Tohti.

Mr. Tohti is a Uighur Canadian activist who has campaigned for the rights of Uighurs for over a decade. Born in the ancient city of Kashgar in northwestern China, Mr. Tohti studied biology at Kashgar University, then went on to teach the subject. When Mr. Tohti was 26, with conditions worsening for Uighurs, he was forced to leave China for Turkey, eventually making his way to Canada. He served as co-founder and vice-president of the World Uyghur Congress and is now the executive director of the Ottawa-based Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project. We met him on numerous occasions, and he helped us understand what is happening to the Uighurs.

He pushed, he lobbied, he spared no effort to ensure that an overwhelming majority of members of the House of Commons voted in favour of the motion recognizing China's genocide against the Uighur minority. Unfortunately, the executive branch turned a deaf ear. He is under constant threat, but he continues to pressure the government and Canadian businesses to boycott goods made by Uighur slaves. I encourage my colleagues to meet him. They can look forward to very interesting discussions.

I am also thinking about Mr. Dolkun Isa, a physician who founded a student union in 1985. In 1988, after some demonstrations, he was kicked out of university. He has fully experienced the discrimination against the Uighurs. He was arrested in Beijing and was forced to flee to Turkey before seeking asylum in Germany in 1996. He was in Ottawa a few months ago and we had a chance to talk to him. He is wanted by China. In 1997, Interpol issued a red notice against him based on false accusations. It was later retracted in 2018.

I am also thinking about Mr. Kayum Masimov, who lives in Quebec. He is a Montrealer of Uighur origin who is also advocating for the rights of Uighurs. He talked to us about certain mining companies that apparently have their headquarters in Montreal and who use Uighur labour in the form of slavery. He talked to us about that. He often works as a Uighur interpreter at meetings of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. He is married to a Quebec woman and is very well established in Quebec. He has first-hand experience of what Uighurs are going through and he deserves this recognition.

Routine Proceedings

I am saying that this recognition is important. If we want to do something for Mr. Tohti and Mr. Masimov, the best thing we can do is to quickly adopt Motion No. 62 without playing partisan politics and support the proposal made by our colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

This is a good example of working together. The member for Lac-Saint-Jean, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard did this great work together in committee.

• (1925)

What was the result?

The first request that is being made is to recognize that the Uighurs and other Muslim minorities from China emigrated in order to flee the Chinese government's repression and intimidation to force them to come back to China.

As members know, the House recognized the genocide in February 2021. There is therefore no doubt in the minds of most people, except perhaps the executive of the Liberal Party, that many Muslims are fleeing China to escape the brutal repression that extends well beyond China's borders.

A recent example of such repression is the police stations that China opened. There are three in Canada and about 50 around the world. China opened these illegal police stations without any kind of bilateral agreement in order to harass the diaspora and refugees to try to force them back to China, usually by threatening reprisal against their families if they do not. The people I was talking about earlier have experienced these types of threats.

China claims that these stations merely provide administrative services for Chinese nationals abroad, for example to renew a driver's licence. However, when abroad, that would be a consular activity, not a police activity. The Chinese government's subterfuge is clear. China also claims that it plans on repatriating Chinese nationals accused of corruption, but several documented cases of opponents being abducted prove that China aims to crack down on dissidents abroad.

The committee's second request is to recognize that many third countries are under pressure from China to repatriate Chinese dissidents and Muslims to China. In several neighbouring countries, such as Mongolia, which has no access to the sea and is 100% dependent on China and Russia for its exports and to maintain its economy, Uighur minorities are very vulnerable, as these countries sometimes bear the brunt of Chinese government pressure.

Many activists have been arrested in these third countries, including activists from Vietnam, Thailand and Uzbekistan. There is also the case of Uighur Canadian Huseyin Celil, who was arrested in Uzbekistan and sent to China, where he was sentenced to life in prison. As China does not recognize dual citizenship, he was not given access to consular information.

A 2019 Radio-Canada article painted a very clear picture of how China harasses Uighur nationals in Quebec using Chinese diplomatic services, which are often covers for sophisticated spying operations. We know that. It is public knowledge.

Canada is not immune to this pressure. In 2020, the House of Commons passed a motion calling on the federal government to adopt a plan to counter foreign interference, but once again, nothing was done.

The third request is that Canada take in 10,000 Chinese Uighur and Muslim refugees over a two-year period, beginning in 2024. Much like the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, I have to wonder why the limit is 10,000 refugees. Why not 20,000? It is a rather arbitrary number. The member for Lac-Saint-Jean committed to advancing the idea that we should take in 15,000 Uighur refugees. Uighur advocacy groups are clearly saying that 10,000 is not enough and more should be taken in, hence the idea of increasing it to 15,000.

I would point out that Canada already has programs for Afghans and for Ukrainians, so I do not see why it would not have the same kind of program for Uighurs. Some organizations have criticized Ottawa's favouritism for some nationals over others. For instance, Yemen is suffering terribly from armed conflict, but Ottawa has no specific program for the Yemeni people and is even selling arms to Saudi Arabia. Ironically, that country was lambasted in a UN report for its abuses in Yemen.

What we are really denouncing is the double standard, which is clearly the result of political decisions rather than humanitarian ones. I think this is where the problem lies, and perhaps why the member for Winnipeg North was annoyed earlier. Instead of showing some compassion, which is what the situation called for this evening, the member for Winnipeg North chose to indulge in political discussions.

• (1930)

The fact remains that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims are being surveilled by China, which is not necessarily the case for Yemeni refugees in other countries.

Finally, the motion calls on the government to “table in the House, within 120 sitting days following the adoption of this motion, a report on how the refugee resettlement plan will be implemented”. As the Liberal government tends to ignore House of Commons motions, the Bloc Québécois believes it is necessary to require the government to table a report. We think the government must respond quickly to avoid the matter being put off indefinitely. That is what we find in the motion.

This evening as I was thinking about the Uighurs, I thought back to a book entitled *De la dignité humaine*, or on human dignity. It was written by my philosophy professor at Laval University, Thomas De Koninck, the wisest person I know. I think the worst thing we can do to a person is take away their dignity. Dr. De Koninck writes that every human being, whoever they may be, has their own inalienable dignity, in the unequivocal sense that Kant gave to this term: something that has no price and no equivalent, with no relative value, but rather an absolute value. The idea behind human dignity is that the individual has absolute value.

What we are hearing about the treatment of the Uighurs clearly shows that rather than having absolute value they are considered as objects. I can quickly talk about concentration camps. The Chinese Communist Party has set up concentration camps where the communists have held approximately two million Uighurs at one time or another. The number of cases has sharply increased over the years. These camps indoctrinate Muslims, who do not have the right to practice their religion or even speak their language. They are forced to eat pork. They must constantly praise the Chinese Communist Party and President Xi Jinping. Some witnesses have spoken about organ harvesting. Many women have been raped in these camps and have reported the sexual, psychological and physical abuse they experienced. Many women underwent forced sterilization. Children are separated from their families. Many children were taken away from their families and placed in orphanages or state-run schools. That includes children whose parents are in concentration camps as well as children whose family unit is intact. There is talk of slavery. Many Uighurs are taken from their homes or concentration camps and forcibly sent to factories located mainly outside Xinjiang, which further reduces the Muslim population. There is mass surveillance. China has the most advanced surveillance system in the world, particularly in Xinjiang. Cameras are installed practically everywhere, and new facial recognition technologies make it possible to identify Uighurs. Finally, the Chinese Communist Party spares no effort to poison the lives of the Uighurs to the extent that we can call it unbridled violence.

I would like to close by saying that what I have seen tonight from the member for Winnipeg North reflects how the House has dealt with the Uighur file for over two years now. The member for Winnipeg North came to say that now is not the time to debate this and that there are other priorities. This is similar to what his political party did when it came time to recognize the genocide, but the Liberals preferred to focus on Canada's economic and strategic interests in China, and that is unacceptable.

• (1935)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean is great to work with, and I agree with him. However, I do have a question for my colleague.

Does he have any concerns about whether IRCC can support these necessary measures? What can be done to ensure that Canada can respond adequately to this motion?

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I think that the best thing we can do is listen to the Uighurs themselves.

I think that what is proposed in this motion, namely to welcome 10,000 Uighurs over two years does not have the unanimous support of Uighurs themselves. They do not think that is enough. The best thing we can do is listen to them and shape our policies around their needs. We do not need more proof. A genocide has occurred in Xinjiang. That has been proven and we recognized that genocide here.

