



HOUSE OF COMMONS
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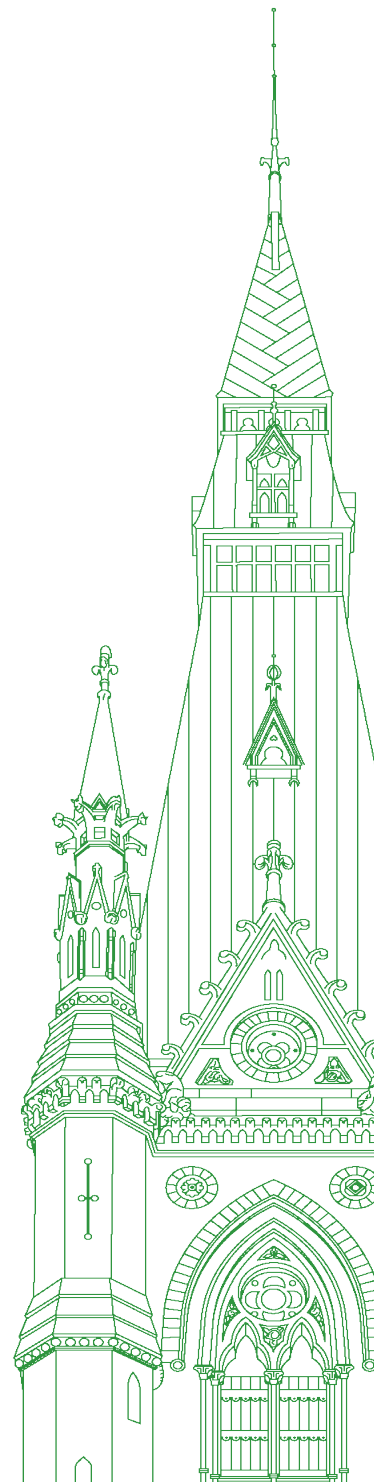
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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 28, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved that Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am happy and proud to rise in the House this morning to begin debate on a bill from the other place, Bill S-222. This is a small but mighty bill that would create beautiful, safe federal buildings, support our forestry sector during difficult times, spur innovation in the cement and steel industries and help us reach our climate targets.

What would this bill do? It simply states that when building federal infrastructure, the Minister of Public Works “shall consider any potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and any other environmental benefits and may allow the use of wood or any other thing — including a material, product or sustainable resource — that achieves such benefits.”

I mentioned the bill came from the Senate, but, in fact, this bill started its life in the House of Commons, first as a Bloc bill more than a decade ago. I took up the bill in the 42nd Parliament where, as Bill C-354, it passed in the House of Commons, but died in the Senate when that Parliament ended.

I would like to take a moment to thank my friend, Senator Diane Griffin. Senator Griffin guided the bill through the Senate in 2018 and 2019 and when the bill stalled there, through no fault of her own, she reintroduced the bill in the 43rd Parliament. As many here remember, that Parliament ended prematurely due to an election, so Senator Griffin introduced it once again last year in this Parliament. It is through her persistence that we are seeing it again.

Senator Griffin retired last spring, so she passed the torch to Senator Jim Quinn, who saw it through its passage in the Senate earlier this fall.

The initial form of the bill over a decade ago was a direct ask of the minister to consider wood in the construction of federal infrastructure. It was modelled on the Charte du bois in Quebec and the wood-first bill in British Columbia. It was designed then to ensure that the federal government actually considered wood when building large infrastructure. Until recently, the construction industry had been totally geared to cement and steel when doing that.

My version of the bill was amended in committee to remove the overt preference for wood and replace that with preference for materials that had environmental benefits, in particular regarding the greenhouse gas footprints of the building materials. This amendment allayed a couple of concerns around the trade implications of potentially favouring one sector over another and also recognized the emerging work on making concrete and steel more environmentally friendly. I will speak more on that later.

I was initially inspired to take up this bill in 2016 because of a company in my riding, in my home town of Penticton. That company is Structurlam, and it has been at the leading edge of mass timber engineered wood construction in North America.

While Structurlam leads that sector, it still faces some of the hurdles that confront all innovative companies. It needs help to scale-up its production, and the easiest way for a government to help a company in that situation is to provide business through government procurement. That is one of the core benefits of this bill. It would help Canadian companies scale-up to maintain our dominant position in the engineered wood sector in North America.

Forest products, with their sequestered carbon, are obvious candidates for decisions under this policy. If we can use more wood in government infrastructure and grow the mass timber market in Canada, it will obviously benefit the forest sector overall.

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These are benefits to a forest industry beset by challenges on all sides. Beetle infestations, catastrophic wildfires and a long history of harvests have all reduced access to fibre. To top it off, the softwood lumber dispute has brought illegal tariffs from our biggest trading partner, the United States.

Reduced fibre access means we have to get more jobs and more money for every log we cut, and that is what mass timber provides.

To make glulam beams or cross-laminated timber panels, mass timber plants use lumber sourced from local mills. That gives those mills a new domestic market for their products and it reduces their reliance on the United States. On top of that, we can sell those mass timber products to the United States tariff-free, so it is a win-win.

Just to reiterate, the bill and a rejuvenated domestic market for lumber would not mean increased forest harvest, as that is limited by other factors, but it will mean getting more value added out of the trees we do cut. There are benefits to using mass timber, benefits for the construction industry and benefits for the users of that infrastructure.

• (1105)

First, I will mention the construction process itself. Engineered wood is produced indoors in plant facilities. The building can be literally constructed indoors with no weather delays or complications, while the site is being prepared for construction. Then the building components can be put together quickly and delivered to the site exactly when needed.

Brock Commons, an 18-storey residence complex at the University of British Columbia, the tallest wood building in the world, was built in 57 days, two storeys per week. It is now home to over 400 UBC students. Because the component parts are built indoors, they can be constructed to very fine tolerances, within millimetres, and that means a lot when one is constructing the buildings of the future that will have to be built to passive energy specifications.

The buildings constructed in this way are beautiful. The exposed wood components are like furniture. Structurlam has an entire finishing plant devoted to smoothing and treating every exposed beam and wall panel as if it were a piece of massive furniture.

It is not surprising many of the early examples of mass timber construction were civic buildings meant to look good as well as be functional, buildings such as the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, the Olympic speed skating oval in Richmond, B.C. and the Rocky Ridge recreation centre in Calgary. The Rocky Ridge facility has over 2,000 glulam beams forming its huge roof, and no two are the same.

I would like to also mention that Canada leads the way in engineered wood construction in North America. Structurlam has projects all across the continent and has recently opened up a branch plant in Arkansas. Nordic Structures in Chibougamau, Quebec was another pioneer of this technology.

Another major mass timber plant has recently opened in my riding just outside Castlegar. It was opened up by Kalesnikoff Lumber. I would like to give a shout-out to Ken Kalesnikoff and his son Chris and daughter Krystle for making this major investment that

will pay off for the future of the West Kootenay and the forest sector in British Columbia.

One issue that often comes up when talking about tall wood buildings is fire safety. I hear from firefighters who just simply do not like the concept of wood buildings of any size. We heard testimony of that nature in both House of Commons and Senate committees. However, I need to reiterate that large infrastructure projects under this legislation would be constructed with mass timber. Firefighters I talked to are concerned about buildings constructed with traditional wood frame construction such as two-by-fours and two-by-sixes.

Mass timber is another thing entirely. When we have glulam beams a metre thick or cross laminated timber panels nine inches thick, those materials react to open flame in a completely different way. They simply slowly char instead of bursting into flame. Think of trying to light a log on fire with a match.

The National Research Council has conducted fire safety trials with mass timber and has found it is just as safe, or safer, than traditional concrete or steel construction.

More detailed studies are under way, including those at the University of British Columbia with Felix Wiesner. Dr. Wiesner has found, perhaps not surprisingly, that thicker components, say panels made with five layers of lumber versus those made with three layers, burn more slowly and that the type of adhesive that binds those layers also has an impact.

Suffice it to say, large buildings made with mass timber provide both occupants and firefighters ample time to exit the building in case of a fire and, as I said earlier, are just as safe or safer than traditionally designed buildings.

I would be remiss if I did not mention some of the other materials that might compete successfully in the government's analysis of environmental benefit. We have been hearing a lot about green steel production, and there are new cement products that sequester carbon dioxide to reduce some of that material's carbon footprint.

When I first put forward this bill, I heard concerns from the cement industry that the direct mention of wood might be unfair to the cement sector, which has made impressive advances in sustainability over the past few years. Those concerns were largely met by the amendments that were made in the committee in the 42nd Parliament and carried through to this version of the bill. I just talked to the cement industry last week, and it is supportive. It pointed out it is working with the federal government to provide data for life-cycle analysis of greenhouse gas footprints of building materials.

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• (1110)

These analyses will be critical to the use of the legislation before us, as it will provide decision-makers with all the details they need. We will need similar full life-cycle data for steel and wood products, of course.

In recent conversations I have had with members of all parties around Bill S-222, I am heartened by the support I am hearing. Members of all parties know that this is the right way forward; that this bill will set us in the right direction when it comes to meeting our climate targets; that this bill will support the forest industry, a sector that has been beset with challenges from all sides in recent years; and that this bill will not discriminate against other building material sectors, such as cement and steel, that are working hard to innovate new solutions to make their products truly sustainable.

I hope that every member here will support Bill S-222 at second reading. I look forward to discussing it at committee to ensure that it will truly have the beneficial impacts that it promises. With this legislation in place, we can literally build a better Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I liked what my colleague had to say.

To begin, I want to say that I worked in the forestry sector and forestry industry for a decade. It is 2022 and, even back in the early 2000s, I was telling insurers in Laurentides—Labelle about the positives of carbon capture, its use and benefits in terms of fire reduction. Given that it is now 2022, it was high time this bill was introduced.

I see this as just the tip of the iceberg. My colleague who spoke before me mentioned that, in Quebec, this is already happening. The province is already in the process of adapting training programs to provide access to this basic information.

My question is this: Does my colleague agree that we can fight for the forestry industry to have its fair share once this bill is passed?

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is correct. We need to move forward.

She mentioned education. A lot of what the bill will promote will need the education of architects, engineers and construction workers across Canada to change their mindset about the construction of large buildings.

There is a wonderful program in Okanagan College, in my home town of Penticton, that is on sustainable building methods. We need that kind of program across the country so that not just governments but people building large facilities will think about wood when they make those decisions.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really do appreciate the member's insights as to the materials we are using when it comes to building. I know that constituents in the riding of Waterloo are really concerned about the way we are building, what we are building with and with the environment.

I would like to hear from the member on the benefits for the forestry sector. What are the added benefits of using wood when constructing or maintaining rural properties? I also appreciate the fact that he has consulted with firefighters and those who would recognize some of the challenges that come with that. I appreciate his efforts on this.

• (1115)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I mentioned some of the benefits. The main benefit for the forest sector would be increasing the domestic demand for wood products. Mass timber does exactly that. Mills all across the country are making two-by-fours and two-by-sixes. Mass timber plants use those pieces of lumber to make their own products. That would really boost the domestic demand for wood. We will get that value added. We will have plants creating jobs and value all across the country. That will benefit the forest industry and, at the same time, create beautiful buildings.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I note that this bill is an improvement on some of the earlier iterations that have come around and that it is not quite as prescriptive as others we have seen in the past.

I wonder if the member could comment on PSPC, as this bill creates a new piece for PSPC to consider. PSPC has been a broken department. It is broken under the government. I will say, though, that successive governments have allowed PSPC to become the disaster it is today.

Can he comment on any concerns about giving PSPC one more thing to bungle in its process of procuring buildings?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I have met with PSPC. There might have been concerns if this had been presented to it and it was completely unprepared. It is not. It has been preparing for this for the last few years. It has processes in place, like life-cycle analyses that are under way now with cement and steel, and will be under way later with wood products.

I am confident that this bill will not add to any other problems PSPC might or might not have. We are headed in the right direction.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay for his sponsorship of the bill, for his advocacy and for his hard work on this. I really appreciate it. I think he has done a yeoman's job on this file, including through his meetings with firefighters and others. I thank him. I think this is a very good bill, and I am pleased to speak about how we can make our government operations greener through smart investments in public infrastructure.

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The efforts of this government to be more sustainable in how it operates, what it buys and what it builds are more important than ever right now. After a summer of unprecedented heat waves, wildfires, floods and storm surges around the world and right here at home, it is well past time to seriously accelerate our action against greenhouse gas emissions.

This past March, the government introduced its 2030 emissions reduction plan. This plan is our path to meeting our target under the Paris Agreement to get to net-zero emissions by 2050. The plan maps out how we will reduce our emissions from 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030, with clear milestones. It is consistent with the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

In Canada, we must lead the way. Indeed, as the Prime Minister has said, “climate change is an existential threat. Building a cleaner, greener future will require a sustained and collaborative effort from all of us.” He has mandated his ministers to seek opportunities within their portfolio to “support our whole-of-government effort to reduce emissions, create clean jobs and address the climate-related challenges communities are already facing.”

As we work toward solutions to ease and mitigate the environmental damage, we are positioning ourselves to bring about real reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

[Translation]

Bill S-222 will encourage the government to use wood, a sustainable, renewable material, in the construction and renovation of federal buildings and infrastructure projects.

One department is particularly well positioned to help the government achieve its greening government strategy objectives. That department is Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC. As the government's primary procurement body and manager of its real property, the department can prioritize purchasing and using materials that reduce our carbon footprint.

Today I would like to talk to you about how PSPC can play a unique and important role in reducing our GHG emissions and how wood products are essential to achieving that.

I would like to start with a brief explanation of what PSPC does. First, the department is the government's central purchasing agency, responsible for about 24 billion dollars' worth of procurement activity annually on behalf of most government departments and agencies. Second, PSPC is also the property manager for a vast portfolio of buildings it owns or rents across the country. In addition to office buildings, that portfolio includes heritage properties, such as the parliamentary precinct, and numerous bridges, wharves and dams across the country.

These two sectors offer a significant opportunity to achieve greener outcomes, and advance the goals of sustainable development and a carbon neutral portfolio for Canada.

• (1120)

[English]

By prioritizing green procurement, PSPC can help protect the environment in several different ways. Beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions from government operations, green procurement will

also have the same effect on our supply chains. Moreover, it cuts down on the use of hazardous and toxic substances, pollution and plastic waste. It also supports the Canadian economy by creating new markets for innovative products and services. In this context, green procurement includes assessing the life cycles of goods that are purchased, and adopting clean technologies and green products and services.

The government's policy on green procurement also stipulates the criteria for sustainable goods and services to guide procurement operations. These criteria require potential suppliers to demonstrate that their products can reduce emissions, are sustainable or have other environmental benefits.

Given that it purchases nearly \$24 billion on behalf of the majority of departments and agencies, PSPC has substantial leverage to create markets for sustainable goods. This can act like a virtuous circle and inspire other manufacturers and businesses to up their game and offer greener alternatives to the greater consumer market, which will benefit all of us.

The greening government strategy also commits the government to maintaining a plan to reach net zero for its real property portfolio by 2050. That plan also has to show that its buildings and infrastructure are resilient to climate change and cost-effective. For example, PSPC is transforming the iconic Centre Block from one of the highest-emitting PSPC assets to a near net-zero carbon facility. It is also using low-carbon construction materials where possible in the new Parliament Welcome Centre. In addition, during the rehabilitation of West Block—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Jonquière on a point of order.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, there is a problem with the interpretation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will check on that.

The problem has been fixed.

The hon. parliamentary secretary may continue his speech.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[English]

In addition, during the rehabilitation of West Block and the Senate of Canada building, more than 90% of construction waste was diverted from landfills, and a number of environmentally innovative measures were incorporated to save energy and reduce water use. We are also committing that starting in 2030, 75% of new lease and lease renewal floor space will be in net-zero climate-resilient buildings.

To ensure we move forward with reducing the carbon footprint of governmental operations, all departments are subject to various legal instruments. Indeed, the greening government strategy flows from the Federal Sustainable Development Act.

With Bill S-222, we have an opportunity to encourage the use of wood by PSPC and, by extension, the whole of government to meet our climate change objectives. Indeed, wood represents a green approach to building and renovation. It is a renewable resource that is widely available across most of this country. The forest sector is a key source of economic prosperity for people and communities across the country, including many rural, remote and indigenous communities.