Now we need to take action, and what I have seen here tonight are not people who are prepared to take action, but rather people who want to use the situation of the Uighurs like any other issue to

Routine Proceedings

advance their political agendas. I will repeat what I said. I find that unacceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to work with the member's colleague from the Bloc on many of these issues. His colleague proposed the amendment. He talked about this in relation to an Olympic boycott, which was, I think, one potential way of the international community sending a strong signal. Unfortunately, that signal was not sent early enough with sufficient magnitude to achieve the result that his colleague and other members of this House were advocating for.

There are many different things we can do legislatively to push for justice for Uighurs. I really appreciated the speech given by another one of the Bloc member's colleagues on Bill C-281, which is an important international human rights piece of legislation. We have Bill S-211 and Bill S-223 as well, which are both before the foreign affairs committee and are unfortunately waiting to move forward. There are also the immigration measures, the concurrence motion and the motion to be debated later this week. There are many different things we can do.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on the breadth of areas where Canada's Parliament could take action and on the fact that we can make a difference through the steps we take here in Canada's Parliament, even to impact injustices that are half a world away.

• (1940)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, in my introduction, I admitted that I felt a bit like an impostor since I did not follow the entire course of the work in committee. I was made aware of this political issue by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean, who has made the Uighurs a prominent part of his work.

To answer my colleague's question, I think what we need to do is focus on humanitarian concerns. Unfortunately, in the case of the Uighurs, political, strategic and economic issues are sometimes put before humanitarian considerations. As responsible politicians, we cannot turn a blind eye to such atrocities in the hope of recovering some aspects of international trade, so as not to offend a giant like China. We cannot do that. It is an appalling lack of courage. If there is anything we can do here, it is perhaps to find some courage to stand up to China and defend the Uighurs in the dignified way they deserve.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Jonquière for his speech. I would like to make a comment rather than ask a question.

Routine Proceedings

This evening's debate brings two things to mind. I am a member of the All Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Of course, the committee talked about the Uighurs. The fact that this group of people is being subjected to modern slavery in this day and age disturbs me.

As the status of women critic, I will end on a much more personal note. As my colleague said, when women are being subjected to forced sterilization, that is a sure sign of a desire to annihilate a group of people. When things get to that point, economic considerations stop mattering and humanitarian considerations take over. That is our role as parliamentarians. It is our duty, as a member of the international community, to take action rather than merely express good intentions. It is time to take action.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. Before preparing this speech, a book that I used to make my students read came to mind. Entitled *If This Is a Man*, by Primo Levi, the book is about the Holocaust. Everyone who reads this short book by Primo Levi thinks to themselves, "never again". What we read about in *If This Is a Man* by Primo Levi should never happen again.

Still, it seems to me that we have stooped to accepting what the Uighurs are currently experiencing. I do not understand why there is not more indignation about such miserable and violent living conditions that deprive these people of all their dignity. I believe that we need to collectively examine our priorities. Economic considerations ought not come before the dignity of people, no matter their religion or ethnicity.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, one of the other aspects of context for this motion is that Uighurs who have fled from China and are in other countries are increasingly facing threats and pressure because the Chinese Communist Party seeks to exert influence beyond its borders and is, in fact, putting pressure on some of these other countries around the world. Sometimes we see efforts to co-opt international organizations and co-opt international mechanisms such as Interpol that are designed for pursuing criminals internationally. Authoritarian powers want to use these mechanisms to harass dissidents internationally. This is a big challenge we face, and part of the push to have Uighurs come to Canada is recognizing that they are no longer safe in places where they may have sought refuge.

I wonder if the member has further thoughts on how we can respond to these challenges, try to prevent the negative repurposing of some of these international mechanisms and try to encourage our partners in other countries not to succumb to the pressure to send Uighurs back to China, where they may face persecution.

• (1945)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, what can we do? We definitely need to continue the work here, but I think in the short term the best thing to do is listen to people like Mr. Tohti who are being threatened. We must listen to the testimonies of the Uighurs being forced to live with this constant threat and we must continue our work here in the House to come up with solutions to keep Uighurs safe from a regime that has lost all touch with reality and human dignity. I think

the best thing we can do in the short term is to listen to them carefully and to take into consideration the terrible situations they are going through.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to stand in this place and represent the people of Edmonton Strathcona.

I find this to be such an important debate for us to have, but I have to say that I am disappointed that it is happening in this manner and not when more parliamentarians can join in and there can be more people to participate in the discussion. After so many years, I think the genocide happening against the Uighur people is something every parliamentarian in this place must take with the utmost seriousness, and I worry that it is not being taken as such this evening.

I am a relatively new member of Parliament and have only been in this place for three years. One of the very first things that happened after I was elected was an appointment to the international human rights subcommittee. As I think I have brought up before in this place, my whole career has been about international development, foreign affairs and sustainable development around the world, so I was appointed to be the New Democrat member on that subcommittee. I was so happy to have that opportunity, because I feel like in my heart I have spent most of my career trying to fight for the human rights of people around the world, and this felt like an opportunity to do that and perhaps take it to the next level.

One of the very first studies we undertook looked at the genocide of the Uighur people in China. I have two brothers who are very rough and tumble with me, and I was beaten up many times as a child when I was growing up. I have lots of cousins too. I think of myself as a relatively tough and robust person, but the testimony I heard from expert witnesses, Uighurs and people who experienced the genocide was the most harrowing thing I have ever heard to date. The stories of rape, of forced sterilization, of people being surveilled and of the very systematic and cold attempts to erase a people were horrific for me to hear. It was very difficult.

Of course, I am only hearing these stories; I am not experiencing them, so I always try to imagine what it must be like to be somebody from Xinjiang who is dealing with this and is not seeing the world stand up for them and not hearing people in Canada and around the world say that they are not going to tolerate this. How difficult must it be for the Uighurs not only in China but in Canada to know their loved ones are experiencing this genocide?

When I come to this debate, that is what I bring. I bring the testimony that I heard at the international human rights subcommittee. I bring all of the stories I heard in many meetings with members of the Uighur community and with many members of the community who fight for human rights.

Routine Proceedings

I think this is a vitally important debate and it is vitally important that we are all here, but it was disappointing for me that we did not vote to have a debate on the report that came out of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. There was no opportunity for that debate to happen.

Of course, we know the Uighurs have raised concerns about these issues for years. We know they have been calling for more action not only from Canadian parliamentarians but from other parliamentarians for years. In fact, the recommendations that came forward from the report of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights were very clear. We asked that the Government of China be condemned for its “actions against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang”. We asked to “work with allies and multilateral organizations to help international observers gain unfettered access to Xinjiang”. We asked to “provide support through international overseas development assistance to civil society organizations especially in countries that are geopolitically important to China’s Belt and Road Initiative”.

● (1950)

We asked to “recognize that the acts being committed in Xinjiang against Uyghurs constitute genocide and work within legal frameworks” of what that meant. We also asked to “impose sanctions under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act on all Government of China officials responsible for the perpetration of grave human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims.”

We brought forward these recommendations, but we have not seen the level of action from the government that I think all of us in this place should be demanding. We have not seen the empathy and care that I think we have seen for other conflicts.

One of the things I struggle with the most in this place is that we are often in a situation where we are asked to prioritize human rights, to amplify the rights of one group of people over the rights of another. I do not know how to do that. I do not know how as parliamentarians we can do that. Of course, we need to provide whatever support is necessary to help the people in Ukraine who are struggling with a genocide of their own from the Russian Federation. We need to ensure that the people in Ukraine can flee violence, that they can come to Canada and seek safety here and that they are protected and cared for 100%.

However, as parliamentarians, we need to recognize that being from Ukraine does not make someone’s life more valuable than being from Afghanistan, being a Uighur from China, being from Yemen, being from Palestine or being from Tigray. We need to recognize that Canada has an important role. We are a country of such opportunity and such wealth, and we have an important role in this world to open up our doors and welcome those who are fleeing violence, those who are fleeing persecution and those who are fleeing genocide. That is such a fundamental role for Canada. That is how many of us ended up here.

I am, in fact, a settler in this country. My family came when the Scots were being persecuted in Scotland. Canada opened its doors and welcomed us here, and, of course, generations of McPhersons, and I am also a McCoy, have flourished in Canada. Providing that

opportunity for people around the world is what Canada is all about and what we need to be able to do.

I support the idea of bringing Uighurs here and ensuring that Uighurs are able to flee genocide to come here, but I have deep concerns. I think everybody in the House, including members of the government, must recognize that IRCC is broken. Immigration services with the government are broken. If anyone in the House does not agree that this is a problem, they are not listening to their constituents. They are not listening to the fact that we have massive delays and massive problems.

In Edmonton, Alberta, 636 students who were approved to study at the University of Alberta could not do so this fall because they could not get a study permit. It cost the University of Alberta \$6 million. These are people who wanted to come here to study. I therefore have some concerns about the IRCC’s capacity to actually welcome all of the newcomers we need to be welcoming in Canada. Absolutely there are people who are suffering around the world, and the Uighurs have been suffering for years. For years they have been calling for attention to this horrific genocide. However, Canada needs to do better at welcoming people into our country. We need to be better at doing the work of government to ensure that people can come here.

For me, I do not want to say that we need to limit how many Ukrainians, Afghans, Tigrayans or Syrians come to Canada so we can make sure that Uighurs are able to come. There needs to be something done so that all people fleeing violence have access to come here, are able to be treated with respect, are able to be protected and able to be brought here. I have this deep worry that there is a Peter-Paul mentality with the government.

● (1955)

In August 2021, we were going to welcome a huge number of Afghans into our country. Then, of course, the horrific war started in Ukraine, and we were going to welcome an unlimited number of Ukrainians into our country. That is great, but we do not have the capacity to do that right now.

My worry is how we are going to get there. How can we work with the government? How can all of us in this place work with and reinforce to the government how important it is that it fix our broken immigration system so that we can be the country that so many Canadians believe we are, and certainly that so many Canadians believe we should be.

There is another thing I want to raise. In terms of immigration, there are things that we can do, things that need to happen and things we can expedite to make sure that Uighurs are protected, but there are other things we can do to help the people in Xinjiang who are being persecuted right now. There is legislation before the foreign affairs committee, Bill S-211, that looks at forced labour. My opinion, and members may say this is always the NDP opinion, is that the bill does not go far enough. It would not do near enough to protect people from forced labour, slave labour or child labour around the world.

Routine Proceedings

My dear colleague, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, brought forward Bill C-262, which is an excellent example of what forced labour legislation could look like. It aligns very much with what is happening around the world, in Germany, the EU, France, Australia and the U.K. This country is at least a decade behind other countries in ensuring that we have good forced labour legislation in place.

It has been in mandate letter after mandate letter, which used to mean that action would be taken, but it does not appear to mean that any longer. I look at things like that and ask how we can make sure that Canada is not complicit in supporting forced labour, that we are ensuring that the cotton, the tomatoes and the products that come into Canada are not produced with forced or slave labour. What can we do to make that better?

There is one last thing I want to talk about today. Here is what I am struggling with in the House of Commons right now. I worry that what we are doing in this place is politicizing human rights. I worry that we are using it as a tool to cause shenanigans or gum up the work of government, and if that is the case, we should be so deeply ashamed of ourselves. Human rights are of such fundamental importance that, when they are used as a tool to gum up the work of government, it demeans every member of Parliament. When we use human rights as a trick to force things through or to stop things from going forward, we should be ashamed of ourselves.

When we talk about human rights in this place, we need to be honest with ourselves and talk about human rights across the board, because it is not okay that the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party refuses to talk about human rights in Yemen, as both of them are complicit in the selling of arms to the regime that is propping up that war.

It is not all right that neither one of them will talk about human rights in Palestine. Children in Palestine are being murdered, and neither of the parties will talk about that. That is not all right. They do not get to pick and choose human rights. They do not get to choose that the people being murdered in Tigray matter less than other people. They do not get to choose that the Uighurs do not matter because we have an economic relationship with China. That is not now human rights work. For every one of us in this place, if we believe in protecting human rights, then a human right is a human right.

● (2000)

It does not matter if it is a child in Palestine. It does not matter if it is a child in Yemen. It does not matter if it is a woman in Xinjiang. It does not matter if it is a woman in Ukraine. If we have a feminist foreign policy, and if we believe in human rights, all human rights matter.

I am deeply afraid that in this place we are choosing to politicize human rights. We are choosing to use human rights to forward our agenda and gum up the works of Parliament. About that, I am deeply worried.

There is a genocide happening against the Uighurs in Xinjiang. There is a genocide happening in China right now. Parliamentarians have an obligation to stand up to protect the people being persecut-

ed. We have an obligation to welcome those people to Canada. It is not even an obligation. It is a privilege to welcome those people to Canada.

I will always stand in this place and fight for human rights. I will tell members that I will fight for all human rights, not just some of them.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her contribution to this very important debate.

I want to touch on something that she mentioned at the start of her comments, which is her work on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. We know it has received a lot of evidence over the past few Parliaments. Some of it has been troubling, and it dovetails a bit with what she was talking about in her speech. Could she comment on that?

There is this idea that nations are selective in terms of standing up to China. I say this as a Muslim-Canadian representative in the House: There has been an unfortunately large number of Muslim-majority nations that have not spoken up about the Uighurs, and have actually defended some of the practices of the People's Republic of China.

Can she enlighten the House on some of the evidence she heard at the Subcommittee on International Human Rights?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague to be very thoughtful on issues of human rights and in his work.

As parliamentarians, we have an obligation to think about Canada's response. Obviously, there are diplomatic paths and tools we can use to work with other countries that have not come as far along in declaring a genocide. One of the things I have been pushing the government to do is to reinvest in our diplomatic core and our international development.

When Global Affairs was created, and we lost the Canadian International Development Agency, and it all became part of one pot, I feel the government prioritized trade over diplomacy and international development. That has resulted in having less ability to influence countries around the world than we used to have.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated a lot of the member's speech. I did not agree with everything. I think, for instance, it is important to note that I and other members of my caucus have spoken out repeatedly about human rights in Yemen and some of the other examples she mentioned. The arms deal she referred to was signed prior to the start of the Yemen war, and we have been very critical of the atrocities in that context.

Routine Proceedings

It is also important to note that tonight's debate is happening in the way it is and the time it is because a unanimous consent motion was adopted today, and it was agreed to by all parties. In terms of the process issues, we are having this debate now because, fortunately, there was agreement and the unanimous consent of the House to do so.

I want to pick up on a comment the member made about the fact that there is sometimes pressure to say if we are going to prioritize this community or that community, or prioritize this issue or that issue. Unfortunately, we have seen the government trying to help refugees in one context, which means pulling resources away from another context. I think we have seen that from the beginning of the tenure of the government.

That is why we believe, in the Conservative caucus, that part of the solution to that is strengthening the opportunities for the private, not-for-profit sector when it comes to refugee sponsorship and lifting caps on private sponsorship by trying to reduce red tape and remove barriers for private sponsoring organizations.

Frankly, that would allow us to welcome more refugees and would perhaps allow us to welcome folks in risk of persecution earlier on in the process, when those issues are identified by diaspora communities and others.

What does the member think about strengthening the opportunities for private sponsors to be involved in the refugee system and lifting caps? That could be a tool in perhaps taking the government out of needing to be responsible for prioritizing this situation versus that situation, and allow us to welcome more vulnerable people into communities that are choosing to support them as they come here.

• (2005)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, it is very fascinating to me when the member talks about unanimous consent, as Conservative Party members declined unanimous consent for me to table a motion on vaccine equity today. Clearly, it works when it works for them but not when it works for others.

Frankly, the Conservative Party was atrocious when it was in power in terms of immigration. I think we can all agree that its response to the Syrian refugee crisis was disgusting. How it broke the temporary foreign workers program was horrific. I really have nothing else to say on that particular point.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I agree with what my colleague is saying about human rights. Indeed, human rights are the rights of all humans, not just those we feel like having as friends.

When my colleague was speaking, I was thinking about Sun Tzu and his treatise, *The Art of War*. I do not know it by heart, but I know some passages, including the one where Sun Tzu suggests to the great and powerful that they not rely too much on their great power because they might be surprised and this could end up working against them. It seems that everyone fears China, the great superpower.

How can we convince others that, in spite of everything, the overreach of a superpower can work against it and we really have to help people in a tangible way?

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important conversation that we need to have as we go forward. We know that in the United States, in the next two years, there will be elections as another superpower. One of the ways Canada can help with this is to reduce our dependency on superpowers and to, in fact, diversify our relationships and have more relationships with different partners, with different members of the Indo-Pacific. I look very much forward to hearing what the Indo-Pacific strategy looks like for the government.

The fact that we should be working more with Arctic countries, the northern countries, is very important. Increasing our ties and our ability to trade and work with European countries is very important. That is one of the ways, as a medium-power country, I guess I could say, we can work with the current changing geopolitical climate.

We can expand so we are not so dependent on the United States, and become perhaps dependent on many other countries and expand our relationships, but we also need to make sure we are not so dependent on China and that we are working with some of our like-minded democracies, such as Japan and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

• (2010)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was incredibly thoughtful. As we are having these discussions, I would like to give her an opportunity to talk about how important it is to not pick and choose when it comes to human rights.