The benefits of wood in construction have been evident for hundreds of years. Many of the wood buildings that were constructed at the beginning of the 20th century are still standing and being used today. Moreover, newer wood waste products, such as mass timber, are less carbon-intensive than other materials and could be used more extensively in Canadian construction to remove the carbon emissions equivalent of taking 125,000 internal combustion engine cars off the road every year.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Promoting the use of wood in the construction of federal buildings would be meaningless if this country's forests were poorly managed. As it happens, Canada's forest laws are among the strictest in the world. They protect our forests and ensure that sustainable forest management practices are applied across the country.

This should reassure consumers and all Canadians that Canadian wood and forest products have been harvested under a robust system of sustainable forest management.

[English]

To conclude, I would like to go back to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development and draw attention to goal 9 of that agenda, which states that signatory countries are to “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.” This agenda commits Canada to “upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable” by 2030 and to increase “resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes”.

Time is of the essence. CO27 has just called on the world to take urgent action. Canada will need to accelerate its climate action, and Bill S-222 can enhance the role that greener government operations

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are already playing to meet our obligations to this country and around the world.

I want to thank the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for his work on this file.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak to Bill S-222. I want to recognize the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for introducing this bill.

Back in 1951, when my grandfather was 21 years old, he came across the ocean from the Netherlands with \$200 in his pockets, which was a lot of money back then. He bought a chainsaw and proceeded to make a fortune cutting down trees in northern British Columbia. That was a lifelong passion of his. He was very much an admirer of Canadian forests and Canadian trees.

Having bought a chainsaw, that was his means to earn a living here in Canada, and it was a good living. He noted that by 1956, he bought a brand new Chevrolet pickup for \$1,600, and that in one particular month he made \$2,200. He made more money in one month than it cost to buy a brand new pickup. In today's dollars, that is probably \$40,000 or \$50,000 in one month, which is incredible.

The forestry industry across Canada is one of the reasons Canada exists. There were many interests coming across the ocean early on, starting in about year 1,000. There was the fishing industry that came across the ocean, with people fishing off the Grand Banks, but also the lumber industry. When folks came from Europe to Canada for the first time, they noted the large trees, and for ship-building they used the trees here. One of the reasons that people came to Canada was to develop our forest industry and use the giant trees we have here to build things. That is definitely part of our heritage and part of the reason that Canada exists, and it is good to recognize that.

If members are ever in Calgary, they should check out the ATCO Commercial Centre. It is a big new building in the middle of Calgary. I had the opportunity to speak at an anti-human trafficking event that was hosted there just a couple of weeks ago, and I was impressed and blown away by the grandeur of the building and all of the beam work inside of it. I bet the ceiling is nearly 100 feet tall. It is as tall as the ceiling in here or maybe taller, and whereas here we see the beams are made out of steels, there they are made out of wood. It is an impressive structure and is really neat to see, and it is something we can enjoy as a Canadian society.

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I will get back to my grandfather coming across the ocean to become a logger in northern British Columbia. While this bill is very much supportive of the forestry industry and the lumber industry, the challenge we have today is that many people are fighting against the harvesting of our forests. Most of those in the forestry industry whom I deal with in my area have a 100-year plan on how they are going to harvest the trees. They harvest some trees in one area, move to another area and harvest some trees and then move to another area. Within 100 years, they anticipate harvesting about 70% of all trees on the landscape, but by the time they are done that, they can go back to where they started and start harvesting the trees all over again. In the area where I live, the average tree is probably 40 or 50 years old before the wind blows it over, it dies or a forest fire comes along and takes care of it, so a 100-year plan on harvesting the forest is a good idea.

• (1130)

There is a huge amount of value that lives in the forest, but there is an increasing number of voices in this country of people who want to shut down the forestry industry and want to shut down logging. For full disclosure, I have many family members who work in the forestry industry. My brother works in the forestry industry building roads and working on a processor. My brother-in-law is a heavy-duty mechanic who works on forestry equipment, so it is a big part of my family's life. Increasingly, they are frustrated with the inability of the government to get organized around managing and developing the industry.

This is a good bill, in that it recognizes the potential and the benefits of the forestry industry. Particularly, I would note that in British Columbia there is more and more difficulty in getting access to the wood fibre. In Alberta, it is not a great deal better. The rest of the country I am not as familiar with, so I cannot say. However, it is an increasing challenge all the time to get access to the wood fibre. While Bill S-222 would indicate we should be using wood to build buildings, if we are unable to harvest the trees in the forest in order to make the lumber, this bill would not necessarily go places.

We have to ensure that this is a country that can build things again, that can develop its natural resources and that lives up to the heritage it was given by the first peoples who developed our forestry industry. Wood has been used to build dwellings and buildings forever. There are wood structures around the world that are over 1,000 years old. It is a good building product, but we need to ensure that we can develop this resource across the country.

I would note that there are voices across this country that are working very hard to minimize and to stop the development of our forestry industry. Particularly, British Columbia is where I note this to be a challenge, and I hope we can see governments coming around to promoting this. I would note that the New Democrats have been a government in power in British Columbia for a long time, and were historically very much champions of development of the forestry industry. However, today it seems to be a challenge to develop the forestry industry.

We are seeing a reduction in allowable cuts. We are seeing a reduction in the land that is available for managing it. It is ironic, to some degree, that most of British Columbia is covered by forests. It is one of the areas where forestry is probably the most valuable re-

source they have. The northern half of Alberta is covered with forests, and forestry is a big deal up there as well, but I note that it is definitely something we have to be concerned about.

Interestingly, we have had a few discussions with folks around fire concerns and wood buildings. It is an interesting discussion to have regarding fire ratings. Let us think about it a little and get back to that ATCO building in Calgary. The same building could be built with steel girders.

Typically, steel girders are an I-beam configuration. What is really fascinating about a steel girder in an I-beam configuration versus a wooden glulam beam, which is made from multiple laminated pieces of wood, is that the wood actually has a much better fire rating.

This is interesting, because we think that fire would consume the wood. The wood is consumed in a fire, but it actually maintains its structural integrity for a very long time, even if it is burning. However, a steel beam, because of the two layers, will actually twist and buckle if one side of it is heated. We had a bridge in Edmonton that buckled just because of the heat of the sunshine, so it is interesting to think about some of these things.

I am looking forward to supporting this bill. I hope this country can get back to developing our natural resources and harvesting the trees.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak about Bill S222.

If we want to trace the origins of the discussions that led to an act that would benefit forest products, we need to go back to the proposals of the Bloc Québécois. As early as March 2010, Bill C-429, which dealt with something very similar and was sponsored by the member for Manicouagan at the time, was being studied. The same thing happened a few years later, in 2014. The member for my former riding, Jonquière-Alma, which is now called Jonquière, had also tabled a similar bill. What we realized then was that the House's interest in supporting the forestry sector was not very high.

I would remind the House that, at the time, in 2010, the NDP voted in favour of the bill. However, in 2014, they changed their stance a bit. Half of their caucus was against the bill because it might be detrimental to the steel beam industry. I say that because I feel that there has never been the appropriate balance of power to bring the interests of the forestry industry to the House. It is no coincidence that the province where the forestry industry is largest is Quebec. Unfortunately, here, the Conservatives, among others, have never voted in favour of such measures.

Bill S-222 certainly has potential, but there is no denying that it will need to be amended if it is referred to committee. The major difference in Bill S-222 is that it is devoid of any means of enforcement. The bill feels like wishful thinking: It simply hopes that more wood will be used. However, if we are to achieve this, there must be some means of enforcement. This is the case with the Quebec law.

In Quebec, the wood charter assumes that, for all buildings under six storeys, a wood solution must be considered. It is mandatory. Perhaps it is something that can be corrected in the bill. We may be able to do that work in committee, but it would be essential. The Bloc Québécois will support this bill, but I believe that it should go a little further and make consideration of wood for federal government infrastructure mandatory.

I will take this opportunity to address another aspect. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I find that the forestry sector tends to be overlooked when it comes to federal government support. I would like to demonstrate that. As I have repeated around 3,000 times in the House, Canada has an economy that is based on two major industries: the oil and gas sector and the automobile sector. Support for the forestry sector has consistently been anemic.

I will share some figures from a study that I commissioned along with every other member of the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc Québécois is a caucus that is focused on the issue of softwood lumber. I will share the figures from the nine key federal programs that help the forestry sector.

From 2017 to 2020, we can say that roughly \$317 million was redirected to the forestry sector. Keep in mind that 75% of the money that was distributed throughout Canada was in the form of guaranteed loans and 25% of that money was in the form of real subsidies. Earlier, the comparison was made with the oil and gas sector, but I think that is a bit of a stretch.

Quebec represents 22.5% of the federation, but the volume of Quebec's forestry sector represents a bit more than 30% of the sector Canada-wide. Canada pays Quebec \$71 million a year. If we apply that same calculation, that means that 75% of that amount is in the form of loans. Quebec is therefore paid \$53.5 million a year in the form of loans and \$17 billion is paid in the form of subsidies. My region of Quebec, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, provides more to the federal government than the entirety of the subsidies that are offered to Quebec's forestry sector. The \$71 million paid by the federal government to the forestry industry does not even represent 0.3% of the sector's \$20 billion in annual sales.

● (1140)

I checked and found that the federal government provides the least amount of support to these sectors. I see the disparity when I examine the fossil fuel sector. I say that because, on my initiative, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources is doing a comparative study of all the different natural resources sectors.

If I look at the fossil fuel sector, the cost of the Trans Mountain pipeline alone is \$21 billion. Then, there are the \$18 billion a year over 2020-22. Canada Economic Development, or CED, will be providing \$5.4 billion, which will be redirected only to the oil and gas sector. That does not include \$2.5 billion in the last budget for carbon capture strategies. As I am not meanspirited, I am not going to talk about everything to do with the cleanup of orphan wells and lines of credit that we have seen since 2019. I just want to say that it is appalling.

There really is a double standard. I do not see why this legislation would not pass. It would not cost the federal government very much to consider promoting the use of lumber in its contracts. It is

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simply a regulatory measure that does not necessarily involve funding.

We know that the federal government is allergic to supporting the forestry industry. If a small sawmill asks for help from CED, it will not get it. Instead, the sawmill will be immediately referred to Global Affairs Canada. No small sawmill in Quebec or Canada can get support from the economic arm of the federal government alone for fear of violating American softwood lumber laws. That is a big problem. It means that companies that do not even do business with the United States are not entitled to support from CED.

I want to quickly come back to what the Bloc Québécois has been doing to support the forestry industry. In September 2020, we presented a green recovery plan to get out of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the main focuses of this recovery plan is the development of natural resources, including the forestry sector.

In October 2020, on my initiative, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources was studying the renewal of the forestry sector. There were some very interesting proposals, one being that the federal government start using the concept of carbon footprint in its tenders.

Perhaps this could be worked into Bill S-222. It goes much further than just using wood in construction. If we go with the idea of a carbon footprint, then all derivatives from the bioeconomy—that is, products derived from the forest biomass—would qualify. Think of packaging products, for one. We can replace single-use plastics right now. It would provide a much broader scope for supporting the forestry sector, and we could reduce our carbon footprint.

Unfortunately, even though these recommendations were made in a committee study, the government never acted on them. In fact, last week we had people from the forestry sector come before us. They came to tell us that the time for committee studies has passed, and we must now take action. We are still waiting for that action.

In April 2021, the Bloc Québécois hosted a forum on forests and climate change. Participants included experts from academia and the forestry sector, producers and people involved in research and development. At the end of the forum, participants reached a unanimous conclusion. From an economic perspective, our best weapon in the battle against climate change is the forestry sector. Forests are carbon sinks. The more carbon we sequester by building with wood, the better our GHG performance.

I recently toured Chantiers Chibougamau with my party leader. I would actually encourage all members to go see what is happening at Chantiers Chibougamau. They are superstars. They use pulpwood, the little bits from treetops, to make glued-laminated I-joists of astounding size.

Private Members' Business

• (1145)

I see my time is up. I will be happy to vote in favour of this bill, but it needs improvement. I hope that, going forward, the government will pay closer attention when it comes to the forestry sector.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, like a lot of my colleagues in this place, I spend a lot of time in airports. Yesterday afternoon I had a chance to spend a few minutes in my home airport, the Smithers Regional Airport. I was sitting in the departure lounge watching the sun set behind Hudson Bay Mountain and looking around the room, marvelling at what a beautiful space the community has created there. I know there are not many airports one could describe as beautiful, but it is certainly one of them.

It has personal significance for me because, during my time in local government as the mayor of Smithers, we undertook a major renovation of the Smithers Regional Airport. It was a building dating back to the 1950s and was in much need of renovation and renewal. Part of that was a brand new departure lounge. In undertaking this major project, with help from the provincial and federal governments, we had a number of objectives. We obviously wanted to make it a functional, modern space, but we also wanted to use it as an opportunity to tackle our community's greenhouse gas emissions and take responsibility for our role in this huge challenge we face.

We did that in a number of ways. We installed a geoexchange system for heating and cooling the building, which takes energy out of the ground and does so mostly without the use of fossil fuels. The other area where we really tried to drive sustainability was the use of wood.

I know there has been a lot of discussion about some of the more technical aspects, but what I was struck by yesterday, sitting in this room looking at the beautiful glulam beams and expanses of cross-laminated timber, is just the beauty of wood as a building product. In addition to all its other benefits, it is truly a spectacular product to be building with. This is important not only because the forest industry is a big part of our economy and always has been in British Columbia, but also, in the context of this bill, because wood is a lower-carbon building material than many other options.

I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill S-222. I believe this bill originally was intended to promote the use of wood in the construction of public infrastructure in Canada. I want to take a moment to recognize Senator Griffin, the bill's sponsor in the other place, but mostly my colleague, the brilliant MP for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, who has been a tireless champion for the role wood can play in addressing climate change.

This bill calls for amending the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act by adding the following wording to the clause laying out the minister's powers and responsibilities:

In developing requirements with respect to the construction, maintenance and repair of public works, federal real property and federal immovables, the Minister shall consider any potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and any other environmental benefits and may allow the use of wood or any other thing—including a material, product or sustainable resource—that achieves such benefits.

I understand that was amended to recognize some of the improvements in the steel industry and in the manufacturing of concrete, etc.

I hope colleagues will forgive me if my comments about this bill speak directly to the benefits of wood as a building product. This is a topic that has personal significance for me. My father worked for over 30 years in the forest industry. He was a buckerman, which, for folks who are less familiar with forestry, is the person who works in the bush and cuts the logs to length before they are loaded onto the trucks headed for the mill.

I remember how frustrated my dad was by some of the waste that occurred in the forest industry at the time. There were trees and logs that were too big to be used by the sawmills and were left in the bush and eventually burned. I remember his chainsaw mill, a little portable mill that attached to his chainsaw. He would take it out on the weekends and mill these logs into slabs, bring them home and build beautiful things from them. He was also the person who instilled in me a love for forests and a recognition of the need to do forestry responsibly and sustainably, an area I believe we continue to make progress in today. Of course, he built many beautiful things out of wood.

As I speak to this bill today, I am thinking of my dad and those values he instilled in me.

• (1150)

Bill S-222 speaks to public procurement as an opportunity for addressing greenhouse gas emissions through the choice of building materials, and this is indeed a huge opportunity. Much of the debate around tackling climate change has focused on emissions from the operation of buildings and transportation and such. However, the embodied carbon in building materials represents a significant challenge and opportunity when it comes to tackling the climate crisis. Given the billions of dollars spent on public procurement every year, and my colleague across the way mentioned the figure of, I believe, \$27 billion per year, this represents a significant opportunity for Canada.

When we dig into the role of embodied carbon in Canada's overall emissions, it is a surprisingly complex picture. At a high level, the advantage of wood rests on the fact that trees grow back and that the carbon stored in wood is stored for as long as the buildings it is used in are still standing. One source I found cited softwood timber as having an embodied carbon footprint of 110 kilograms per cubic metre, compared to 635 kilograms per cubic metre for reinforced concrete.

Admittedly, when we look for figures on the carbon footprint of building materials, we will find a huge range. Therein lies some of the complexity in evaluating different building materials and their climate impacts. However, the benefits of wood as a renewable resource are quite obvious.