A lot of devastating things are happening in many countries, and all of us who live in safe countries, where we largely have a good life and are not worried about genocide day to day, need to stand up to voice those things so we can encourage other countries to step up and do the same. I am wondering if this member could speak a bit about this.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely can. Something I reflect on a great deal is how Canada can play a better role, how we can play a bigger role as a country that is respected around the world, and as a country that is seen as a champion of human rights. There are many ways we can do that. One is we can have a bigger role geopolitically.

We really, for the most part, have abandoned our obligations to be a peacekeeping nation, to have peacekeepers in the field. We have never reached the obligations we promised under the Pearson Commission to reach 0.7% of ODA. We have repeatedly spoken about having a feminist government, yet we do not have a feminist foreign policy. There are many ways Canada can play an increasingly important role in the world. We just need the focus, the bravery and political will to do so.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

Today is Diwali. I want to first of all wish my wife and two boys, who are celebrating tonight in Toronto, a happy Diwali. Diwali is the festival of light. It is the triumph of light over darkness. When we talk about light over darkness, I think that is actually an apt metaphor for what we are talking about today. We are talking about shedding light on a global situation that has thus far not garnered enough international attention from western governments, literally across the board.

I am speaking about the debate we are having this evening about the deplorable human rights situation of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in East Turkestan. I use that term quite deliberately, because part of the propaganda exercised by the People's Republic of China is to refer to this area as Xinjiang or the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, but for the folks who live there and have made it their home for many years, it is known as East Turkestan.

The situation is outright deplorable. We have heard commentary in this vein thus far in tonight's debate. It is an outright attack on religion under the auspices of rooting out extremism. We have heard reference to the subcommittee on international human rights, and I want to go to a report that was done not one Parliament, but two Parliaments ago by that subcommittee. It was rendered on December 19, 2018, by the subcommittee on international human rights. I am going to read part of a section of the report that talked about what was taking place. This was four years ago, and we know that the situation has only worsened since.

In section A, paragraph 3, the report reads:

While prohibitions on outward displays of religion had formerly applied only to public sector workers and to students, “now, an entire religion is criminalized.” Witnesses described prohibitions on a wide array of religious practices or expressions of Islam through anti-terror legislation. This includes a prohibition on facial hair and religious clothing. Individuals with names bearing religious significance have been forced to change their names. Qurans, religious literature and prayer mats kept at home are confiscated. Keeping Islamic dietary practices is prohibited. Halal signs are now illegal, and restaurants must stay open during Ramadan. It is also prohibited to teach Islam to children. Individuals have been detained for praying five times a day and for circulating religious text among family. Most mosques have been demolished; the Muslim call to prayer is no longer heard. Effectively, outward displays of faith among Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Turkic Muslims in the XUAR have effectively stopped.

I read that out in its entirety because it carries a lot of impact in terms of helping members of this House to understand and in terms of helping Canadians watching these parliamentary proceedings to understand exactly what is transpiring. Again, this report was rendered at the end of December 2018.

We understand this attack on Muslims in the People's Republic as part of a broader sweep of attacks. I am sure that if they have not come up yet, they are going to come up in the context of tonight's debate: attacks on Hong Kong democracy protesters, attacks on people who dare to practise Falun Gong and are members of Falun Gong, attacks on Tibetan Buddhists, of whom I represent several thousand in my riding of Parkdale—High Park, whose linguistic, religious and cultural traditions are being repressed and actively attacked. That has been the status quo since 1959.

The repression of Tibetan religious practices dates back over 60 years. The repression, in its acute form, of Uighur Muslims dates over the last 20 years, also outlined in that subcommittee report.

What is interesting is that it also spills over, so we are not talking just about an internal domestic situation within the People's Republic of China. There is pressure exercised on nations that are largely dependent economically on China to deport Uighurs back to the PRC, so they can effectively undergo persecution under the guise of re-education. There is targeting of Uighurs here in Canada, Uighurs like Mehmet Tohti, whose name has been mentioned before, who dare to speak up or to try to reach out and contact their loved ones, who have effectively disappeared into camps in China.

There is the targeting of others here, such as Tibetans, some of whom are my constituents. One of them, whom I want to mention by name, has decided not to be silenced and not to let attacks or surveillance or harassment or bullying diminish her voice. In fact, that woman, even today, is running for municipal office in the city of Toronto.

● (2015)

Her name is Chemi Lhamo. She is a former intern who served in my office. She is a very proud Tibetan Canadian and a very strong advocate. I salute her for having the courage to not be silenced but to continue to advocate for the causes she believes in and for seeking public office this very evening through a city council seat in Parkdale—High Park.

The human rights violations also raise grave concerns because they harken back to a different time. What am I speaking about here? I am speaking about the massive detention camps that we have learned about through human rights accounts, through parliamentary studies and through the debates that are entering this chamber this very evening. These detention camps are occurring as we speak in the People's Republic of China, housing, by some accounts, hundreds of thousands of Uighurs. By other accounts, over a million Uighurs are being housed in these detention camps.

People have used the term “concentration camps”. That harkens back to only one thing for every one of us in this chamber. That harkens back to World War II Europe and the devastation and horrific human rights abuses that were wrought by the Third Reich at that time, yet that is what we are talking about in 2022 on this planet in a country in Asia in the People's Republic of China.

Routine Proceedings

What is taking place in these camps? Again, I am going to go back to this report. I am in chapter C, paragraph 17. It talks about these camps, political re-education camps. A witness named Mr. Byler described sessions where detainees were forced to publicly denounce their past crimes such as studying the Quran, learning Arabic or travelling abroad. Those who did not fully comply faced harsh punishment, including psychological measures designed to break the detainees, including the targeting of their families, their masculinity or forcing them to eat pork.

I want members to digest that. I apologize for the pun, but it is the idea of openly violating a person's religious traditions in the name of re-educating someone out of their Islamic practices, in violation of strict religious dietary laws. The punishments include beatings, stress positions and isolation. This is what is transpiring right now. This is what we are speaking about.

In these final few minutes, I want to talk about the reproductive rights of people in East Turkestan. We have heard about forced sterilization. Forced sterilization and, indeed, forced abortions were cited by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in a report that is dated this year, August 22, 2022. What they talk about is forced sterilization.

We have heard about the definition of genocide. I am going to cite it now. I do this having been a UN war crimes prosecutor on the Rwandan genocide. I think it is important to turn back to how genocide is defined. A genocide is defined in the UN convention under article II as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” and then it lists five different indicia. The fourth is “Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group”.

There is only one way to characterize a forced sterilization or a forced abortion. The rates of population growth among Uighurs in East Turkestan are one-sixth of what they are in the rest of the People's Republic of China. We know what is going on. If that can be proven as evidence and successfully prosecuted, that amounts to genocide. That is why this debate is important. That is why what this motion calls for is important.

Let me finish on this motion because it calls for understanding the pressure that Uighurs in third countries are facing in terms of their fear of deportation and making sure that Canadian immigration measures are supple and flexible enough to accept these individuals. I say this quite emotionally. We heard the member opposite talk about those who have faced safe haven or received safe haven in this country. I include myself among those persons. Fifty years ago, I came here as a Ugandan Asian refugee at the age of 10 months, fleeing the persecution of a guy named Idi Amin Dada, who decided that there was no place for Asians in Uganda at that time. If Canada did not open its doors then, I would not be standing here today.

Canada has a moral duty and an obligation to ensure we continue that humanitarian tradition. Doing so through immigration measures, such as those being proposed today, is one way we can do exactly that and show the world that the persecution being faced by Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in the People's Republic is unjust and cannot be countenanced. To go back to the metaphor of light over darkness, that is the light that we need to shine today.

• (2020)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure working with my friend opposite on the Tibet friendship group, and I thank him for speaking to the motion today.

The motion identifies the fact that Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims face an ongoing genocide. The member quite eloquently, especially in the final minutes of his speech, made precisely the case for that genocide recognition. There was a motion in this House a year and a half ago on which the government, speaking not of the entire Liberal caucus but the government, chose to abstain. At the time, the government said it was studying the issue.

A lot has happened in the last year and a half. The member mentioned the UN human rights commissioner's report as well, which is new since the House of Commons motion. Could he clarify, if he is able to, the position of his government on this motion and, flowing from that, whether the position of the Government of Canada today is that Uighurs are subject to an ongoing genocide?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his comments today and on many days on this issue, among others exposing international human rights violations.

In terms of the motion that was before this chamber, the member opposite knows that I voted very much in favour of that motion. The position of cabinet was as displayed, in terms of the vote that was taken.

I will say to him quite candidly that as the days go by, as we see what the People's Republic of China is doing as a government and what President Xi is doing as a leader in terms of entrenching himself in perpetuity, it would seem, I think people, parliamentarians and elected governments around the planet are really taking note of what is at stake.

What is at stake is really a strident China that is threatening a region and threatening a planet in terms of a lot of its practices. Those extend to Uighur rights and also to the rights of Taiwanese, Hong Kongers, folks from Tibet and people who would seek to defend or assert their rights within the context of China and just assert simple, basic religious and racial rights and freedoms. That is what everyone is taking note of.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's intervention today was very interesting, very heartfelt and very intelligently delivered.

I have some concerns about what Canada can do in addition to the efforts to allow Uighurs to come to Canada to flee persecution. However, I wonder whether the member can talk a bit about the potential for the government to impose sanctions on those responsible for this genocide and what additional steps the Canadian government can take to ensure those sanctions are not just put in place and named, but also enforced and made effective.

Routine Proceedings

● (2025)

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, that is a really important question. What I have noted in the seven years that I have been serving in this chamber is, first of all, an aptitude toward enacting Magnitsky sanctions, for example, strengthening the Special Economic Measures Act and then seeking to apply it.

I will take a note from the remarks the member delivered earlier about not cherry-picking where we wade in with sanctions and not being selective by picking on convenient targets, but also looking at the somewhat less convenient targets, if I can put it that way.

I know, for example, in terms of the Ukrainian conflict, we have imposed a rash of over 1,000 sanctions on Russians, but we have not been as strident in other parts of the world. Speaking, again, very candidly, we need to be more open to expanding the sanctions envelope and targeting them toward other individuals.

I know some Chinese officials have been sanctioned by the government. Certainly, on this issue, among others, and the member was including Hong Kongers, Taiwanese and Tibetans, I think there is more room for such sanctions to be applied and then for further seeking to ensure how such sanctions have bitten, so to speak, so we know they are actually doing the work they are meant to do.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope I am audible with the microphones here. I know my voice is gone. I do not have COVID. I tested negative, but I am here to speak to the motion the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan brought forth.

This is an important debate and, I would suggest, a preview of what we will be seeing on Wednesday and in December when we will be discussing my own motion, which is Motion No. 62. It relates to resettlement and calls upon the Government of Canada to resettle 10,000 Uighur here in our country to provide safe refuge as of 2024.

My motion calls for us as a country to welcome 10,000 from third countries, not from within China but Uighur people and other Turkic minorities who are living in, for example, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and many different countries around the world. Why? It is for the exact reason we in this House have said: They are suffering a genocide. Not only are we saying this today, but we said it in this House on February 22, 2021. We were unanimous in saying so. We spoke with one voice, and I would like us again to speak with one voice, not only here today and now but also this coming Wednesday and again when we speak in December on this exact same thing.

We are all from different political families, and we posture, position and angle in different ways in order to get our sound bite, our headline in the newspaper and our quotes, but this issue is an issue of grave importance. It is one in which we should be united, moving together in one direction. It is an issue of genocide, not only the political rhetoric of genocide but the legal definition of genocide. This has been the opinion of legal scholars and of a people's tribunal, and this is the opinion of this House.

The genocide convention of 1951 was brought into force after World War II, after the Holocaust when there was an attempt to wipe out a people. We, as an international community said never

again and that we would not allow this kind of behaviour to exist on the face of our earth, but it is happening right now.

Legally, what does genocide mean? It means that there is an “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”. They do not have to do it, but they have to intend to do it. There are five enumerated aspects of this legal definition. It includes killing members of the group. It includes causing serious bodily harm. It includes inflicting conditions on a group calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, such as imposing measures to prevent births and forcibly transferring children of the group out of their group to another group.

Jurists have said that what is happening to the Uighur people meets all five aspects of the genocide convention. The people's tribunal, though, said specifically that, while it did not determine on all five aspects, the forced sterilizations were genocidal in intent. We heard from other members previously who talked about forced sterilizations. We heard their impact on the reduction of births in the Xinjiang Uighur autonomous region.

Thus, it is incumbent upon us in this House to speak with one voice. I would ask that members put aside the partisan angling and the jockeying, and move with one force. It is important for us as a country to have a single thrust on this issue. If we are able to do that, we can and we will, hopefully, resettle at least 10,000, if not more, Uighurs.

● (2030)

However, if we are going to posture and position while we are having these important debates, then we will find that our energy is not focused in one direction. Instead of fighting to save people, we are fighting ourselves. There is no dignity or respect in that. There is no honour in that. It is something that we should be ashamed of. This is a moment for us to save lives. Let us do it. Let us speak with one voice. Let us encourage each other to do it.

As we are going to enter this debate on Wednesday, I ask that people reflect on this. If we actually want to have strength as a country in terms of resettling people here, we are not dealing with a small opponent or a small country that is committing genocide. We are dealing with a juggernaut of a nation. If we hope to put a dent in that genocide, then we must move together as a single hand and not as open digits.

Where are we at right now? We are at a time of reflection. We have two days to see how we will create our next speeches, what positions we will take and how we will debate the motion that I bring forth on Wednesday. I hope, expect and believe that we will move together as one.

There are so many human rights cases on the face of this earth, which is not to say that we should not speak to them openly and publicly, but we have an opportunity right now to make an impact. Sometimes we have to focus to get success, and that is what we are doing on Wednesday. We are going to focus. I ask us to focus so that we can get success and bring this thing home. If we do speak with one voice, our government will listen. It will make it more likely for our government to listen if we do speak with one clear voice.

We heard about Michelle Bachelet's report, which said that the allegations of the Uighur people were well founded and that they may amount to international crimes, including crimes against humanity. We know that our country's responsibility to protect is engaged not only when we have established that crimes against humanity are occurring, but when there is the possibility of crimes against humanity occurring. This is what Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, actually said: that there may be crimes against humanity. Therefore, our responsibility to protect is engaged. This motion allows us to fulfill that responsibility in part, not in whole but in part.

To conclude, let us move together as one force so that we can have success in this. For those who are listening, I ask them to bring this to their colleagues to reflect on it personally and to come back on Wednesday with some gusto and a united front.

• (2035)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to speaking to my friend's motion on Wednesday, and I thank him for his work on that.

The member spoke at the end of his speech about a united front. I know that he was not referring to the United Front. Maybe we need a united front to counter the United Front.

As well, I agree with his point about the fact that, as a state party to the genocide convention, we have obligations. Those obligations are not dependent on a determination by the UN, and they are not dependent on its being definitively a genocide. Those obligations are engaged when there is a possibility of genocide. We heard this testimony very clearly from Irwin Cotler during the initial hearings that led to the recommendation by the subcommittee on human rights of the finding of genocide.

The member's motion speaks of 10,000 over two years starting in 2024. He is giving the government time, and I appreciate the member's principle and pragmatism in trying to push these things forward. Is the member hoping that the government will exceed that timeline if the motion is adopted? I wonder if the member could speak to the imminent danger certainly that many people are in right now.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for that important observation, that Uighur people are right now suffering a genocide and that we need to act as soon as possible to help people. The sad reality is that we cannot go into China to stop it. We need to continue to work with the international community and call for unfettered access, because it is only with unfettered access that this will stop. We know it is occurring. The satellite images show it. The China papers have revealed the intent. We see the birth rates dropping. To the member's correct observa-

Routine Proceedings

tion, it is happening right now. We must act immediately and without delay. My motion brings things forth to the earliest possible time, so that we can get this done effectively and in a fulsome manner.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for persevering through that speech. I hope he gets a lozenge by Wednesday, so he can be in better shape as we all discuss his motion, which of course I will be supporting. I am incredibly honoured to be able to work with the member as he brings this motion forward.

I bring some legitimate concerns that the governing party is not acting on this and that it has taken a private member's motion to bring this forward rather than government legislation, which we know could also be done. I wonder why the member thinks that so long into this, after we have done the work, and I did this work with the member at the international human rights subcommittee, it is still on a private member's motion that we are acting.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Mr. Speaker, lawyers say we cannot put ourselves in the mind of somebody else, so I cannot put myself in the mind of anyone else; I can just control what I do. I had a slot in the lottery that allowed me to put forth any piece of legislation or motion, and of all the things I am working on, I chose this one issue, because I knew that through this I could have a positive impact, that we could have a positive impact. At the end of the day, it is all of us who must move together.

Personally, this slot was utilized in order to have the most positive impact within my ability, and that is exactly what I have done. I am asking everyone here to hold my hand and make it possible. I know that it is going to happen. I believe it is going to happen, and I expect it to happen.

• (2040)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member across the way for his work on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights and for his work in passing the report through this place, calling for the government to recognize the genocide that is happening there.