Much of the life cycle climate carbon implications hinge on our management of forests. It is a popular idea to think of Canada's forests as climate-fighting machines that suck carbon out of the atmosphere, but the actual numbers, I think, would surprise people. A couple of years ago it came out that Canada's forests, since 2001, have actually been sources of carbon emissions and have emitted more carbon than they have sucked out of the air. This points to the need to consider the big picture when it comes to the climate implications of forest products.

Jim Pojar, a renowned ecologist based in Smithers, has expressed some caution regarding the notion that forestry is carbon neutral. He writes:

It should be emphasized that the underlying carbon budget calculations are complex and depend on assumptions about a future with much uncertainty around carbon dynamics in a rapidly changing environment.

The approach he advocates is one he calls “smart harvest and...substitution”, which couples forest management improvements with the substitution of wood in the place of more carbon-intensive building materials. Despite the complexity in evaluating the carbon emissions from different building materials, there does seem to be broad agreement that using wood products in buildings is an important tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I mentioned the beauty of wood, which admittedly is a subjective benefit. Less subjective is the economic impact of manufacturing wood products in regions like the one I live in. So many people I speak with are alarmed by the volume of raw logs we continue to export. They understand intuitively that the more we can add value to our raw resources, the more we can manufacture things, the more people in our communities are going to have jobs and the more benefits we can accrue.

In our region, there are thousands of people employed in forestry: loggers, truck drivers, mill workers, tree planters, foresters and so many more. As we grapple with mid-term timber supply constraints and managing a landscape for multiple values, it becomes ever more important to maximize the number of jobs and the economic benefits from every cubic metre of timber harvested. If we can use public procurement to increase demand for manufactured Canadian wood products, we can spur investment in new manufacturing facilities, new technology and new applications for wood.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the Wood Innovation and Design Centre in Prince George, which is home to UNBC's master of engineering in integrated wood design program. It is one example of how, in British Columbia, we are seeking to do more with wood, to innovate and to create models that can be applied around the world.

• (1155)

I am thankful for the time today to talk about this important topic and I hope this bill passes into law very soon.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-222. I too, as other speakers have, support this legislation.

Private Members' Business

One thing I have not heard much of today that I would like to talk about in the short period of time I have is why it makes sense to transition to using more wood products. If we look at the residential buildings built in Ontario recently, we are seeing many more being built taller out of wood. Obviously Ontario has its own building code, but it is informed to a large degree by the national building code. Until recently, within the last decade or so, wood buildings could only be four storeys as the maximum, but now we are seeing that increase quite a bit. Six, seven, eight storeys in different parts of Ontario are permitted to be built out of wood.

We are seeing this shift back towards more wood-based construction not just because of the environmental impacts associated with that and how environmentally unfriendly concrete can be, even though concrete has come a long way in the last couple of decades in terms of its carbon footprint. One of the other things we are seeing is the manner in which we can protect people from fires. Quite frankly, decades ago, when wood was being used a lot, there were not a lot of mitigating measures in place to prevent fires from spreading in structures that had an incredible amount of wood. That is probably why most building codes moved away from using wood towards concrete, particularly in large residential and commercial applications.

However, now there are more fire-suppression tools being used, better ways of suppressing a fire by using certain types of drywall, installing different measures to ensure there is proper egress from buildings in the event of a fire, as well as ensuring that if a fire does occur, there is an opportunity to allow people a certain amount of time to escape before being impacted by—

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I have to interrupt the member.

[Translation]

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***DIGITAL CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2022**

The House resumed from November 4 consideration that Bill C-27, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to start this week by speaking to Bill C-27. It is quite an extensive bill at over 140 pages in length. It would amend several acts and the most consequential are three of them in particular, as it is an act to enact the consumer privacy protection act, the personal information and data protection tribunal act and the artificial intelligence and data act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

I should start by saying that this is really three pieces of legislation that have been bundled up into one. As New Democrats, we have called for different voting for the third and final part of this act.

The first two parts of the act, concerning the consumer privacy protection act and the personal information and data protection tribunal act, do have enough common themes running through them to be put together into one piece of legislation. I still think, for these issues, that they would have been better as two separate pieces of legislation because one of them is brand new and the first one, the consumer privacy protection act, is the former Bill C-11, which was highly controversial in the previous Parliament.

When we had an unnecessary election called by the Prime Minister, that bill died, along with all of the work from Parliament, which was not concluded, despite extensive lobbying and consultation going, particularly, through the ethics committee at that time. This has now been bundled with some other legislation to go through the industry committee, which is fine.

The personal information and data protection tribunal act is a new component of this legislation. I have some concerns about that element of it, but it does have a common theme, which is worthwhile, and at least it has the potential to be put together and bundled. Although, again, it is extensive, it is a bundling that we can accept.

We have called for a Speaker's ruling with regard to the artificial intelligence and data act, as this is brand new legislation as well, but it does not have the same connections as the previous two pieces, which are bundled together, in the way that one could argue for them. We want a separate vote on the second part of this because the legislation would be studied at committee together.

There will be a high degree of interest in this legislation, since Bill C-11 had that in the past. The new bill changes position from Bill C-11 significantly, and I expect that this in itself will garner a lot of chatter, as well as review and interest, from a number of organizations, many of whom we have already heard from as of now.

The other part, with the tribunal, would be another important aspect, because it is a divergence from our traditional way of enforcement and creates another bureaucratic arm. Again, I would like to see more on this, and I am open to considering the idea, but it is certainly different from our traditional private right of law for dispute settlements about data breaches and other types of corporate malfeasance, that actually have to deal with the types of laws that are necessary to bring compliance among people.

This goes to the heart of, really, where a political party resides in their expectations of companies and their use of data, information and algorithms. For New Democrats, we fall very much in line with something I have tabled before, several years ago, which is a digital bill of rights, so that one's personal rights online are consistent with that of our physical rights, where one is expected to be properly treated in a physical world and in the digital format world. That includes one's right to privacy, right to the expectation of proper behaviour conducted toward oneself and right to not be abused. It also includes significant penalties to those who do those abuses, especially when we are looking at the corporate world.

Where this legislation really becomes highly complicated is the emergence of artificial intelligence, which has taken place over the last decade and will be significantly ramped up in the years to come. That is why the European Union and others have advanced on this, as well as the United States.

● (1205)

Our concern is that this bill tries to split both worlds. We all know that the industries of Google and other web giants have conducted significant lobbying efforts over the last number of years. In fact, they have tripled their efforts since this administration has come into place and have had a direct line of correspondence about their lobbying, which is fine to some degree, but the expectation among people that it would be balanced does not seem to be being met.

I want to bring into the discussion the impact on people before I get into the technical aspects of the bill, as well as the data breaches that remind us of the need for protection among our citizens and other companies as well. One of the things that is often forgotten is other SMEs, and others can be compromised quite significantly from this, so protecting people individually is just as important for our economy, especially when we have the emergence of new industries. If they are behaviours that are hampered, manipulated or streamed, they can become significant issues.

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I want to remind people that some of the data breaches we have had with Yahoo, Marriott, the Desjardins group and Facebook, among others, have demonstrated significant differences in the regulatory system between Canada and the United States and how they treat their victims. A good example is a settlement in the U.S. from 2009 with the Equifax data breach, where Equifax agreed to pay \$700 million to settle lawsuits over the breach in agreement with the U.S. authorities, and that included \$425 million in monetary relief to consumers. We have not had the same type of treatment here in Canada.

This is similar to the work I have done in the past with the auto industry and the fact that our Competition Bureau and our reimbursement systems are not up to date. We have been treated basically as a colony by many of the industries when it comes to consumer and retail accountability.

We can look at the example of Toyota and the data software issue, where the car pedal was blamed for the cars going out of control. It turned out this was not the case. It was actually a data issue. In the U.S., this resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars of investment into safety procedures. We received zero for that. Also, consumers received better treatment, where their vehicles were towed back to different dealerships to be fixed. In Canada, consumers did not receive any of that.

The same could be said with Volkswagen, another situation that took place with emissions. Not only did we not receive compensation similar to that of the United States, we actually imported a lot of the used Volkswagen vehicles from Europe. However, that was of our own accord and time frame when those vehicles were being sunsetted in those countries because of emissions.

In the case of Facebook, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission was able to impose a \$5-billion fine for the company's violation, while the Privacy Commissioner's office was forced to take the company to federal court here in Canada. One of the things I would like to point out is that our Privacy Commissioner has stood up for the needs of Canadians, and one of the concerns with this bill would be the erosion of the Privacy Commissioner's capabilities in dealing with these bills and legislation.

The Privacy Commissioner has made some significant points on how to amend the bill and actually balance it, but they have not all been taken into account. One of the strong points we will be looking to is to see whether there are necessary amendments from our Privacy Commissioner on this.

One of the big distinctions between Canada and the United States, which is to our benefit and to Canada's credit, is the office of the Privacy Commissioner. Where we do not have some of the teeth necessary for dealing with these companies, we do have the independent Privacy Commissioner, who is able to investigate and follow through at least with bringing things to a formal process in the legal system. It is very laborious and difficult, but at the same time, it is independent, which is one of the strengths of the system we have.

If the government proceeds, we will see the bill go to committee, which we are agreeing to do. However, we do want to see separate voting. Before I get into more of the bill, I will explain that we

want to see separate voting because we really distinguish that this is inappropriate. The artificial intelligence act is the first time we have even dealt with this topic in the House of Commons, and it should be done differently.

● (1210)

We will be looking for amendments for this, and big corporate data privacy breaches are becoming quite an issue. Some of these privacy breaches get highly complicated to deal with. There have been cases with cybersecurity and even extortion. The University of Calgary is one that was well noted, and there have been others.

We need some of these things brought together. The bill does include some important fixes that we have been calling for, such as stronger enforcement of privacy rights, tough new fines, transparency in corporate decisions made by algorithms.

I have pointed out a lot of the concerns that we have about the bill going forward because of its serious nature. However, we are glad this is happening, albeit with the caveat that we feel the bill should be separate legislation. The minister does deserve credit for bringing the bill forward for debate in the House of Commons.

Bill C-11 should have been passed in the last Parliament, but here we are again dealing with it. The new tribunal is the concern that we have. It could actually weaken existing content rules, and we will study and look at the new tribunal.

The tribunal itself is going to be interesting because it would be an appointment process. There is always a concern when we have a government appointment process. There is a concern that there could be complications setting up the tribunal, such as who gets to go there, what their background is, what their profession is and whether there will be enough support.

One of the things that gives me trouble is that the CRTC, for example, takes so long to make a decision. It is so laborious to go through and it has not always acted, most recently, in the best interest of Canadians when it comes to consumer protection and individual rights. It gives me concern that having another tribunal to act as a referee instead of the court system could delay things.

Some testimony has been provided already, some analysis, that suggests the tribunal might end up with lawsuits anyway, so we could potentially be back to square one after that. The time duration, funding, the ability to investigate and all these different things are very good issues to look at to find out whether we will have the proper supports for a new measure being brought in.

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Another government resource for this is key. At the end of the day, if it is a tribunal system that is not supportive of protecting Canadians' privacy and rights, then we will weaken the entire legislation. That is a big concern because that would be outside Parliament. The way that some of the amendments are written, it could be coming through more regulatory means and less parliamentary oversight.

Who is going to be on the tribunal? How will it be consistent? How will it be regulated? I would point to the minister providing the CRTC with a mandate letter, which is supposed to emphasize the public policy direction it should be going. In my assessment, the CRTC, over the last number of years, has not taken the consumer protection steps that New Democrats would like to see.

When it comes to modernizing this law, we do know that this will be important to address because there are issues regarding the data ownership, which is really at the heart of some of the challenges we face. There is algorithmic abuse and also areas related to compensation, enforcement, data ownership and control, and a number of things that are necessary to ensure the protection of people.

We can look at an area where I have done a fair amount of work related to my riding, which is automobile production. There has been the production of the car and the value there, but there will also be the data collection. The use of that data collection can actually influence not only one's individual behaviour, but also that of society. That is a significant economic resource for some of these companies.

• (1215)

It is one of the reasons I have tabled an update to my bill on the right to repair. The right to repair is a person's ability to have their vehicle fixed at an auto shop of their choice in the aftermarket. The OEMs, the original manufacturers, have at times resisted this. There have been examples. Tesla, for example, is not even part of what is called the voluntary agreement, but we still do not have an update with regard to the use of data and how one actually goes about the process of fixing the vehicle.

It also creates issues related to ownership of the vehicle, as well as insurance and liability. These could become highly complicated issues related to the use of data and the rules around it. If these types of things are not clear with regard to the process of rights for people, expectations by those who are using the data, and protection for people, then it could create a real, significant issue, not only for individuals but for our economy.

Therefore, dealing with this issue in the bill is paramount. A lot of this has come about by looking at what the GDPR, the general data protection regulation, did in European law. Europe was one of the first jurisdictions to bring forth this type of an issue, and it has provided an adequate level of protection, which is one of the things Europe stands by with regard to protection of privacy. There have been some on the side over here in North America who have pushed back against the GDPR, and even though this landmark legislation has created a path forward, there still is a need for transparency and to understand what the monetary penalties for abuse are going to be, which are also very important in terms of what we expect in the legislation.

Erosion of content rights is one of the things we are worried about in this bill. Under Bill C-27 individuals would have significantly diminished control over the collection, use and disclosure of their personal data, even less than in Bill C-11. The new consent provisions ask the public to install an exemplary amount of trust to businesses to keep them accountable, as the bill's exceptions to content allow organizations to conduct many types of activities without any knowledge of the individuals. The flexibility under Bill C-27 allows organizations to state the scope not only of legitimate interests but also of what is reasonable, necessary and socially beneficial, thus modelling their practices in a way that maximizes the value derived from the personal information.

What we have there is that the actors are setting some of the rules. That is one of the clearer things that we need through the discussion that would take place at committee, but also from the testimony that we will hear, because if we are letting those who use and manage the data make the decision about what consent is and how it is used, then it is going to create a system that could really lead to abuse.

There is also the issue or danger of de-identification. Witnesses, artificial intelligence and people being able to scrub much of their data when they want and how they want is one of the things we are concerned about. There is not enough acknowledgement of the risk that is available in this. That includes for young people. We believe this bill is a bit lopsided towards the business sector at the moment, and we want to propose amendments that would lead to better protection of individual rights and ensure informed consent as to what people want to do with their data and how they want it to be exercised as a benefit to them and their family, versus people being accidentally or wilfully brought into exposure they have not consented to.

As I wrap up, I just want to say that we have a number of different issues with this bill. Again, we believe there should be a separate vote for the second part of this bill, being the third piece of it. It is very ambitious legislation. It is as large as the budget bill. That should say enough with regard to the type of content we have. I thank the members who have debated this bill already. It is going to be interesting to get all perspectives. I look forward to the work that comes at committee. It will be one that requires extensive consultation with Canadians.

• (1220)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member touched a little on children's personal rights and protection. I wonder if he could comment on seniors and what kind of an impact it would have on them if they were exposed to this legislation. How could the legislation in fact harm seniors, especially if it was made more bureaucratic?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I did not touch on the issue of seniors, and I really appreciate the member's raising it.

We do not even have consistency right now in the decision-making process about privacy. People currently agree to a number of different things by clicking boxes, and there is no standardization. For seniors, we have seen, for example with the ArriveCAN app, the confusion as they have complex technology thrust at them during times of stress and times of highly important decisions.

As we move toward this, the member raises a good point in the sense that seniors and other people will need some type of support, education and coaching that go along with this, and shown in plain language. We are dealing with a highly technical bill here that we have had to scrub through the system several times, and the complications it has are unbelievable.

We know we have a very good, educated population, but this is a big change, and I hope that there will be a program of education as part of this. It is a good point that seniors have been left out of this debate, and I am glad the member raised that.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the speech from the member for Windsor West, especially around the issue of artificial intelligence. This is a brand new area. How does the member feel about the importance of this, and does he feel we are ready to legislate in this area? I know it is an area of concern for my constituents, and I would like to hear the member's thoughts on that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I applaud the minister for bringing the issue forward to Parliament. Again, I want to exercise some caution that the first two pieces of the legislation are much easier to deal with, because at least there was some discussion on those with Bill C-11. It is a bit different in this one, and the tribunal is an issue, but I am open to looking at it. I just have concerns about that. However, the artificial intelligence part of it is critical. I am glad it is in front of us, but it is going to require much more extensive debate and care, and that is why it should be entirely separate.

We in the NDP have proposed a fairly reasonable compromise, and the Speaker will rule on it. The proposed compromise is that there would be a separate vote for that particular part of the bill. The reason is that perhaps the first two parts could lead to a decision that might be different from the decision on the last part, just to ensure that we get enough testimony and time in committee for it.

I am looking forward to all perspectives in the House on this. It is time for us to look at that. It is a reasonable position, and I am glad it is in front of us. I do not like the way it is in front of us, but we will deal with that.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

This is a very important moment in time. The subject before us is sensitive and extremely complex. As has been mentioned several times, we are wading into areas that have not been regulated until now. It is very important to take the time to get it right. Certain conditions are obviously needed. For example, all legislation must be adapted to legislation that already exists in the provinces and in

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Quebec. As we know, orders in council issued during the previous Parliament guaranteed that there would be no encroachment on provincial jurisdictions if equivalent legislation exists in those provinces.

I wonder if my colleague could confirm whether his party is committed to not encroaching on provincial jurisdictions. Unfortunately, his party usually has a hard time respecting what happens in the provinces and wants to centralize everything at the federal level. I want him to understand that things might be more efficient if we can avoid duplicate structures. That is the first part of my question, which is fundamental. Furthermore, his political party has a tendency to pass legislation very quickly using gag orders, which are supported by the party. It concerns me that such an important piece of legislation is being voted on after limited debate.

Will the member commit to respecting the time allotted for debate on this bill and to respecting Quebec's jurisdictions?

• (1225)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I have extensive notes here, more than I could even go through, with regard to this bill being the number of pages that it is.

My party has an exemplary record of respecting Quebec and using, including in this bill, some of the practices in Quebec that are solid for all of us. Therefore, I disagree with the member on that.

Also, I have also seen the member's party close debate many times during the years I have been here. I have been here just over 20 years, and the Bloc has limited debate on different bills at different times for different circumstances and so forth. I want to have a robust discussion about this, and we are committed to it. I have expressed that to the minister and to other parties, including anyone who wants to talk about this bill to try to make sure it gets its due course. Those are the things that are quite strong.

I will conclude by saying again that we have shown that some of the best practices from Quebec are part of our strategy. That is flattery, and it is not at odds with Quebec.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the complexity with which the bill has been introduced and that it presents to my hon. colleague, and the work involved in going through it. He mentioned the problems in terms of the tribunal process. I know the Privacy Commissioner has raised a lot of concerns.

Could the member perhaps go into a little more detail about the insistence, which our party certainly has, that the Privacy Commissioner has raised, in terms of ensuring that consumers have far more access to fairness within the legislation than organizations typically would have, because they have more monetary resources to pursue things under legal precedence?

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Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the member for London—Fanshawe's question is something I did not touch on. Again, there is so much in the bill. She is quite right with regard to the fact that if an individual wants to take a legal right of action against an abuse, it is going to be more cumbersome for them, and a company would have a better chance at that.

The tribunal and the division of power with the Privacy Commissioner are going to be very interesting. What I do not want to do is anything that would undermine the Privacy Commissioner. I suppose I am biased in the sense that from my experience, the Privacy Commission has been an excellent model, has done some excellent work and needs more support. That is the other thing we have to do. If we are going to give it more responsibilities, it will need more support. What is worrisome to me is that the tribunal would be a bit disenfranchised from that consistency, and that is one of the reasons we want to see this legislation debated thoroughly.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, we know that businesses and companies find data to be very useful for many purposes, including offering consumers the goods and services they prefer.

However, data can also be used to reduce competition, charge certain selected individuals higher prices for a good, or increase delivery charges for food in locations where there is less competition. Data can therefore be used to stifle competition. It seems to me that Canada's regime is very outdated.

I would like my colleague to comment on whether this bill will provide some sort of justice for Quebec and Canadian consumers, who are presently likely to be taken advantage of by companies that use their personal data without their knowledge and against their own interests.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, that is going to be where we really want to steer, as New Democrats, toward more empowerment for consumers and watching that abuse be eroded. The problem we have is that some of the companies and the lack of competition we have in Canada right now could even lead to greater abuse, potentially, because the information and sharing of data can be done behind closed doors and behind the system of accountability. That will be one of the things to watch for, and that really is the objective of parliamentarians.

I am glad the member has raised that, because I think it is one of the things we do not want to lose sight of. A good example is that we see outright abuse of competition right now. When we had the Loblaw's bread scandal, those involved were also putting their money offshore, and on top of that they all ended their pandemic hero pay at the same time, so these are good questions.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for York Centre.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the digital charter implementation act, 2022, in particular the aspect on the consumer privacy protection act. If I have time, I will also discuss the artificial intelligence and data act.

I am very proud to speak to these two pieces of legislation that introduce a regime that seeks to not only support the technological transformation, but also help Canadians safely navigate this new digital world with confidence. These past few years, Canadians have witnessed these technological shifts take place. They have taken advantage of new technologies like never before. In 2021, more than 72.5% of Canadians used e-commerce services, a trend that is expected to grow to 77.6% by 2025.

According to TECHNATION, a 10% increase in digitalization can create close to a 1% drop in the unemployment rate. What is more, every 1% increase in digitalization can add \$8.7 billion to Canada's GDP. In order to take advantage of those major benefits for our economy, we must ensure that consumers continue to have confidence in the digital marketplace.

Technology is clearly an intrinsic part of our lives, and Canadians have growing expectations regarding the digital economy. It is absolutely essential that the Government of Canada be able to meet those expectations.

With this bill, the government is putting forward a regime that gives Canadians the protection they deserve. First, as stated in the preamble of the digital charter implementation act, 2022, Canada recognizes the importance of protecting Canadians' privacy rights. Similarly, the 2022 consumer privacy protection act also provides important protections for Canadians.

That said, our government has listened to the input of various stakeholders, and we have made changes to improve this bill. I was on the committee in the last Parliament, and there was a lot of discussion about the previous bill, Bill C-11. I am very pleased to be able to speak to Bill C-27, so that we can get all that work done in this Parliament.

One of the most important changes we have made is enhancing protection for minors. Some stakeholders felt that the previous legislation did not go far enough to protect children's privacy. I agree. Consequently, the bill was amended to define minors' information as sensitive by default. This means that organizations subject to the law will have to adhere to higher standards of protection for that information. The legislation also provides minors with a more direct route to delete their personal information. This will make it easier for them to manage their online reputation. I think this is a really important change, because we know that young people are very aware and very capable of using all types of digital platforms, but at the same time, we need to make sure that they are able to protect their reputation.

In addition to protections for minors, we also made changes to the concept of de-identification of personal information. According to many stakeholders, the definitions in the old bill were confusing. We recognize that having well-defined terms helps ensure compliance with the act and provides more effective protection of consumers' information. In that regard, I understand that, because we are talking about new technologies and an evolving industry, it is important for all members to share their expertise, since that will help us develop a better piece of legislation.

• (1235)

The difference, then, between anonymous information and de-identified information needs to be clarified because, clearly, if information is de-identified but an organization or company is able to reidentify it, that does not serve the purpose of having anonymous information.

Data-based innovation offers many benefits for Canadians. These changes contribute to appropriate safeguards to prevent unauthorized reidentification of this information, while offering greater flexibility in the use of de-identified information.

The new law also maintains the emphasis on controlling the use of their personal information by individuals. That remains a foundation of the law, namely that individuals must be able to fully understand the purpose for which information will be used and consent to that purpose in the most important circumstances.

However, the modern economy must also have flexible tools to accommodate situations that are beneficial but that may not require consent if the organization respects certain limits and takes steps to protect individuals.

The approach advocated here continues to be based on the concept of individual control, but proposes a new exception to consent to resolve these gaps as a tool for safeguarding privacy. The new provisions propose a general exception to cover situations in which organizations could use personal information without obtaining consent, provided that they can justify their legitimate interest in its use for circumstances in which the individual expects the information to be used.

In addition, to prevent abuse, the exception is subject to a requirement that the organization mitigate the risk. For example, digital mapping applications that take photos of every street and that we use to view them, particularly to help with navigation, are wide-

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ly accepted as being beneficial. However, obtaining individual consent from every resident of the city is impossible.

I believe that everyone in the House will agree that it is hard to imagine how we managed before we had access to those navigation applications. Last evening, I had a visit with a family member in Ottawa and was very happy to have my mapping application to find my destination.

The presence of an exception, combined with a mitigation requirement, therefore allows individuals to take advantage of a beneficial service while safeguarding personal information. The example shows another key aspect for building trust and transparency. Digital mapping technology presents a certain level of transparency. The vehicles equipped with cameras can be seen on our streets and the results can also be seen posted and available online.

However, there are some technologies or aspects thereof that are more difficult to see and understand. That is why the bill continues granting individuals the right to ask organizations for an explanation regarding any prediction, recommendation or decision made in their regard by an automated decision-making system.

What is more, these explanations must be provided in plain language that the individual can understand. These provisions also support the proposed new artificial intelligence act. However, I do not think that I have time to get into that, so I will end there.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about the protection of minors. I have a simple question. I cannot find anywhere in the bill where it defines a minor or a reference to “sensitive information”. Could the hon. member please inform the House how the bill defines a minor and sensitive information?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concern the member brings with that question.

We have many definitions of “minor”, but it is generally understood that it is the different provinces that would legally establish who a minor is. We can understand it being youth using the Internet, and we need to make the extra effort to protect them and ensure they have the tools to protect themselves.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague. I sat with her on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics for a few months.

We had concerns about privacy. Several recommendations were made, and that is why Bill C-11 became Bill C-27. I acknowledge that the bill has been improved. That being said, I wonder about two things.

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First, in 2022, I do not think it is right that banking institutions are taking the lead on showing us how important it is to protect privacy. Second, this bill is important, but I would like to know if we should refer it to a committee to study it properly because it is really two bills in one. The first is on artificial intelligence, and the second is on privacy protection. What does the member think?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague opposite is very interested in this matter because our personal information was leaked by a Quebec financial institution. That was very worrisome.

I believe that it is in the business interests of financial institutions to protect their customers and not to lose them. They have really taken the lead in this area. The provinces have followed suit, but I believe it is also the federal government's role to enhance these protections and ensure that standards exist across the country.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is notable that Bill C-27 does not explicitly apply to political parties. Given the potential for privacy breaches and other issues to exist in the political arena, I wonder if my colleague across the way could comment on the potential for amending it to explicitly reference and include political parties in the scope of the bill.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, that is a very interesting question, which I believe has come up at different times in this Parliament and previous Parliaments. It is an area, I am sorry to say, that I do not have a lot of insight into, but the overriding principle of safeguarding the information of Canadians has to be first and foremost, especially for any political party that hopes to earn their votes.

• (1245)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker and hon. colleagues, I rise today to speak about the digital charter implementation act, 2022, also known as Bill C-27.

I thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for sharing her time with me today.

It is an important discussion that is happening among Canadians about what our digital environment looks like. As we know, over the past few years, we have witnessed the constant evolution of our digital environment. Canadians have been successfully navigating through this changing environment, but they have also made it clear to us that they want better protection of their privacy. They want to be able to benefit from the latest emerging technologies with the confidence that they can be used safely. Canadians also believe that organizations need to be fully accountable for how they manage personal information and how they go about developing powerful technologies, such as artificial intelligence, or AI.

From the beginning of our consultations on digital and data, stakeholders have stressed the importance of maintaining flexibility to innovate responsibly and maintain access to markets at home and abroad. I am proud to say that the digital charter implementation act, 2022, which would enact the consumer privacy protection act, or CPPA, and the artificial intelligence and data act, or AIDA, would do just that.

The CPPA represents a complete transformation of Canada's private sector privacy regime, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, or PIPEDA, which came into force in 2001. That was 20 or so years ago. CPPA would introduce significant changes to better protect Canadians' personal information, including strong fiscal and financial consequences for those who seek to benefit from curtailing their legal obligations. This new framework would also ensure that all Canadians could enjoy the same privacy protections as individuals have in other countries.

The AIDA, for its part, is being proposed to build confidence in a key part of the data-driven economy. This part of the bill would introduce common standards for responsible design, development and deployment of AI systems. It would also provide businesses with much-needed guardrails for AI innovation and would ensure that Canadians can trust the AI systems that underpin the data economy.

PIPEDA was passed at the start of the century when other countries and some provinces were moving forward with privacy laws governing the private sector. Recognizing the potential for a patchwork of provincial privacy laws to emerge and the need to align internationally, Canada put in place PIPEDA as a national privacy standard. It drew on best practices to provide robust privacy protections for increased consumer confidence and a consistent and flexible regulatory environment for businesses that allowed for legitimate use of personal information.

The key element for alignment was the recognition of provincial private sector privacy laws as substantially similar. This meant that, where such a law is given that designation, PIPEDA did not apply to an organization's activities within that province. PIPEDA would continue, however, to apply to the federally regulated sector in that province and to any personal information collected, used or disclosed in the course of commercial activities across borders. This has provided a stable regulatory environment and flexibility for provinces, and it has supported Canada's trade interests well for many years.

Today, history is repeating itself, but the stakes are much higher. The role of the digital economy is far more central to our lives than it was 20 years ago. To harness all that the modern digital world has to offer, we clearly need to modernize our federal private sector privacy law. The provinces are moving in that direction and, again, the risk of fragmentation looms.

Quebec has amended its private sector privacy law, and B.C. and Alberta are examining their private sector privacy laws as well. Ontario too is considering introducing a new private sector privacy law. Therefore, the federal government must act now to ensure that all Canadians benefit from a substantially equivalent degree of protection and facilitate compliance for organizations that do business across the country.

Like PIPEDA, the CPPA is grounded in the federal trade and commerce powers. It builds on the best practices developed internationally and by Canadian provinces, and it foregrounds the importance of the ease of doing business across boundaries. The CPPA replicates the approach under PIPEDA, and it updates the mechanism in regulations for recognizing provincial laws as substantially similar. The regulations will set out the criteria and process for such recognition and will continue to provide the flexibility that has been important to PIPEDA's success.

• (1250)

CPPA, like its predecessor, would also maintain the Privacy Commissioner's ability to collaborate and co-operate with his or her provincial counterparts. This is an important tool to ensure consistency, guidance and enforcement, and one that has enabled our commissioners to lead the world in privacy collaboration and co-operation.

Canada also needs to move proactively to regulate in the AI space, given that the operation of these systems transcends national and provincial borders in the digital environment. AIDA would create a common standard that all organizations involved in international and inter-provincial trade and commerce would have to meet. AIDA would place Canada at the forefront of international regulation in the AI space and would provide clear rules across the country. This would spur innovation and build confidence in the safety of AI systems used or developed in Canada.

We live in an interconnected world. Data is constantly flowing across borders. In 2001, the European Commission recognized PIPEDA as providing adequate protection relative to EU law, allowing for the free flow of personal information between Canadian and European businesses.

In 2018, a new EU regulation came into effect that was known as the general data protection regulation. It updated many of the existing requirements and added strong financial penalties for contraventions. The EU is currently reviewing its existing adequacy decisions, including the one that applies to Canada. We expect to hear more on the outcome of this review soon.

The CPPA would make a positive contribution to maintaining Canada's adequacy with the EU privacy regime. It would enable personal data from EU businesses to continue to flow to Canada without additional protections. Beyond the EU, the changes proposed in the CPPA would represent important updates that would

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bring us in line with other international jurisdictions that have updated their laws. It would ensure interoperability with consistent rules, rights and consequences.

Other jurisdictions internationally are also moving ahead on their AI regulation, and strong action is needed to maintain Canada's leadership position internationally. Interoperability with international partners remains a key priority. The EU in particular has advanced a framework for regulating AI that would set standards for any AI systems being deployed in the EU market.

AIDA would propose a risk-based approach that would ensure interoperability with the EU while keeping in mind that Canadian context is unique. For example, AIDA would include flexible compliance options in order to ensure that our many small to medium-sized businesses would not be left behind. The proposed AIDA would represent an opportunity for Canada to lead internationally, would ensure market access for Canadian companies and would uphold Canadian values.