I note that this member is very active on it, but my question for him is this. If we continue to wait for the government to take action on it, when does he think the government will be taking action on this declaration of Uighur genocide?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi: Mr. Speaker, as politicians we know that everything is movable and nothing is determined in advance. That is why I make the clear call for us to unite together in order to make the possible happen. Thus, I will keep it very simple and to that single point. That is my firm opinion. If we ask for it and call for it, it is possible, so let us make it happen.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to speak to this motion today.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Peace River—Westlock.

Routine Proceedings

I am proud to speak to this motion on behalf of my constituents in Saskatoon West. It is a very important motion and I want to note that the motion came from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, of which I am a proud member and have been since this Parliament resumed a little over a year ago.

I am also proud to say that last week I was elected by my colleagues as the vice-chair on the committee, which is new for me. Along with my work as the associate shadow minister for immigration, it is a very important role and I am thankful for the faith that the leader of my party and my constituents have put in me for that. My goal is to work with MPs from all parties to better our immigration system. This does not have to be a partisan issue, so I have some key priorities as I work with the immigration committee and immigration in general.

We need to hold the government to account when it makes errors that affect people. We all need to work together to improve the system and fix the problems. There are so many examples I see in my work of people who are stranded from their families. These are true life-and-death situations for them. We, as MPs, have to remember that the people we work with are not files but people and families with real issues. We need to always keep that in mind.

I am also very excited to work on the student direct stream. That is important for us. We know the IRCC is broken when it comes to backlogs. MP offices are inundated with immigration cases every day. I am sure everyone is in the same boat. That is also very important to me.

Finally, foreign credential recognition is a huge issue for me. That is why I put forward my private member's bill, Bill C-286, to help improve that situation and work with the government to try to make that situation better so that new immigrants coming to our country can work in the jobs in which they are trained, rather than having the classic "doctor driving a taxicab" situation. That is very important.

About 20 months ago, the House adopted a different motion, declaring that China's treatment of Uighurs and Turkic minorities constitutes a genocide. This was a Conservative motion and it was unanimously agreed to by the House, but it is disappointing that the Liberal cabinet did not vote for it. In fact, it abstained. It has had no position on this. It is unfortunate because, as has been discussed tonight, this is a very important issue through which we can make a difference in people's lives in a huge way. I would encourage the Liberal cabinet to take a position and take some action on this.

The other interesting thing that happened just recently was that the United Nations officially recognized that horrific crimes are occurring in the Xinjiang province of China against the Uighur people. This is a very significant move. For the United Nations to recognize and mention this is very significant and will definitely raise the profile of this and allow for more work to be done.

In the report that the UN submitted in August, it said "serious human rights violations" have been happening, things like beatings, solitary confinement, waterboarding, forced sterilization and the destruction of mosques in communities. These are all terrible things for a government to be doing against its people. The report stopped short of using the word "genocide", but it did say that reports of all

of the things I just mentioned were credible reports and are real. China, of course, reacted very angrily to this and fought very hard to prevent the United Nations from actually publishing this report. However, in the end, it was published.

I want to also stress that, as I speak somewhat negatively about the Chinese Communist Party, it is so important to remember that I am not speaking negatively about Chinese people. There is a big difference between the Chinese people and the party that is running their country as a dictatorship. The issues that I am reacting to are with the Chinese Communist Party and not with the people of China. I have many good friends from China and many others that I have met. They are wonderful people. It is their government that I struggle with.

The Chinese government claims many things about the Uighurs. For example, when the world, the United Nations and others, see something that looks a lot like concentration camps, it says, no, they are just re-education camps. It has some very nice names for the atrocities that it is committing against the people. We can see through that. We know that is just not true.

• (2045)

We have to be very careful about the Chinese Communist Party. Members may be aware that on the weekend it had its congress, which it has once every five years. One thing I found particularly interesting was that former president Hu was forcibly removed, as a show of strength by the current president, Xi. We can see video of that, of his literally being picked up and taken away during the meeting as a way for the current president to show his power and strength. It is quite an amazing thing that has been heavily censored in China. The government does not want Chinese people to know about that, but it is quite interesting.

That is why I am concerned about our Prime Minister. He said he has admiration for China's basic dictatorship. I know that is not what we want in this place, and I am sure he has changed his position, or at least I hope he has.

I am concerned, though. We know there are Chinese police stations in Toronto now. We do not know exactly what they are doing, but I think we can probably safely assume they are harassing expats, among other things. I am hoping we can learn from this and maybe eliminate some of these things, like these police stations in Toronto.

I am hoping, also, to pass another motion at the immigration committee related to Hong Kong. We know there are special measures in place right now, but they expire in February. I am hoping we can not only extend those measures but waive the requirement for police certificates. It is quite silly, I think, that a Hong Kong resident who wants to come to Canada has to get a police certificate, which essentially means walking into a government office and saying, "Hi, I want to leave the country and go to Canada," and then expecting to get good treatment. It is just not reasonable, and many Hong Kongers are not even trying to come to Canada because of that.

I want to look at the motion itself. Part of the reason for this motion, I think, as I indicated, is that we talked about this 20 months ago and nothing much has happened. Part of the purpose here is just to remind the government, again, of how important this issue is, to put it on the radar and make sure the government is aware of it. I think that is one of the really important reasons for bringing this motion forward today.

Another point I want to make is that in section a) it talks about some of the things we can do. It talks about special immigration measures for Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims.

The government might say that these people are totally free to claim asylum, and that is true, but we have a very congested system in Canada. As I mentioned already, it is backlogged. There are a lot of things going on. We have the ability to create special immigration measures, and we have done this, in fact. We did this for Syrians. We have done it for Afghans, and we have most recently done it in Ukraine, for Ukrainian people.

It is something we can definitely do, and it actually helps, because it creates a special program that gets them priority and gets them special treatment. Otherwise, it is very difficult for people who are fleeing something that is very significant for them.

The other thing I want to mention is that point c) talks about waiving the UNHCR refugee determination. That is an important thing, because right now the UNHCR is able to determine who is and who is not a refugee. It is an administrative process, but it is super important, because if one is designated as a refugee, it gives one access to a whole lot of different programs that one may not otherwise have been able to access. If one is not a refugee, then one is excluded from all those things.

We have heard a lot of testimony at our committee about this very issue, about how bias gets introduced into the system and the method for selecting who is and who is not a refugee. One can have racism and other things that enter into it, because, obviously, people are making these determinations.

One of the things that have come up in that is the persecution of minority religions, particularly Christians. Former London chief rabbi, Lord Sacks, said in 2014, "The persecution of Christians throughout much of the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and elsewhere is one of the crimes against humanity of our time, and I am appalled at the lack of protest it has evoked."

This is a very important issue for me. I want to make sure that Christians who are persecuted all around the world have a safe

Routine Proceedings

haven in Canada, and that they are selected to be refugees by the UNHCR and other things.

It has been mentioned that this is a genocide. I was in Rwanda in April of this year, and I have been there a number of times. I had the privilege, a very holy privilege, to see what has happened in Rwanda and the aftermath of the genocide that happened there. Many of the same things that were mentioned here happened there. We all know the story of Rwanda.

Fortunately, Rwanda has managed to come out of that, but the genocide against the Tutsis was very significant. We said, "Never again," and I just hope we can also say, "Never again," about the Uighurs.

● (2050)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I do worry about genocides happening around the world in many different locations, including in Xinjiang with the Uighur people. There is a need for us to say, and mean, "never again".

We were able to vote on the motion to declare the Uighur genocide years ago. The Subcommittee on International Human Rights declared it a genocide years ago, yet the government has still taken very little action to both condemn and stop the genocide, as well as to help the Uighur people come to Canada to escape persecution.

Can he talk about why it has taken so long?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, we cannot really control what the rest of the world does with this. We can designate this situation to be a genocide here in Canada. We can take those actions.

More importantly, actions we can take that are significant are, for example, blocking products that are made with Uighur forced labour. That is something we can do in Canada. Just last month the European Union banned exactly that. It banned products made with Uighur forced labour. That is an example of something within our control to do, and we can do it.

We can also halt complicity in organ harvesting. This is a very significant thing where organs are actually being harvested from people, such as Uighurs in China, and are being sold all around the world. This is a horrific thing that should not be happening.

There is a bill right now, Bill S-223, that is at the foreign affairs committee. That is another very important piece of legislation. It is something we can do to take action on this important file.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for sharing the wisdom he gained from his experiences in Rwanda with the House this evening.

Could he elaborate further on similarities between what happened in Rwanda and what is happening with the Uighurs in China right now? Could he look back at what happened there and possibly suggest some solutions?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, it is a shame when we see situations repeat themselves. We all know the story of Rwanda and how Canada played a very important roll in that situation.