The government launched Canada's digital charter in 2019. Its 10 guiding principles offer a foundation on which to build an innovative and inclusive digital and data-driven economy. Ensuring interoperability, a level playing field, strong enforcement and real accountability are clearly reflected in the digital charter implementation act, 2022.

I can assure colleagues that our approach is pragmatic, principled and meets our trading needs. The bill would provide a consistent, coherent framework that Canadians and stakeholders could rely on. With Bill C-27 we would continue to encourage trade and investment and to grow an economy that would extend across provincial and international borders alike.

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Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the important concepts of this legislation is clause 18, which introduces the concept into law of legitimate interests of the business. It says that when there is a legitimate interest of the business, it can choose to use a person's data for something that it did not intend, if it is of more importance to the business and it does not think it would cause too much harm to the individual.

I wonder if the member could tell us why the government believes that a company has a right to use an individual's data without their permission.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, this legislation is important right now so that we can weed out what is not legitimate. We all have these phones. I have one. It tells us when we have been to the grocery store, it tells us when our flights are on time and it tells us where we are in the world. We acquiesce to that every day and that data is used. In the same mind, we want to make sure that when businesses, large or small, have access to that information, because we have agreed to it in theory, that it is guard-railed and it is protected.

That was a great question, and I think that is exactly why we are moving on this legislation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member that she is not to use her phone as a prop in the House.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a beautiful Monday morning, particularly since we are talking about a bill that will likely make things easier for people who, unfortunately, did not give their consent or whose personal information was compromised.

I will repeat my question, which I unfortunately did not get an answer to. Does the government intend to thoroughly analyze this bill and invite enough witnesses to ensure that it is clear for all legislators?

[English]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, as part of the ethics committee team, I have already begun these deep-dive discussions on the impact of AI on privacy. We have looked at the mobility data of movement as it pertained to the pandemic. I can rest assured that I have an interest in this at committee, whether it is at ethics, at justice or wherever this lands, to make sure that we get those answers. Consumers and Canadians have a right to know how their data is used and to understand when it is used and the purpose for it.

I am deeply encouraged by our work at committee and what we have done, and I look forward to the discussions that will be ahead.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, privacy rights are so critical. When they are violated, consumers deserve to be compensated. There have been numerous examples in the United States where consumers have been compensated in the realm of

hundreds of millions of dollars. For the same breach here in Canada, consumers have not been compensated.

I am wondering if the member would support amendments that would ensure that, in Bill C-27, there is parity, and for the same breach, Canadians and Americans would be getting fair compensation.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, part of the act and its contemplation is financial consequences for misuse of the act, in terms of privacy and data breaches, so it is certainly something that would come up.

I heed warning. The member and I have talked about this in terms of the Volkswagen case in the U.S. and Canada. We need to compare apples to apples. It is a bit of apples to oranges when it comes to the litigious nature of the United States in terms of compensation and the guardrails that are here in Canada. We should always be mindful of that. While in principle we want to make sure that there is accountability and transparency in the use of this, and that with accountability comes financial penalties, I would like to make sure that it is a made-in-Canada approach.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, data is used for good and data is used for evil. Data is money, data is power and data is knowledge. Data can improve our lives. Data can also harm our lives. Data tells the story of our lives, and our personal data flows globally. The amount of data in the world has doubled since 2020 and is expected to triple by 2025 according to Statista, 2022.

To understand why we need modern privacy rights in the digital world, it is important to understand that businesses have evolved from providing a specific service, like a social network such as Facebook and Twitter or a search engines such as Google or Microsoft to find things, to using data to gather information on individuals and groups, to manage and deploy people's data and to sell their information to others and sell them goods and services.

We have evolved from businesses providing these services for interest to businesses using these services for surveillance on us and making enormous amounts of money on our personal information. As legislators, we must balance the uses of data collection with an individual's right to privacy. It is a delicate balance that Bill C-27 aims to address by modernizing our privacy laws.

At the heart of this long overdue revision to our privacy laws must be the rights of the individual. In my view, commercial usage of data under privacy law should be secondary to personal privacy, and should only be focused on how business interests enhance personal needs and how commercial entities protect individual privacy rights. My remarks today will focus on why this legislation falls far short of what individuals, groups and businesses need for a clear legislative framework of data collection and management of personal information in this digital age.

First, Bill C-27 is really three bills in one omnibus bill. The first bill would update privacy law. The second bill contains a new semi-judicial body and would potentially duplicate what the Privacy Commissioner could do while removing the right to go to the courts. The third is a rushed bolt-on bill on artificial intelligence that does not, in my mind, have much intelligence in it. The Liberal legislation manages to weaken privacy and put up barriers to innovation at the same time.

Bill C-27 fails Canadians right up front in its preamble. Despite demands from privacy advocates over the last few years, the government has failed to recognize privacy as a fundamental right in the preamble. The bill states that individuals' personal information should have the "full enjoyment of fundamental rights". This is clever language that avoids giving personal privacy the recognition that it is a fundamental right or a fundamental human right.

The wording "full enjoyment of fundamental rights" in the preamble needs to be amended from "of fundamental rights" to "as a fundamental right". Furthermore, leaving this strictly in the preamble reduces if not eliminates any real legal impact. If privacy is a fundamental right, for it to have true force in this bill it needs to be included as well in clause 5, which notes the purpose of the bill.

Why is privacy a fundamental right? Freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom to be left alone are derived from privacy. The legal protections of privacy limit government's intrusion into our lives. In free and democratic societies, we consider these freedoms as essential rights. The rights to think what I want, to say what I want and to be free to choose what I do, what I am interested in and whom I interact with and where I do that in our digital world are data points. To me they are personal information and therefore are part of a fundamental right to privacy.

What does this mean? It means privacy rights under law are prioritized over commercial rights. A rights-based approach serves as an effective check on technology's potential dangers while ensuring businesses can function and thrive.

● (1300)

Government officials have told me this cannot be recognized in the bill the way it needs to be to have true meaning under law and force because it would intrude on provincial jurisdiction. I do not agree, and neither does the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. Both levels of government can regulate privacy and do. The federal government's role is to regulate aspects under its control, including the fact that commerce does not follow provincial boundaries and therefore requires federal oversight.

I believe that most Canadians accept and expect their data to be used to enhance their experiences and needs in our modern society.

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I also believe that for organizations to obtain the data of Canadians, Canadians must first consent to it, and that if these same organizations find new uses of our data, they need to get express consent as well. Canadians want their data safely protected and not used for things they did not give permission for, and if they choose to end a relationship with a service provider, they want their personal data to be destroyed.

I do not believe Canadians want their personal data sold to other entities without their express consent, and how does Bill C-27 deal with these expectations of Canadians? I think poorly. The legislation, in the summary section, states that the dual purpose of the bill is to "govern the protection of personal information of individuals while taking into account the need of organizations to collect, use or disclose personal information in the course of commercial activities." What it would not do is place personal privacy rights above commercial interests.

The bill would require express consent in clause 15, and that is true, but a great deal of the bill goes on to describe the many ways in which consent would not be required and how it would be left up to the discretion of the organization that has collected the data if it needs consent for its usage. The bill is also weak in terms of making sure individuals understand consent when given. For consent to be meaningful, the usages proposed must be understood. The lack of definition and the placement of burden of interpretation on businesses expose those same businesses to legal action and penalties if they get it wrong. This lack of clarity may stifle innovation in Canada as a result. The bill needs to ensure that individuals understand the nature, purpose and consequences of the collection, use and disclosure of the information to which they are consenting.

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In addition, the bill would give organizations the right to use information in new ways and would require businesses to get an update to consent for this information. That is good and necessary, but the bill would also enable organizations to use the implied consent in subclause 15(5). When combined with paragraph 18(2)(d), this would give businesses carte blanche to use implied consent rather than express consent.

An organization can decide on its own that the original consent implies consent for a new purpose, and they do not need to seek the individual's views. This is a version of the old negative option marketing that was outlawed in the 1990s. Either someone gives consent, or they do not. There is no such thing as implied consent, in my view, and this needs to be removed from the bill.

Additionally, the bill uses the term “sensitive information”, which companies and organizations must determine to protect data, but it does not anywhere in the more than 100 pages define what “sensitive information” is. It needs to be defined in the bill to include information revealing racial and ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation and religious and other affiliations. These are just a few examples.

However, that is not the worst of it. Bill C-27 would introduce a concept called “legitimate interest”. This is a new rule that would rank an individual's interests and fundamental rights below those of the organization that gathered the information, the exact opposite of what a personal privacy bill should do. To do this, subclause 18(3) would allow an organization or business to use information if it has a legitimate interest in doing so. However, here is where it really gets goofy: To try to reduce businesses using our data under the legitimate interest clause for their own needs over ours, the Liberals have decided to limit the power under paragraph 18(3)(b). This clause could prohibit the business or organization from using our information for the purpose of influencing behaviour.

• (1305)

For more than 20 years, since the invention of loyalty and rewards programs, retailers have used people's data to offer products they might enjoy based on their purchasing patterns. Have members ever bought wine online or in store because it said, “If you like this, you might enjoy this alternative”? Have members ever watched a show on Netflix because it was recommended? Have members ever listened to a song on Spotify because it was recommended based on what else they had listened to? Well, guess what. Paragraph 18(3)(b) could now make this service illegal.

The Liberals cannot get express consent right, and they are allowing companies to use people's data with implied consent or no consent at all. The Liberals are also putting the business use of people's personal data above their privacy rights. That is why it is really the no privacy bill. At the same time, the Liberals are making illegal the good parts of what businesses do in enhancing the customer experience by removing the ability to study purchasing patterns and offering products that we might enjoy because of paragraph 18(3)(b). This bill makes influencing people's decisions illegal.

The minister said to me and mentioned in the House in his opening speech on the bill, as have other members today, that he is proud to be protecting children from harm in this digital bill. This

100-page legislation has only one clause related to children. Subclause 2(2), under “Definitions”, states that “information of minors is considered to be sensitive”, but the bill does not define “sensitive” nor does it define what a minor is. Officials tell me that the definition of a minor is determined by provincial law, so each province would have different rules, and companies would have to comply with the different rules in every province.

If the protection of children were really a major purpose, this legislation would devote some space to defining both what a minor is and what sensitive information is. During COVID, minors used many online apps and programs to continue their formal education. There were then and still are no protections under law as to what is done with their data. This technology would be a new normal for our education system. The online surveillance of children resulting from the COVID experience is huge and protections are zero, even with this bill.

This bill needs to define in law, not regulation, age-appropriate consent for minors, and comprehensive rules to prevent the collection, manipulation and use of any minor's data. This bill leaves it up to businesses to decide what is sensitive and appropriate for minors. It is a colossal failure on the minister's main selling point for this no privacy bill.

The bill is silent on the selling of personal data. It needs provisions on the limits and obligations of data brokers. The bill is silent on the use of facial recognition technology. The bill also prohibits using data in a way that produces significant harm and defines it inadequately. For example, psychological harm caused by a data breach and embarrassment caused by privacy loss are not included. The damages role needs to be expanded to include moral damages, since most contraventions of privacy do not involve provable, quantifiable damages.

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Creating more government bureaucracy and growth is the true legacy of the Liberals in government. This bill is no exception, with the creation of a body to appeal the Privacy Commissioner's rulings to. The appointed new body of non-lawyers is called the personal protection and data tribunal, and it is the second part of the bill. Frankly, these powers, if they really are important, should be given to the Privacy Commissioner to eliminate the middle man of bureaucracy. There is no need for this tribunal.

Finally, let us turn to the ill-conceived, poorly structured and ill-defined artificial intelligence part of Bill C-27. It really needs to be removed from this legislation and puts this bill's passage into question. AI is a valid area to legislate, but only with a bill that has a legislative goal. That is why I am hopeful that the Speaker will rule in favour of the NDP's point of order, reiterated by our Conservative House leader, which would ensure that part 3 of the bill is voted on separately from part 1 and part 2.

• (1310)

Essentially, this part of Bill C-27 would drive all work on AI out of Canada to countries with clearer government legislation. It tells me the government has not done its homework, does not really know what AI is or will become, and has no idea how it will impact people in our country.

The bill asks parliamentarians to pass a law that defines no goals or oversight and would give all future law-making power to the minister through regulation, not even to the Governor in Council but to the minister. The minister can make law, investigate violations, determine guilt and impose penalties without ever going to Parliament, cabinet or any third party.

It is a massive overreach and is anti-democratic in an area critical to Canada's innovation agenda. Promises of consultation in the process of crafting regulations is too little, too late. It puts too much power in the hands of unelected officials and the minister.

The definition in the bill of what AI is, and therefore what it wants total regulatory power over, is a system that autonomously processes data related to human activities using a genetic algorithm, a neural network, machine learning or other networks to make recommendations or predictions. If we think this is futuristic, it is not. It is already happening in warfare to determine and execute bombings.

Without parliamentary oversight, the bill introduces the concept of "high-impact systems". It does not define what that is, but it will be defined in regulation and managed in regulation. No regulatory power should ever be given to the minister or the Governor in Council for anything that is not defined in law.

The only thing the bill defines is the unprecedented power to rule all over this industry and the fines to those who breach the unwritten regulations. The massive financial and jail penalties that extend down to the developers and the university researchers for undefined breaches of law as part of the statute are huge.

Unless this portion of the bill is separated when members vote, this AI section is reason alone that the bill should be defeated. AI is a significant need, but it needs a proper legislative framework, one that is actually developed with consultation.

I urge all members to read the bill carefully. Current privacy laws need amendment, but the current law is preferable to this ill-defined proposal. The AI bill would drive innovation and business out of Canada's economy, making us less competitive.

It is hard to believe anyone could get this legislation so wrong, especially since this is the second time the Liberals have proposed updating our privacy laws. Without splitting the bill, without having separate votes and without considerable amendments in committee in the first two parts, the bill should be defeated.

I urge all members to consider this seriously in their deliberations as we go on to the many speeches that we will hear. While this is a critical point of updating our personal privacy, the bill, in its current state, does not do it and it gives equal if not greater rights to businesses and organizations than it does to individuals.

• (1315)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Madam Speaker, I have heard the Conservatives talk a couple times, as did the member, about the definition of a "minor". For a lot of people, that is self-explanatory. I think we can assume what is intended by the definition of "minor". Would the member support this going to committee so questions like that could be answered? If it is a matter of defining that, and the member and others feel so passionately that it should be in there, would it not be beneficial to get it to committee so that discussion could be had?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I suspect the bill will go to committee given the costly coalition of the NDP and Liberals.

Specifically on that question on defining "minors", it is not clear in the bill because it does not set an age. We are allowed to drive at 16 and vote at 18. The age of majority can be 19 for consuming alcohol. In the United States, the law for the purpose of the digital economy, I think, defines it as low as 13. That is where some of the confusion will lie.

Government Orders

If people are running businesses and we have all these different definitions in Canada of what a minor is, how are they supposed to determine, for the purpose of managing that database and whether that information should stay there or not, what the cut-off age is? It is too vague.

I am hopeful that is one of the areas, presuming the bill will reach committee with the coalition, that we will study in depth and perhaps be able to come up with a more precise definition.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets for her speech.

Here are my takeaways from my colleague's speech: Not everything in this bill is black and white, and it could be improved. Also, the Conservatives want to vote against the bill just to prevent it from going to committee. In contrast, I think we can find common ground and amend it.

I have to say that this unwillingness to send the bill to committee does suggest, kind of like what we saw with the bill to amend the Broadcasting Act, that the Conservatives may be under the influence of big corporations that would be happier with no regulatory framework whatsoever rather than an imperfect one that is a work in progress.

I think this kind of approach which consists of arguing against sending the bill to committee could undermine Quebecers' and Canadians' confidence in our institutions.

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the member for Mirabel and I have some spirited discussions as seatmates.

With respect to the first point, if there is not a separate vote, as has been requested in the point of order, for the artificial intelligence in the third part of the bill, then, yes, we agree that this needs to be defeated because it would really hurt our economy.

In terms of the issue of personal privacy versus companies, in my remarks I made it very clear that the bill is inadequate in dealing with the personal protection of privacy and data of the individual and it places the interest of business over that. We are opposed to this.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's concern about the lack of due diligence on the artificial intelligence aspect of the bill. I wonder if the member wants to elaborate on that point a bit more, because artificial intelligence could be anywhere from national defence all the way to something as simple as products people have in their homes. I wonder if the member wants to talk a bit more about the importance of separating that part of the bill.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, it is an enormous area. Artificial intelligence is already here in aspects of our lives of which we are not aware. Machine learning has evolved into this neural net.

There was a conflict in Azerbaijan where all the targets were chosen by artificial intelligence and the actual bombing and execution of that were all done by artificial intelligence without any hu-

man intervention. Obviously that is a worrisome thing from our perspective, though maybe not from some perspectives of other countries with different ethical backgrounds or approaches to these issues.

There is the need to do a proper consultation beforehand. We are at the early stages of trying to figure out the balance of how to do that in a way that still enhances our lives, like those things that we get now through machine learning about better purchasing options, right through to the issue of the point of which the machines are doing the decision-making process. It is an important area to put some regulatory and law structure around, as other countries have. However, we need to have much more detail in the bill rather than just give the minister carte blanche of regulatory power in the future to define it, execute it and investigate it.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the concerns I have with the bill is again with respect to companies having too many rights and too much power within this. One of them is around the disposal of information. Could the member talk about his party's concern with that as well, when companies say that they are disposing of it and yet that information is truly not disposable?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, that is a great question regarding the ability of individuals to request the destruction, for example, of their data if they leave. I heard about a case in the news this morning and I got an email from somebody yesterday, who has been having this ongoing battle with Telus. The person is leaving the company and wants that information destroyed, but cannot even get a response from Telus.

That is one of the areas, if the bill gets to committee, that we need to explore the issue of providing amendments to the bill that would give individuals more control over the decision to destroy their data if they leave.

There is a worrying provision, as I mentioned already, about minors. A member of the government side said that minors could request the destruction of their data. I do not think minors should have to request it, personally. Minors' data should not be kept in anyway in storage in the system we have today.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on that point, when we think about data that is collected, quite often a lot of that data, especially by AI, is collected in a manner that is not identifiable with who the data came from. The whole point to AI is to develop the systems by pouring massive amounts of data into them so the technology can become intelligence, so to speak.

How does the member square the comment he made with respect to demanding data be deleted from Telus, for example, when it might not be identifiable and, ultimately, one would not want it to necessarily be identifiable in many situations? Would he exclude that from those comments?

Government Orders

• (1325)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, all information is identifiable because it involves, and should involve, expressed consent up front and is trackable under all systems now, even under AI. It can be, theoretically, and at times the identity is removed to put it together in a larger context of data.

I am looking forward to hearing testimony on this. It is my understanding that there are technologies that allow people, through a back end, to figure out and get at that data. I am not sure the legislation is strong enough to deal with the issue of the itemized data, the stuff that had people's individual identification taken off, and that it cannot be reconstituted. I know there are penalties in the bill for doing that if it is done without permission, but there are questions around the technology's ability to truly hide one's data at this point.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to rise to speak to Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act.

I think it is important to reflect on how long it has been since we last had an update to legislation regarding the privacy laws that exist around data. The last time was over 20 years ago. Twenty years might not seem like a long time, but when we think about it, 20 years ago Facebook was probably just a program Mark Zuckerberg was working on in his dorm room.

If we think of iPhones, they were pretty much non-existent 20 years ago. Smart phones were out, but they certainly did not have anywhere near the capabilities they do today. So many other technologies we have come to rely on now have been getting smarter over the years. They are acting in different manners and are able to do the work they do because of the data being collected from individual users.

Another great example would be Google. Twenty years ago it was nothing more than literally a search engine. One had to type into the Google form what one was looking for. Sometimes one had to put weird characters or a plus symbol between words in the search terms. It literally was just a table of contents accessing information for people. However, now it is so much more than that. How many of us have, at some point, said to somebody that we would love to get a new air fryer, and then suddenly, the next day or later that day, we see in Google, on Facebook, or whatever it might be, advertisements for air fryers that keep popping up. I am sure that sometimes it is a coincidence, but I know in my experience it seems it happens way too often to be a coincidence.

These are the results of new technologies that are coming along, and in particular AI, that are able to work algorithms and build new ones based on the information being fed into the system. Of course the more information that gets fed in, the smarter the technologies get and the more they are looking to feed off new data that can give them even further precision with respect to advertising and targeting tools at people.

This is not just about selling advertising. AI can also lead to incredible advancements in technology that we otherwise would not have been able to get to, such as advancements in health and the automotive industry. If we think of our vehicles, the big thing now in

new cars is the lane-assist feature, which uses technology such as lidar to read signals in the road.

There is technology that, when we enter our passwords to confirm we are human beings, sometimes requires us to pick different things from pictures. When we do that, we are feeding information back into helping those images be properly placed. We are not just confirming that we are human beings; there is an incredible amount of data being used to give better evaluations to various different formulas and equations based on the things we do.

When we think of things like intelligent and autonomous vehicles, which basically drive themselves, 20 years ago would we ever have thought a car could actually drive itself? We are pretty much halfway there. We are at a point where vehicles are able to see and identify roads and know where they need to be, what the hazards are, and what the possible threats are that exist with respect to that drive.

What is more important is that, when I get into my vehicle, drive it around and engage with other vehicles, it is analyzing all of this data and sending that information back to help develop that AI system for intelligent vehicles to make it even better and more predictive. It is not just the data that goes into the AI, but also the data that it can generate and then further feed to the algorithms to make it even better.

• (1330)

It is very obvious that things have changed quite a bit in 20 years. We are nowhere near where we were 20 years ago. We are so much further ahead, but we have to be conscious of what is happening to that data we are submitting. Sometimes, as I mentioned in a previous question, it can be data that is submitted anonymously for the purposes of being used to help algorithms around lidar and self-driving vehicles, for example. At other times it can be data that can be used for commercial, marketing and advertising purposes.

I think of my children. My six-year-old, who is in grade one, is developing his reading quite quickly. Two years ago, even at the age of four, when he would be playing a video game and would not be able to figure out how to get past a certain level, he would walk up to my wife's iPad and basically say, "Hey, Siri, how do I do this?"

Just saying that, I probably set off a bunch of phones to listen to what I am saying, but the point is that we have children who, already at such a young age, are using this technology. I did not grow up being able to say, "Hey, Siri, how do I do this or that?"

What we have to be really concerned about is the development of children and the development of minors, what they are doing and how that can impact them and their privacy. I am very relieved to see there is a big component of this that, in my opinion, aims to ensure the privacy of minors is maintained, even though I have heard the concern or the criticism from some members today that the definition of "minor" needs to be better reflected in the legislation.

Government Orders

I feel as though if it is not known what a minor is, in terms of how it relates to this legislation, then I believe this is something that can be worked out in committee. It is something to which the governing members would be more than welcome, in terms of listening to the discussion around that and why or why not further clarifying the definition is important.

I would like to just back up a second and talk more specifically about the three parts of this bill and what they would do. The summary reads as follows:

Part 1 enacts the Consumer Privacy Protection Act to govern the protection of personal information of individuals while taking into account the need of organizations to collect, use or disclose personal information in the course of commercial activities.

A consequence of this first part would be to repeal other older pieces of legislation. I think this is absolutely critical, because this goes back to what I have been talking about in terms of how things have changed over the last 20 years. We are now at a place where we really do not know what information we are giving or is being used from us. I realize, as some other colleagues have indicated, 99.9% of the time, we always click that “yes, I accept the terms” without reading the terms and conditions, not knowing exactly how our information is being used and what is actually being linked directly back to us.

Through the consumer privacy protection act, there would be protections in place for the personal information of individuals while, at the same time, really respecting the need to ensure companies can still innovate, because it is important to innovate. It is important to see these technologies do better.

Quite frankly, it is important for me personally, and this will be very selfish of me, that, when I am watching on Netflix a show that I really like, I get recommendations of other shows I might really like. As the member for South Shore—St. Margarets mentioned earlier, when it comes to Spotify, it is important to me also that, when I start listening to certain music, other music gets suggested to me based on what other people who share similar interests to mine have liked, and how these algorithms end up generating that content for me.

It is important to ensure that companies, if we want them to continue to innovate on these incredible technologies we have, can have access to data. However, it is even more important that they be responsible with respect to that innovation. There has to be the proper balance between privacy and innovation, how people are innovating and how that data is being used.

• (1335)

We have seen examples in recent years, whether in the United States or in Canada, where data that has been collected has been used in a manner not in keeping with how that data was supposed to be used. There has to be a comprehensive act in place that properly identifies how that data is going to be used, because, quite frankly, the last time this legislation was updated, 20 years ago, we had no idea how that data would be used today.

By encouraging responsible innovation and ensuring we have the proper terminology in the legislation, companies would know exactly what they should and should not be doing, how they should be engaging with that data, what they need to do with that data at vari-

ous times, how to keep it secure and safe and, most importantly, how to maintain the privacy of individuals. It is to the benefit not just of individuals in 2022, or 2023 almost, to have data that is being properly secured. It is also very important and to the benefit of the businesses, so that they know what the rules are and what the playing field is like when it comes to accessing that data.

The second part of this bill, as has been mentioned:

...enacts the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act, which establishes an administrative tribunal to hear appeals of certain decisions made by the Privacy Commissioner under the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and to impose penalties for the contravention of certain provisions of that Act.

This is absolutely critical, because there has to be somewhere people can go to ensure that, if they have a concern from a consumer perspective over the way their data is used and they are not happy with the result from the commissioner, they have an avenue to appeal those decisions. If we do not do that, and we put too much power in the hands of a few individuals, or in this case the Privacy Commissioner under the consumer protection act, if we give all that power and do not have the ability for an appeal mechanism, then we will certainly run into problems down the road. This legislation would help ensure that the commissioner is kept in check, and it would also help consumers have the faith they need to have in terms of accountability when it comes to their data and whether it is being used and maintained in a safe way.

The third part of the bill is the more controversial in terms of whether or not it should be part of this particular legislation or in a separate vote. The summary reads:

Part 3 enacts the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act to regulate international and interprovincial trade and commerce in artificial intelligence systems by requiring that certain persons adopt measures to mitigate the risks of harm and biased output related to high-impact artificial intelligence systems.

That act would provide for public reporting and authorizes the minister to order the production of records related to artificial intelligence systems. The act also would establish prohibitions related to the possession or use of illegally obtained personal information for the purpose of designing, developing, using or making available for use an artificial intelligence system in an intentional or reckless way that causes material harm to individuals.

One of the consequences of artificial intelligence, quite frankly, is that if we allow all of this biased information to be fed into the artificial intelligence systems and be used to create and produce results for important algorithms, then we run the risk of those results being biased as well if the inputs are going to be that way. Therefore, ensuring that there are proper measures in place to ensure individuals are not going to be treated in a biased manner is going to require true accountability.

• (1340)

The reality is that artificial intelligence, even in its current form, is very hard to predict. It is very hard to understand exactly when a person is being impacted by something being generated from an artificially intelligent form. Quite often, a lot of the interactions we already have on a day-to-day basis are based on these artificial intelligence features that are using various different inputs in order to determine what we should be doing or how we should be engaging with something.

The reality is that if this is done in a biased manner or in a manner that is intentionally reckless, people might not be aware of that until it is well past the point, so it is important to ensure that we have all of the proper measures in place to protect individuals against those who would try to use artificial intelligence in a manner that would intentionally harm them.

As I come to the conclusion of my remarks, I will go back to what I talked about in the beginning, that artificial intelligence, quite frankly, has a lot of benefits to it. It is going to transform just about everything in our lives: how we interact with individuals, how we interact with technologies, how we are cared for, how we move around by transportation, how we make decisions, as we already know, on what to listen to or what to watch.

It is incredibly important that as this technology develops and artificial intelligence becomes more and more common, we ensure that we are in the driver's seat in terms of understanding what is going into that and making sure we are fully aware of anybody who might be breaking rules as they relate to the use of artificial intelligence. It will become more difficult, quite frankly, as the artificial intelligence forms take on new responsibilities and meanings to create new decisions and outputs, and we must ensure that we are in a position to always be in the driver's seat and have the proper oversight that is required.

I recognize that some concerns have been brought forward today by different members. At first glance, when the member for South Shore—St. Margarets and others brought forward the concern around the definition of a “minor”, which is not something I thought of when I originally looked at this bill, I can appreciate, especially after hearing his response to my question, why it is necessary to put a proper definition in there. I hope the bill gets to committee and the committee can study some of those important questions so we can keep moving this along.

I certainly do not feel as though we should just be abandoning this bill altogether because we might have concerns about one thing or another. The reality, and what we know for certain, is that things have changed quite a bit in the last 20 years since the legislation was last updated. We need to start working on this now. We need to get it to committee, and the proper studies need to occur at this point so we can properly ensure that individuals' privacy and protection are taken care of as they relate to the three particular parts I talked about today.

• (1345)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned some of the things that are missing in the bill and that it will hopefully get to committee, but there was no mention, as he said, about minors and defining “minor”. My other colleague mentioned today that in the U.S. it is defined as 13 years old, which I found quite surprising. Here in North America we have so many definitions of “minor” that we still do not know what they meant here in Canada when they wrote the laws. There was no mention of seniors, which I mentioned already this morning.

Overall, why did the government pick such an ambiguous or bureaucratic way of approaching this legislation and offering clarity versus having the rules and doing it right the first time?

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, when I first looked at the word “minor” I just assumed what a minor would be. I think my natural assumption was that it meant anybody under the age of 18. That was an assumption I probably should not have made.

I have been listening to the discussion today, and when I asked that question of the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, he gave a really good answer that made me pause and reflect on the fact that even in Canada, we have various terms for minors.

I am looking forward to seeing this go to committee so that it can be studied and then we can hear the pros and cons of defining it. Maybe there is no con to it and only pros, in which case I look forward to hearing what the committee puts forward on that. Maybe there is another reason it should not be defined that I am unaware of at this point. Again, that is something I would like to hear the answers to.

However, the debate today has certainly opened my eyes to that perspective.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, personal information is a shared jurisdiction. The Government of Quebec already has Law 25 on personal information.

Are there any guarantees that the new legislation will not infringe on Quebec's jurisdiction? Has the member already considered that? Does he have any examples?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, my understanding, based on the information that I have received, is that the bill aligns itself very closely with the approaches of other jurisdictions, such as where the member is from in Quebec. I think that the two bills can work together and this does not necessarily supersede the other.

Again, that is a good question for the committee to study and report back on. At least, my understanding at this point is that it works very closely with other laws that exist. That may be part of the reason the information was not conclusive in relation to defining a minor. Perhaps that is a decision that has to be made with the provinces and other jurisdictions. I do not know, but I think it is a good question and I too would like to hear the answer to it when this returns from committee.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things that concern me in this bill is the proposed personal information and data protection tribunal. The way it is formulated and the vagueness of the membership, especially since many members will be appointed by the government, gives rise to a concern that it might be used as a political tool by the government of the day to overturn rulings it does not like. No other jurisdiction in the world has a tribunal like this. No other privacy regime has a tribunal like this.

Government Orders

I am curious as to whether the member thinks it might be better just to empower the Privacy Commissioner.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not understand exactly what the member means by just empowering the Privacy Commissioner. My understanding was that the intent of the tribunal was to oversee decisions that were made by the commissioner. That being the case, I think it is important that there be a body in place to bring complaints about the commissioner to.

Having said that, again, if the concern is not about the structure of the bodies but more about the composition and how that is determined, then I think this is a great conversation that can be had at committee, and the committee can bring forward its suggestions on this.

The government that introduced the bill certainly is not in a majority, as we know, and the NDP have been there to work with the government quite a bit. If these are suggestions that need to be brought forward, in a minority Parliament there is going to have to be at least a majority of the members on the committee that make recommendations back. I guess we will see what comes back from the committee.

• (1350)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated hearing the thoughts of the member for Kingston and the Islands, but one proposed section that is a concern to me is proposed section 18(3), which states:

An organization may collect or use an individual's personal information without their knowledge or consent if the collection or use is made for the purpose of an activity in which the organization has a legitimate interest that outweighs any potential adverse effect on the individual resulting from that collection or use

I wonder if the member could comment on the possibility of tightening up the language of what a legitimate interest is and if, in his view, this is something the committee could look at improving when the bill gets there.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the governing party does not have a majority, if a majority of the House feels a concern over that, there will have to be some kind of a compromise or resolution in committee with respect to this.