The things that the government, or the rebels in that case, did to the Tutsi people were horrific, and many of the same things are happening right now to the Uighur people in the Xinjiang province of China.

One of the big errors we made in Rwanda was that the world did not recognize it and act quick enough. I believe that, unfortunately, a very similar thing is happening right now. That is why the motion today is very important. It is very important for the government to take some action and make some concrete steps to help everybody in the world recognize what is going on and do something to stop it.

• (2055)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, several petitions were presented on combatting forced organ harvesting around the world.

Does the hon. member have any thoughts or opinions about the passage of Bill S-223 through the House?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, it is a very important bill. It is currently at the foreign affairs committee, and it really needs to move through the House and become fully adopted. It is one of those bills that is a no-brainer. We should not be allowing people to harvest organs and then get paid to have those organs used. It is one more way that the Uighur people are being violated and taken advantage of.

It is not just Uighurs, unfortunately. It is other people around the world too. This bill is very important because it will stop that practice, at least in Canada, for whoever might be affected by it.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to this motion.

Way back in the day, in 2015, just after I was elected, I was invited to a Christian embassy Christmas dinner and was seated at a table with a gentleman named David Kilgour. David Kilgour was a former member of Parliament when I met him, and he had represented a riding in Alberta. Interestingly, he had been a member of the Conservative caucus and a member of the Liberal caucus and he had sat as an independent, so he had seen the House of Commons from all sides.

We got into a heated debate at that Christmas dinner on issues I did not agree with him over, but I guess the fact I was willing to argue with him made us immediate friends. From that point onward until his death just recently, I had probably seen David Kilgour on a monthly basis in and around Parliament Hill.

David Kilgour was a human rights lawyer and former member of Parliament, and he was the one who really opened my eyes to the situation of the Uighur population in China and the forced organ harvesting that happens in China. Forced organ harvesting is something that, just on the face of it, sounds terrible, yet David Kilgour went through the effort of building reports to prove the Chinese Communist Party and government officials are complicit in this. They are actively participating in it and have created entire systems to facilitate forced organ harvesting in China.

I commend the work of David Kilgour. It is really too bad he is no longer with us. He died suddenly just a couple of months ago. He made the calculations around the number of foreigners coming into China for organ harvesting. He was tipped off originally and started to monitor that, and it was dramatically more people than was possible given the natural occurrence of accidents, overdoses and things like that from which one usually harvests organs. He said that, given the size of the population of China and the expected number of organs that would be available for donation, one would expect a certain amount of people to be able to get a donor, given there has to be an alignment of the ability to donate from one person to the other. It was an order of magnitude of 10 times more people going to China for organ harvesting than he calculated to be possible.

Then he received a phone call from an Israeli doctor who said that the darndest thing had just happened to him. He said that he had just been able to book an organ transplant. He said that never in his life had he been able to book an organ transplant. Typically, one waits on a waiting list for a donor and a match. One waits and waits, because this is a life-and-death situation for the person receiving an organ. Lo and behold, when one comes available it is like winning the lottery. The person travels across the world to find their specific donor who happens to be a match, and on a moment's notice a person needs to drop everything and go to get this organ donation.

The doctor said it was the weirdest thing. He said he now could book two weeks out from today and had scheduled an organ transplant, and that something was odd about it. He knew Mr. Kilgour was investigating this already, so that was kind of the first tipoff. I think that was probably almost 20 years ago now that Mr. Kilgour received that phone call.

As Mr. Kilgour was investigating these things, it came to light that, yes indeed, there was a systematic process of organ harvesting happening in China, but the Chinese government said it was using folks who were on death row, hardened criminals who were being executed. It said it was using organs from those people. It said it was using it from accidents, from other tragedies and also from criminals who were being executed. I think we would all have our foibles about that a little bit.

• (2100)

The other interesting thing is that the Chinese have an extensive network of political dissidents who are imprisoned. We were considering whether the Chinese are using political prisoners as organ donors. Mr. Kilgour made the case that this is in fact happening.

Mr. Kilgour then showed us a lot of footage from the particular regions of China where most of the organ harvesting is happening. It happens to be not in Shanghai, not in the centre of China, but out in the more mountainous regions, in more remote communities. This is for a couple of reasons. Typically the air quality is better, so lungs and organs are in better shape because of that. Also, the people are less educated and are less aware of what is going on.

Routine Proceedings

He showed that these marginal populations in Canada were being targeted for organ harvesting. The Uighurs have been a victim of this, there is no doubt. It gets crazier, so I cannot say that is the craziest part, but if one lands in particular airports in China, they have signs in English saying “This is the organ donor expressway.”

They have yellow markings on the floor and yellow signs saying that those who are there for an organ donation are to follow the signs. There is an entire system set up from the moment people land at the airport, so they do not get lost, and so they can rush, as people are typically in a hurry in these are life-and-death situations. There is an entire system of signage, shuttle buses and specialized elevators, with yellow signage and yellow arrows on the floor to tell people who are there for an organ to follow the signs and they will get where they need to go. That is organized.

Then there needs to be a supply of organs. Mr. Kilgour showed us complete remote villages of people all getting blood tests, and nobody seemed to know what they were getting them for, but they were getting a blood test. Everybody had to show up at the school to get their blood test, and then everybody went home again. Later on, people would randomly go missing. Mr. Kilgour was making the case that this was part of that organ harvesting that is happening in certain populations in China.

This is the greatest connection to the Uyghur population. The Uyghur population are of the Muslim faith, and what is interesting about that is that, particularly when it comes to the organ harvesting, there is a demand for organs that come from a Muslim person. China seems to be using the Uyghur population to fill that demand.

This is another thing that Mr. Kilgour pointed out to us. Between the forced organ harvesting happening in China, the particular community of the Uyghur population being targeted for this, and the amount of effort the Chinese Communist Party has gone through to make the Uyghur people pariahs in their communities, so they are reported by their fellow countrymen and not associated with, make it so they are not missed when they are taken. It makes it so they are seen as lesser than human and generally reported to the government.

Interestingly, this happens to the Uyghur people and it also happens to the Falun Gong. Again, Falun Gong is a unique religion, but they also have a very healthy lifestyle and are excellent organ donors. It just seems interesting that the Chinese government would turn the Falun Gong into social pariahs, people their neighbours would turn in for what seems to me to be a steady, healthy supply of organs.

That is the story that I have been told by Mr. Kilgour. I will be forever indebted to him and the work that he has done.

• (2105)

I also want to recognize Francis Yell, who took many trips with Mr. Kilgour to China to investigate a lot of these things. A lot of times, Mr. Kilgour did this at great personal cost, so I want to recognize his legacy. I also want to recognize this motion as being great work by my colleague.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the importance of not recogniz-

ing lesser humans. He spoke of lesser humans, how there is this hierarchy and how dangerous that is.

One of the concerns I have, as I have mentioned in this place, is that we pick and choose which human rights to protect. Children are, of course, innocent regardless of the circumstances they find themselves in.

I wonder if my colleague is supportive of the notion that children need to be protected regardless. Would he stand with the NDP in calling for a special envoy for children in Palestine who are the victims of violence in Palestine?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the basic idea of human rights. What are human rights? Do all human beings get human rights? Those are my questions. For me, human rights come to us because we are created in the image of God. Therefore, all of humanity is equal and worthy of dignity and respect.

Particularly when it comes to children, that is definitely the case. Regardless, innocent human life should not be taken. I do not know much about the specific thing the member is referencing, but those are my views on human life and human rights, and I defend human life and human rights wherever I can.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really did appreciate learning more about organ harvesting and all of the terrible, tragic things that are happening there.

I want to ask the member a different question, though. One of the other related topics is the idea of Lululemon, Target and Walmart all having products that potentially come from the forced labour of Uyghur people in China. Uyghur people are removed from their families and villages and taken to cities where they are put to work in factories, and then the state benefits from their labour. I am just wondering whether the member has comments and thoughts about that.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Oh boy, do I ever, Mr. Speaker. I think I would need a whole other speech just to address that.

What I would point out is that there is currently a bill in front of the foreign affairs committee, Bill S-211, that deals with supply chain reporting. It deals with big companies that operate in the west or in Canada. In particular, they would have to do a report on the impacts of their companies on human trafficking and forced labour. That is for sure a bill I would like to get passed.

The other thing is what the Americans are doing. They are identifying the province of Xinjiang as a place where forced labour is a problem, so for any products that are coming out of that area, there is a reverse onus and companies must prove that forced labour is not being used in their products. That is another initiative that I could get behind, and I look forward to the government moving on that.