My only caution would be to ask, what does it actually mean? When we hear stuff like this and we read it, we might intuitively say, "Hold on, there is a problem with this," without actually getting all the feedback. Committee is a great place to ask these questions specifically and to get examples of when that might happen and when it might not. That would then better inform the committee to make a recommendation, like the member is suggesting.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague on his wonderful speech.

He did mention that it has been 20 years since this matter was reviewed and looked at. Could the member describe why now, and how important it is to get it right at this time?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, 20 years ago none of us were on Facebook. I think it was just Mark Zuckerberg and some of his college friends, and look where we are now and not only the way Facebook, Instagram and all those other social media services impact our daily

lives in the sense that we are using them, but also how they are selling stuff to us, collecting information from us and feeding stuff back to us. The same could be said about Google and the iPhone. All these things have come a tremendous way in the last 20 years.

Having the proper measures in place now is critically important, because these technologies are not going to slow down. They are just going to speed up, getting better and more efficient. We need to make sure the proper accountability and rules are in place at this stage of the game, so we are not trying to play catch-up even more later on.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about being in the driver's seat, about AI and privacy.

The bill is really a balance between business interests and privacy, but one thing that we have seen is missing from the bill is its failure to mention privacy as a fundamental human right. That is not included in the purpose clause. We look at other provinces, like Quebec, and Quebec has privacy listed as a fundamental human right in its privacy legislation.

To be in control, to be in the driver's seat, to protect our minors, to ensure that businesses do not have something like legitimate interests that take control of this bill, does the member agree that having privacy listed as a fundamental human right is imperative to this bill going forward in the purpose statement?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member indicated that it is not in the preamble. Could it be in the preamble? Maybe it should be. I am not sure.

What I did learn very quickly from my days on municipal council is that the preamble really does not matter; it is the resolve clauses in the motion, or in this case the bill, that really matter. Do I believe that privacy is of the utmost importance? Absolutely. It is talked about throughout this bill. Should that be in the preamble? I am sure that is another matter that could be discussed at committee to determine if it is appropriate.

• (1355)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, for the average citizen in the digital age, we have entered uncertain times. To almost everyone, at face value, the convenience of our time is remarkable. Access to any piece of information is available at our fingertips. Any item imaginable can seamlessly be ordered and delivered to our doors. Many government services can be processed online instead of in person. Canadians have taken these conveniences for granted for many years now.

The pandemic accelerated our ascent, or descent, depending on who you ask, into the digital age. The inability to leave our homes and the necessity to maintain some rhythm of everyday life played a significant part in that, but around the world, we saw governments taking advantage of the plight of their citizens. Public health was used as a catalyst for implementing methods of tracking and control, and social media platforms, which have been putting a friendly face on exploiting our likes, dislikes and movements for years, continue to develop and implement that technology with little input or say from their millions of users.

Canadians no longer can be sure that their personal information will not be outed, or doxed, to the public if doing so would achieve some certain political objective. We saw that unfold earlier this year with the users of the GiveSendGo platform.

The long-term ramifications of our relationship with the digital economy is something Canadians are beginning to understand. They are now alert to the fact that organizations, companies and government departments operating in Canada today do not face notable consequences for breaking our privacy laws. As lawmakers, it is our responsibility to ensure that Canadians' privacy is protected and that this protection continues to evolve as threats to our information and anonymity as consumers unrelentingly expands both within and beyond our borders.

That brings me to the bill we are discussing today, Bill C-27. It is another attempt to introduce a digital charter after the previous iteration of the bill, Bill C-11, died on the Order Paper in the last Parliament. My colleagues and I believe that striking the right balance is at the core of the debate on this bill. On the one hand, it seeks to update privacy laws and regulations that have not been modernized since the year 2000 and implemented in 2005. It would be hard to describe the scale of expansion in the digital world over the last 22-year period in a mere 20-minute speech. It is therefore appropriate that a bill in any form, particularly one as long-awaited as Bill C-27, is considered by Parliament to fill the privacy gaps we see in Canada's modern-day digital economy.

Parliament must also balance the need for modernization of privacy protection with the imperative that our small and medium-sized businesses remain competitive. Many of these businesses sustain themselves through the hard work of two or three employees, or perhaps even just a sole proprietor. We must be sensitive to their concerns, as Canada improves its image as a friendly destination for technology, data and innovation. This is especially true as our economic growth continues to recover from the damaging impact of pandemic lockdowns, crippling taxes that continue to rise and ever-increasing red tape.

That extra layer of red tape may very well be the catalyst for many small businesses to close their operations. No one in the House would like to see a further consolidation of Canadians' purchasing power in big players such as Amazon and Walmart, which have the infrastructure already in place for these new privacy requirements.

In a digital age, Canadians expect businesses to operate online and invest a certain amount of trust in the receiving end of a transaction to protect their personal information. They expect that it will

be used only in ways that are necessary for a transaction to be completed, and nothing more.

In exchange for convenience and expediency, consumers have been willing to compromise their anonymity to a degree, but they expect their government and businesses to match this free flow of information with appropriate safeguards. This is why Bill C-27, and every other bill similar to it, must be carefully scrutinized.

As many of my colleagues have already indicated, this is a large and complex bill, and we believe that its individual components are too important for them to be considered as one part of an omnibus bill.

There are three—

The Speaker: I am sorry, but I am going to cut in to interrupt the hon. member. She will have 15 minutes and 45 seconds to complete her speech when we return to this. We will now go to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Public Services and Procurement in Kanata to announce \$1.7 million in federal funding for BluWave-ai, a clean-tech company in my riding of Kanata—Carleton.

BluWave-ai is leveraging artificial intelligence to help utility companies add renewable energy sources to their electricity grid. Our federal funding will help it build and commercialize software to manage electric vehicle fleet operations while reducing energy consumption on carbon-emitting vehicles.

By investing in these transformative technologies, our government is supporting workers and businesses as we move toward smarter and more reliable made-in-Canada, and in this case, made-in-Kanata, technologies. Way to go BluWave. Way to go FedDev Ontario. The future is green.

*Statements by Members***INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY***[Translation]*

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, December 2 is the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. In Canada, forms of modern slavery can take place in factories, on job sites, on farms and in restaurants.

However, sex trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes. It is happening in every province, in thousands of Canadian communities. It is happening within 10 blocks, or within 10 minutes, of where we live. Most victims of this crime are from Canada and are coerced into prostitution by pimps. Over 90% of them are women and girls.

Around the world, over 50 million people are trapped in modern-day slavery, many making the very products Canadians buy. Modern slavery takes advantage of the poor and vulnerable throughout the world and robs people of their God-given dignity and freedom. It destroys lives and families.

We can change this. We can end this. On this International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, let us recommit to ending modern day slavery in all its forms, to seeking justice for those enslaved and to hoping for the restoration for those who are freed. May Canada be the first country to declare zero tolerance to modern slavery and human trafficking.

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WAABAN CROSSING

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, almost four years since construction started, almost five years since all the funding was approved and over 50 years since it was first conceived, a third crossing of the Cataraqui River in Kingston is almost ready for its opening date of December 13.

Officially known as the Waaban Crossing, its name is an Ojibwa word meaning dawn, morning light or east. It is an appropriate name, as the bridge will further connect Kingston's east end with the rest of the city, and it recognizes our indigenous roots.

On time and on budget, this was the first bridge built in North America using the integrated project delivery model made possible only because of the incredible collaboration of public and private efforts of the City of Kingston, led by Mark Van Buren, and contractor Peter Kiewit Sons, along with the incredible labour delivered by LiUNA labourers Local 183; Local 793, operating engineers; and Local 765 and Local 721, ironworkers.

The largest infrastructure project taken on by the City of Kingston to date, this bridge spans nearly 1.4 kilometres and includes a fully accessible active transportation lane, which will allow residents to enjoy the beautiful Cataraqui River while moving between Kingston east and centre. Once again, I send my congratulations to all those involved.

FÉLIX AUGER-ALIASSIME

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to recognize the exceptional season of tennis played by Quebecer Félix Auger-Aliassime.

The season culminated in an impressive victory at the Davis Cup, where his performance was instrumental in winning that iconic trophy for the first time. His career reflects his phenomenal progress. This year he won his first tournament in Rotterdam, to which he added consecutive titles in Florence, Antwerp and Basel. He won 16 matches in a row during the tour, qualifying for the ATP finals, in which he managed to score his first career win against Rafael Nadal, finishing sixth in the world rankings.

Félix Auger-Aliassime is a source of pride for Quebecers. He is an example of perseverance and determination as one of the top athletes on the international stage in 2022. All Quebecers are behind Félix Auger-Aliassime and hope to see him reach the top of the world rankings next year.

* * *

NATIONAL ADDICTIONS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2022 proposes to provide \$100 million over three years to support harm reduction, treatment and prevention at the community level. People have different reasons for using substances, but one thing is certain: No one chooses to become addicted.

Although National Addictions Awareness Week came to an end this past weekend, we must continue our daily efforts to minimize these devastating effects on individuals, families, communities and the country.

In fact, I see this as an opportunity to call Canadians to action. Without passing judgment, let us provide support and help eradicate the stigma.

There are federal resources, such as Wellness Together and Kids Help Phone, to help those struggling with addiction. I want them to know that they are not alone.

• (1405)

[English]

LOBSTER FISHERY

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from Halifax, down the south and western shores of Nova Scotia, is Canada's most lucrative fishing region, where the lobster season will open this week. It is dangerous work fishing in the North Atlantic in the winter. This year, fishermen are facing more challenges. If the howling winds, frigid temperatures and unpredictable waves were not bad enough, the Liberal government's taxes are making it more difficult for fishermen to fuel their boats and make a living.

The government's unscientific closures for the bait fishery have made it tougher and more expensive for fishermen to set their traps. The men and women who make a living on the sea feed Canadians and, in southern Nova Scotia, the lobster industry is the main economic driver. Families depend on a thriving lobster season to pay the bills and put food on the table. I hope everyone in the House will join me in wishing all the fishermen in lobster fishing areas 33 and 34 a safe, successful and prosperous lobster season.

* * *

GIVING TUESDAY

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is that time of the year. I am talking about a special day for kindness and generosity, and boy, could we not use a little more of that these days? This Tuesday, November 29, is a special day. After Black Friday and Cyber Monday, it is Giving Tuesday, a global movement of generosity.

For Giving Tuesday, I am encouraging everyone to perform random acts of kindness. They could help a neighbour, buy a coffee for the person in line behind them, pick up litter or let someone else have their seat on the bus. The opportunities are truly endless. If they have a favourite charitable organization in their community, they could call to ask if they can volunteer and how they can help.

Let us be inspired by Giving Tuesday and be kind to one another. On Tuesday and every day, let us help those who need us in our communities. I ask that everyone in the House and across all of Canada join me in celebrating Giving Tuesday.

* * *

CHARITABLE GIVING IN CAPE BRETON—CANSO

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, local businesses are the heart of our communities in Cape Breton—Canso. Freeman's Pharmacy, nestled in the small community of Inverness, is no exception. Recently, the people of Freeman's Pharmacy went far above and beyond in their efforts to give back to their community. They did so in the form of a \$75,000 donation to the local Inverness Consolidated Memorial Hospital. This incredible donation will go a long way toward purchasing medical equipment for the local hospital and is something that will benefit this community for years to come.

This not only is a testament of the positive impact of small businesses within our communities, but it is also a true testament to the

Statements by Members

people of Inverness, whose commitment to their neighbours remains undoubtedly strong. On behalf of the residents of Cape Breton—Canso, I extend my gratitude to the staff of Freeman's Pharmacy for their fine example of community-oriented kindness.

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[Translation]

LAVAL UNIVERSITY'S FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, something wonderful happened on Saturday, November 26, that made me very proud: The Rouge et Or, the football team for Quebec City's Laval University, won its 11th Vanier Cup, this time against the Saskatchewan Huskies. It was a thrilling game that proved that it pays off in the end to work as a team, persevere and keep up the effort until the end of the game. The last time the Rouge et Or won the Vanier Cup was in 2018. Four years later, this victory puts Quebec City's team back at the top of the list of Canada's best university football teams.

I want to congratulate receiver Kevin Mital, who was named the Vanier Cup's most outstanding offensive player. I also want to pay tribute to the Rouge et Or coach, Glen Constantin, who led his team to their 11th victory. This was Mr. Constantin's 10th career Vanier Cup. That means he has won one out of every two Vanier Cups over the past 20 years.

The people of Quebec City are all proud of the Rouge et Or. I hope the team savours their well-deserved victory.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives believe passionately in the value and potential of immigration. Immigration allows us to fill skill gaps in our economy, to incubate movements for freedom and justice, and to pollinate our national conversation with the good and beautiful from all over the world. Unfortunately, Liberals are undermining support for immigration by piling on silly red tape, extending wait times and denying newcomers the opportunity to work and serve in their communities.

A Conservative government would make our immigration system work again. First and foremost, we would ensure that those who come to Canada can work in their fields. We would support programs to allow newcomers to qualify before they even get here, provide support for foreign-trained professionals to get certified and sign deals with provinces to guarantee that they would get a clear yes or no answer on their qualifications within 60 days.

Statements by Members

Under the Liberals, new Canadians are seeing red: red ink and red tape. It is time to replace that red with blue skies. Conservatives are excited about the limitless potential of a diverse, pluralistic and free society where anyone, no matter how long they have been here, can use their skills to build our country up. For new Canadians and all Canadians, it is blue skies ahead.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the cost of living and record-high inflation, small businesses have been forced to bear the brunt of cost increases, which are hitting them hard after more than two years of challenges.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, small businesses have incurred, on average, \$150,000 in new debt, yet what Christmas gifts are the Liberals giving them for 2023? Tax increases.

Carbon tax increases add costs to their heating bills and anything that is shipped. There is the payroll tax increase and an automatic tax increase on beer, wine, ciders and spirits, affecting beverage production and hospitality industries.

It is no wonder that one in six Canadian small business is considering closing its doors.

A female entrepreneur from my community recently told me that she was making the tough decision to raise her prices, knowing that it would affect her clients, and that she held off as long as she could. Small businesses are among the most affected by inflation and they are making tough decisions every day.

Only the Conservatives will axe the carbon tax on gas, groceries and heating and give our small businesses the breaks they need now.

* * *

AARON FISHER

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like so many in my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, I was saddened to hear the news of constituent Aaron Fisher's sudden and tragic passing while on holiday in the Philippines on Friday, November 18.

Aaron was a professional millwright and was a valued employee at Septodont in Cambridge for many years.

Aaron served as the past president of the Kitchener South—Hespeler Federal Liberal Riding Association. He was also the former executive director of the Hespeler Village BIA. In this role, he was a tremendous advocate for small businesses in Hespeler's downtown core.

Most of all, Aaron was a dedicated father to his two sons Sammy and Cole, who have lost their father way too soon.

Every member of Parliament in the House knows what it is to have that dedicated and enthusiastic political volunteer. Aaron con-

tributed greatly on both federal and provincial boards and campaigns in various capacities.

I extend my sincerest condolences to Aaron's family, friends and former co-workers during this difficult time. He will be greatly missed.

* * *

[Translation]

MARIO ST-DENIS

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I had the pleasure of joining members of the Canadians Armed Forces 34th Service Battalion and their spouses for a regimental dinner at Saint-Hubert Garrison.

That evening, we acknowledged the career and command appointments of Lieutenant-Colonel Mario St-Denis, who retired as commander of the battalion in June 2020. Lieutenant-Colonel St-Denis is an outstanding service member who had a stellar career in the Canadian Armed Forces. I had the privilege of collaborating with him for several years, and I can say that I consider him a personal friend. I congratulate him on a well-deserved retirement.

Lieutenant-Colonel Lance Gosselin will be taking command. I will be pleased to work with him and continue the strong relationship that I have long had with this battalion.

Many thanks to the 34th Service Battalion for a wonderful evening.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I recognize the hard work of trucking companies and drivers who keep our supply chains and economy moving. However, those companies and employees are coming face-to-face with an illegal tax scheme that threatens the livelihood of the industry, the rights of truckers and the safety of people on our highways.

Driver Inc. is a tax scheme designed to convince employees to register as a corporation. The company then pays the corporation, which is not subject to normal tax deductions. Drivers are not entitled to overtime pay, paid sick days, vacation or severance pay.