Routine Proceedings

• (2110)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Peace River—Westlock for the work he does on human trafficking. He did not talk a lot about how perhaps the Uighurs have been subjected to that. He talked a lot about organ harvesting, and we know about that through the work of David Kilgour. We know it is happening and how atrocious it is.

I wonder if the member could expand a bit on any elements of human trafficking that there may be with the Uighurs in China.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for highlighting the work I do in combatting human trafficking both here in Canada and around the world.

Human trafficking for the Uighur population mostly looks like forced labour. It is a big challenge for Canada to identify who is being trafficked and forced into labour in some instances. In some places, it is not at all.

In some instances, people who have worked for a company for 20 years got their job all on their own and they are of the Uighur ethnicity or religion but have moved into the city and now work there. Sometimes we struggle or grapple with how to identify a person who took that job on their own and another person who has been trafficked into it, but it is definitely the case that it happens.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will start my brief remarks by saying that I thought, at least at the onset of this debate, that there would be a great show of unity about an issue that strikes at the very core of who we are as Canadians, which means to stand up for those who are being persecuted. However, I was very disappointed, specifically by some members of the government who did not use this opportunity to make a stand of unity but instead tried to score cheap political points.

We are debating today an important issue. It is something that many Canadians are probably unaware of but have probably seen the impacts of, whether that be forced labour, human trafficking, forced organ donations or the whole host of actions that have led this place and many around the world to state very clearly that there is a genocide taking place against the Uighur and Turkic Muslim people in China.

It is especially important that we have this debate today, because we come to this debate after the Chinese Communist Party closed its five-year annual convention, where the current leadership of the

People's Republic of China and the Communist Party, that one-party dictatorship, has, with a heavy hand, shut down discourse, which has led to, in this case, systematic persecution against a minority population that needs Canada's support and needs the world's support.

In the very short amount of time that I have, I would simply say that it behooves us all to ensure that we stand up for those who are being persecuted, that we stand up for human rights and that we take the actions that are outlined in this motion and with the vote that will be coming, I believe, on Wednesday, to ensure that this Parliament makes a clear statement to say that we stand for religious freedom and we stand for the rights of minorities, and to ensure that Canada's Parliament, the voice of the people in our nation, stand with the Uighur people who have faced systematic persecution.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak, and I look forward to a strong show of support in Canada's Parliament.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 9:14 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

• (2115)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, October 25, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 9:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9:15 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, October 24, 2022

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Reuniting Families Act

Bill C-242. Third reading	8717
Ms. Gaudreau	8717
Ms. Zarrillo	8718
Mr. Kmiec	8718
Ms. Koutrakis	8718
Mr. Beaulieu	8721
Mr. Seeback	8722
Division on motion deferred	8723

Sitting Suspended

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:48 a.m.) ..	8723
---	------

Sitting Resumed

(The House resumed at 12:03 p.m.)	8723
---	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Committees of the House

Mr. Lamoureux	8723
Motion	8723
(Motion agreed to)	8724

Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act

Bill S-5. Second reading	8724
Mr. Patzer	8724
Mr. Gerretsen	8725
Mr. Beaulieu	8726
Mr. Desjarlais	8726
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	8726
Mr. Carrie	8727
Mr. Angus	8727
Mr. Gerretsen	8728
Mr. Lamoureux	8729
Mr. Viersen	8729
Mr. Desjarlais	8729
Mr. Duguid	8731
Mr. Doherty	8731
Ms. Gaudreau	8731
Ms. Michaud	8732
Mr. Carrie	8735
Mr. Boulerville	8735
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	8735
Ms. Chagger	8736
Ms. Gaudreau	8736
Mr. Seeback	8736
Ms. Chagger	8739
Mr. Albas	8739
Mr. Long	8740
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	8740
Mr. Kmiec	8741
Mr. Doherty	8741

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas

Mr. Ali	8741
---------------	------

Tourism Industry

Mr. Baldinelli	8742
----------------------	------

Port Saint John

Mr. Long	8742
----------------	------

Guy-Bélisle Library

Mr. Desilets	8742
--------------------	------

The Economy

Mrs. Chatel	8742
-------------------	------

Carbon Tax

Mr. Arnold	8743
------------------	------

Soccer

Mr. Casey	8743
-----------------	------

Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre

Ms. Dabrusin	8743
--------------------	------

Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas

Mr. Hallan	8743
------------------	------

Mahsa Amini

Mr. van Koeverden	8743
-------------------------	------

Farm Families

Mr. Barlow	8744
------------------	------

The Economy

Mr. Chambers	8744
--------------------	------

National Federation of French-language School Boards

Mr. Samson	8744
------------------	------

The Environment

Ms. Idlout	8744
------------------	------

Lise Faucher

Ms. Larouche	8745
--------------------	------

Carbon Tax

Mr. Small	8745
-----------------	------

London and District Business Hall of Fame Inductees

Mr. Fragiskatos	8745
-----------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Taxation

Ms. Lantsman	8745
--------------------	------

Mr. Boissonnault	8745
------------------------	------

Ms. Lantsman	8746
--------------------	------

Mr. Boissonnault	8746
------------------------	------

Ms. Lantsman	8746
--------------------	------

Department of Public Works and Government Services Act

Ms. Mathyssen	8757
Bill C-300. Introduction and first reading	8757
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	8757

Committees of the House**Citizenship and Immigration**

Mr. Genuis	8757
Motion for concurrence	8757
Mr. Lamoureux	8760
Mr. Carrie	8760
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	8761
Mr. Viersen	8761

Petitions**Human Organ Trafficking**

Mr. Carrie	8762
------------------	------

Falun Gong

Ms. Sgro	8762
----------------	------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Zimmer	8762
Mr. Généreux	8762
Mr. Lamoureux	8762
Mr. Aboultaif	8762
Mr. Morrison	8763
Mr. Deltell	8763
Mr. Maguire	8763
Mr. Viersen	8763

Charitable Organizations

Mr. Viersen	8763
-------------------	------

Forced Labour and Child Labour

Mr. Viersen	8763
-------------------	------

COVID-19 Mandates

Mr. Viersen	8763
-------------------	------

Age Verification Software

Mr. Viersen	8763
-------------------	------

Northern Residents Tax Deduction

Mr. Viersen	8763
-------------------	------

Opioids

Mr. Johns	8763
-----------------	------

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Genuis	8764
------------------	------

Charitable Organizations

Mr. Genuis	8764
------------------	------

Afghanistan

Mr. Genuis	8764
------------------	------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis	8764
------------------	------

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux	8764
---------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act**

Bill S-5. Second reading	8765
Mr. Doherty	8765
Mr. Longfield	8767
Mr. Lemire	8767
Ms. Blaney	8767
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	8767
Mr. Gerretsen	8768
Mr. Lemire	8768
Mrs. Shanahan	8769
Mr. Deltell	8770
Mr. Johns	8770
Mr. Desilets	8770
Mrs. Shanahan	8771
Mr. Johns	8771
Mr. Lemire	8772
Mr. Deltell	8772
Mr. Longfield	8775
Mr. Simard	8775
Mr. Garrison	8775
Mr. Carrie	8776
Mr. Lamoureux	8776
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	8776
Mr. Gerretsen	8778
Mr. Carrie	8778
Mr. Morrice	8778
Ms. Blaney	8779
Mr. Gerretsen	8780
Mr. Albas	8781
Mr. Lemire	8781
Ms. Taylor Roy	8781
Mr. Garrison	8782
Mr. Kitchen	8782
Mr. Morrice	8783
Mr. Fisher	8783
Mr. Kitchen	8783
Mr. Gerretsen	8785
Mrs. Vignola	8785
Mr. Johns	8785
Mr. Kurek	8786

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**Committees of the House****Citizenship and Immigration**

Motion for concurrence	8786
Mr. Lamoureux	8787
Mr. Genuis	8788
Mrs. Vignola	8789
Ms. McPherson	8789
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	8790
Mr. Longfield	8790
Mr. Simard	8790
Ms. McPherson	8793

Mr. Genuis	8793	Ms. McPherson	8801
Ms. Larouche	8793	Mr. Viersen	8801
Ms. McPherson	8794	Mr. Redekopp	8801
Mr. Virani	8796	Ms. McPherson	8803
Mr. Genuis	8796	Mr. Falk (Provencher)	8803
Mrs. Vignola	8797	Mr. Viersen	8804
Ms. Blaney	8797	Mr. Viersen	8804
Mr. Virani	8798	Ms. McPherson	8805
Mr. Genuis	8799	Mr. Redekopp	8805
Ms. McPherson	8799	Mr. Falk (Provencher)	8806
Mr. Zuberi	8800	Mr. Kurek	8806
Mr. Genuis	8801	Division on motion deferred	8806

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>