[Translation]

This illegal tax scheme leaves truck drivers unprotected in the event of a workplace accident and vulnerable to unjust termination.

[English]

Legitimate carriers and labour stand together in condemning this practice that benefits large corporate entities that push the demand for this illegal tax scheme.

We must work together to clamp down on systemic labour abuses, close tax loopholes and support those who respect the rules, protect workers and keep our economy rolling.

* * *

[Translation]

URBAN GREENNESS IN SAINT-JÉRÔME

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 17, Statistics Canada released data on urban greenness, and the news is good. With a score of 93%, Saint-Jérôme came out on top in all of Quebec, and even in all of Canada.

There is good reason to be happy with our community's efforts over the past few years. We can take pride in our P'tit Train du Nord trails; Lac-Jérôme nature park, which is as big as the Mount Royal park; or the Rivière du Nord, which runs through the Laurentians.

In the face of climate change, developing green cities means building quality living spaces, mitigating heat islands, reducing rainwater runoff, preserving healthy wildlife habitats and maintaining the beauty of the area. Saint-Jérôme is number one in urban greenness, and rest assured that we will not stop there. Saint-Jérôme will become even greener and bolster its reputation as a champion of electrification of transportation.

A positive step forward for the planet; a positive step forward for Quebec.

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[English]

ADDICTION

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the addiction crisis is destroying lives and tearing families apart. Whether it be the rapid increase in opioid-related deaths, a massive spike in meth use driving rural crime or an overuse of alcohol that continues to utilize more health resources than all other substances combined, Canadians are suffering.

I hear so often from communities that the system is broken. In fact, it often feels like everything is broken, but we can fix it. The Conservatives believe that addiction is a health condition. We believe in a fair, firm and compassionate approach to addressing the addiction crisis, that every Canadian deserves to live in a safe community and that every person struggling with this illness deserves an opportunity to pursue recovery.

We believe there should be a recovery-oriented system of care that helps people on their journey. This means prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery. The Conservatives believe that we have to meet people where they are at, but we need to stop leaving people there. We should be helping them get their life, family and dignity back. Recovery is possible.

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CANADIAN REMEMBRANCE TORCH

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I had the pleasure to co-host with Karen Hunter the Canadian Remembrance Torch meet-and-greet event with students An-

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na, Sebastian and Raj from McMaster University. These accomplished students were involved in engineering and constructing the torch, which serves as an important symbol for the contributions of Canadian veterans.

During this morning's event, the students shared their journey in manufacturing the torch and bringing awareness to Canada's military contribution in the liberation of the Netherlands during the Second World War. The students also shared their thoughts on why commemorative initiatives, like the Canadian Remembrance Torch, was important for Canada's domestic, international and military history.

I stand with them in commemorating those who did not return and our Canadian veterans, and echo their voice in bringing more awareness to our great veterans who risked so much to defend and preserve our freedom.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Governor of the Bank of Canada indicated that this government's inflationary deficits have added to the inflation we are seeing today.

The Prime Minister blames these exorbitant deficits on COVID-19, but 40% of these deficits had nothing to do with COVID-19. According to the Governor of the Bank of Canada, inflation now costs each and every one of us \$3,500.

Will the government reverse its inflationary deficit policies so Canadians can pay their bills?

● (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start the day and week with some very good news.

This week, on Thursday, December 1, Canadians can begin to apply for the Canadian dental benefit. This means that parents of children under 12 years of age will be able to claim \$650 for dentist visits. That is excellent news for all Canadians, especially for our children.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even the Governor of the Bank of Canada has said that the government's deficit spending is driving inflation and that inflation is costing the average Canadian \$3,500.

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Furthermore, we are facing a heating crisis over the winter. The Liberals say they are going to buy everyone a heat pump, but according to MacLeod Lorway insurance group, many insurance companies will not accept heat pumps as a main source of heat. That is because they cannot be counted on to keep the pipes from freezing.

Instead of distracting with promises that will not work, why will the Liberals not cancel their plan to triple the carbon tax and raise home heating prices?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, providing dental care for all Canadian children under 12 is not a promise that will not work. That is a commitment that starts this Thursday and means that never again will Canadian parents of young children need to choose between buying the groceries, paying the rent or taking their kid to the dentist. That is something for us all to celebrate.

When it comes to fiscal responsibility, Canada has a AAA rating, and the lowest debt and deficit in the G7.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was about home heating.

The New Democrats have voted to raise home heating prices. They voted against our motion to take the carbon tax off home heating, and did it right before a winter when analysts expect that home heating prices will double. Now the Liberals are saying they will buy everyone a heat pump, which insurance companies say will not be insured because people need a backup heat supply in order to keep the pipes from freezing.

Instead of coming up with new schemes, why do the Liberals not just cancel the tax so Canadians can stay warm this winter?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly think we can all agree that affordability is an incredibly important issue for all Canadians. That is why we have done a number of things, including the doubling of the GST benefit, enhancing the workers benefit and making investments into energy efficiency to ensure we are addressing affordability.

It is also the case, no matter what the opposition tries to say, that eight out of 10 Canadian families actually get more money back than they pay for the price on pollution.

I would say that every member on that side of the House, including the Leader of the Opposition, campaigned on a platform to put in place a price on pollution. What does he say to his constituents now?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I say to my constituents that we want them to have lower, not higher, heating bills.

As for his claim, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that, when we take into account both the financial and economic cost of the government's carbon tax, 60% of people paying it will pay more than they get back in any rebate. That is published information, and it is only going to get worse as the Liberals triple the tax with the help of the NDP.

We are heading into a cold winter. Canadians need to heat their homes; it is not a luxury. Will the Liberals cancel their plan to triple the tax?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, the hon. member has now made the most bizarre argument I could possibly imagine when it comes to inaction on climate change. He is now suddenly opposed to heat pumps.

Heat pumps have the ability to reduce pollution in our community and bring the cost of power down or heat for homeowners who live in my community. This is particularly important as we are coming up on the winter season. I was so pleased to make the announcement in my hometown last week that we would provide an upfront grant of up to \$5,000 for homeowners to help them lower their heating bills every month.

We are going to continue to do what is right for climate change, because we know the cost of inaction is simply too great to ignore.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the recently published government strategy on the Indo-Pacific, it says, "In areas of profound disagreement, we will challenge China, including when it engages in coercive behaviour [or] ignores human rights obligations". There is a wave of protests across China right now, and there are now reports of government crackdowns against those protests.

If the government is serious about what it put in its strategy, then will it indicate to Beijing that the peaceful protests should be allowed to go ahead and that any crackdown should be resisted?

● (1425)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are following the unfolding events in China very closely. We remain in close contact with our embassy and consulate.

We believe in freedom of expression at home and abroad, including in China, and that protesters should be able to peacefully protest and share their views without fearing for their safety. We will continue to follow the events very closely.

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me summarize the situation. Global News has reported on Chinese interference in the 2019 election. At least 11 candidates may have received funding from China. Intelligence services informed the Prime Minister's Office as far back as January 2022. We are trying to get to the bottom of this, but we are not getting any clear answers from either the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as though secrecy somehow served democracy.

I will put the question another way. Are we to understand from the government that the Global News story is false?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take all threats of foreign interference very seriously. That is precisely why we created not one, but two independent committees, which have confirmed the results of both the 2019 and 2021 elections. We will continue to provide all the tools that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security needs to protect our democratic institutions.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even if there was no Chinese interference with the funding of 11 candidates, we know that a real risk still exists. We need only think of the Chinese researchers at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, the secret police stations in Toronto and the espionage at Hydro-Québec. It is naive to believe that there is no threat of Chinese interference in elections.

Instead of being self-congratulatory, will the government recognize that public funding of political parties is a good way to protect the integrity of our elections?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we obviously share our colleague's belief that it is important to protect the electoral system and the integrity of our elections. That is why the government took action several years ago by creating a committee chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council and with intelligence experts to ensure that Canada's elections are free and open. That is exactly what this group confirmed in 2019 and also in 2021, which is good news.

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling to keep up with rising food costs. Canada's biggest grocer, Loblaw's, made \$556 million in profit in three months. While first-time visits to food banks go up by 64%, Loblaw's CEO is just getting richer. The NDP called on the Liberals to make this right and to make companies pay their fair share, but Canadians have yet to see any action.

Will the Liberals stand up for everyday Canadians and make these people pay their fair share?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is absolutely committed to ensuring that everyone pays their fair share. That is

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why we are taking action by permanently raising the tax on financial institutions and insurers by 1.5%, by introducing a Canada recovery dividend of 15% and by introducing a luxury tax on luxury private planes, yachts and luxury cars.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the demand for food support is on the rise across the country. People back home, children, seniors, low-income families, everyone is going hungry. In the meantime, Loblaw is raking in the profits on the backs of struggling families. CEOs and their shareholders are profiting from a crisis of their own making. The greed of these big grocery chains is callous.

Why are the Liberals refusing to make them pay their share to help people who are hungry?

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government committed to making everyone pay their fair share and that is what we have done.

We have taken measures such as the permanent 1.5% income tax increase on banks and insurance companies, implementing the 15% Canada recovery dividend and the tax on luxury cars, planes and boats.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is the only country in the developed world to increase the carbon tax during affordability crisis. Even Japan got with the program and cancelled its plan to increase the carbon tax.

The Liberals keep raising the tax, yet emissions keep going up, and they have not hit a single emission reduction target. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada said if the government axed the carbon tax, the Liberal inflation would be reduced.

Why would the Liberals not stop forcing their failed carbon tax scheme on Canadians?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we heard really good news for Atlantic Canadians. Three Atlantic provinces are going to get access to the climate action rebate that is going to put more money in their pockets.

Even more good news is that hundreds of millions of dollars are going to flow into Atlantic Canada to transition from dirty, expensive fuel oil to cleaner forms of energy. Heat pumps rule. We are making life more affordable and fighting climate change.

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Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a tax plan and not a climate plan.

The Liberals' failed plan is sending more Canadians to the food banks, and there are more families that have to skip meals. They keep failing on the environment. They have not fixed the economy. They keep charging Canadians even more.

Why will the Liberals not get out of the way, give Canadians a break and axe the tax?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives never met an environmental program that they did not want to cut.

I mentioned on the last day that they gutted our environmental laws, and they cut \$350 million from the climate action budget. For 10 long years, the Conservatives did absolutely nothing on climate change.

We are on track to meet our emissions target. We are doing something about climate change. We are building the economy of tomorrow.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal carbon tax has driven up the cost of home heating, fuel and groceries.

Canadians are suffering. People are wearing their winter coats inside of their homes to keep down heating costs. Mothers are diluting their babies' milk to stretch it. However, Canada pitifully ranks 58 out of 63 countries on climate action.

Will the Liberal government stop forcing their failed climate tax on suffering Canadians?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find that quite rich coming from the party opposite, which promised a climate plan but has not delivered. The people in my riding want action on climate right now.

The impacts of Fiona are still being felt on the ground. Now, in addition to the damages done to personal homes, infrastructure, waste water and municipal infrastructure, we have added four feet of snow to that. My constituents want action on the climate now.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remind the Liberal government that it is in government. It needs to present a plan. The government lacks credibility when it has not met a single climate target.

A tax on the backs of average Canadians does nothing to drive down emissions. It drives up poverty. More Canadians are relying on food banks than ever before. The food banks fear that they are going to run out of food. The carbon tax is not an environmental plan. It is a tax plan.

Will the government cancel its cruel carbon tax on gas, groceries and home heating?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are in government, and we are in government in part because we have a credible plan on climate. I think Canadians expect His Majesty's official opposition to have a climate plan, which it clearly does not.

Affordability today is critically important, but so is affordability tomorrow. We cannot leave the kinds of costs to our children that we will if we do not address climate change. The Climate Institute estimates \$100 billion a year by 2050 if we do not act to mitigate carbon emissions. We are going to do so in a manner that will promote economic opportunity and address climate change.

● (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inflation is squeezing the wallets of all Canadian families. Unfortunately, the simple fact is that everything costs more. Meanwhile, the government is still planning to increase the Liberal carbon tax.

I want to make one thing clear. Mathematically speaking, when the government raises taxes in a time of inflation, it is very profitable for the government, but it is not at all profitable for Canadian taxpayers.

When will the government finally do the right thing and not increase the Liberal carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to consider the issue of affordability while continuing to tackle the threat of climate change. We also need to take into account the future cost of climate change inaction, which will be \$25 billion by 2025.

Part of the solution to the affordability problem in Canada involves tackling climate change.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pillaging Canadian taxpayers' wallets is not going to solve the climate problem.

This Prime Minister has advanced some ludicrous economic theories. According to him, a budget balances itself and SMEs are a tax shelter for cheaters. These theories are completely ridiculous.

This is the first time a head of government has said that it is a good idea to raise taxes in times of inflation.

Honestly, could someone in this government stand up and tell us when they are going to scrap the Liberal carbon tax increase, which is a terrible idea given the inflation rates?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that my hon. colleague raises the issue of absurd ideas coming from Canadian politicians.

The most absurd of those ideas is the Conservative leader's proposal that Canadians can avoid inflation by investing in cryptoassets. That is a really absurd idea, a dangerous idea.

It is time for all Conservatives to apologize to Canadians.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is still not being transparent about its decision to invoke the Emergencies Act.

CSIS told us that the convoy was not a threat to national security. We know the convoy did not fit the definition of a national emergency in the act.

The government claims to have based its decision on one single document, an obscure legal opinion that the Minister of Justice is hiding. As a lawyer, the minister might be bound by solicitor-client privilege, but his client, the government, is not.

Are we honestly supposed to believe the government would hide a legal opinion that provided ample justification for invoking the act?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just remind everyone that what happened last winter was unprecedented. The impact on workers, families, and everyone was unprecedented. After extensive consultation with law enforcement and other levels of government, we made a necessary decision.

Last week, a number of ministers, including the Prime Minister, testified. Justice Rouleau says he now has all the evidence he needs to submit a final report. We will continue to be transparent about this very important decision.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the legal opinion fully vindicated the Liberals, they would have printed out hundreds of copies and distributed them to the media.

The Liberals saw those legal opinions. They read the act, they saw that they did not meet the threshold to invoke the act, but they invoked it anyway.

It was precisely to prevent this kind of thing that there was a shift from the old War Measures Act to the Emergencies Act. It was supposed to prevent any government from saying, "Just watch me", and arbitrarily suspending individual freedoms.

Does the government realize that, in doing so, it has set a dangerous precedent?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will describe the precedent we have set. It is a precedent of transparency, a precedent of rigour, a precedent that protected Canadians' lives and the Canadian economy during a difficult time.

Yes, we invoked the Emergencies Act in a focused, balanced manner for nine days. It addressed a situation involving a national emergency that threatened Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and we are proud of the decision we made as a government.

• (1440)

Oral Questions

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will quote what the Prime Minister said last Thursday about the Rouleau commission. He said, "I think it's a shame that there wasn't enough French.... Obviously, I will try to use it as much as possible so that everyone can understand me in both official languages."

We were looking forward to the Prime Minister setting an example and addressing the situation on Friday. We got 12 short minutes. For the Liberal government, does using French as much as possible boil down to 12 minutes out of five and a half hours? I say to him, great job.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I testified. As I know that my colleague was very interested, I testified before the commission along with the Minister of Public Safety on Tuesday. I spoke in French. I answered in French to questions asked in English.

The government was there. We answered the lawyers' and Justice Rouleau's questions, and we are proud of the testimony and the evidence that we provided on behalf of the government. We look forward to Justice Rouleau's report.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my parents, like most other immigrants, came to this country for the economic opportunities available to them and for the idea that if one works hard, they can make a decent living and provide for a family. However, because of the Liberals' inflation crisis caused by mismanagement and the overspending of Canadian taxpayer dollars, too many Canadians are struggling. Now the Liberals are going to triple the carbon tax and make everything more expensive.

When will they cancel their plan to triple the carbon tax?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the challenges that seniors are facing, and our government has been there for them. Unlike the party opposite, which has opposed every single measure we have put forward to support seniors, we are delivering for them by doubling the GST credit, which will help 11 million people. We are providing rental and dental support. We have permanently increased old age security by 10% for those 75 and over. We are going to continue to be there for seniors.

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Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are some facts. Too many hard-working Canadian families are lining up at food banks just to provide food for their families. Twenty per cent of Canadians have to skip meals just to save money, and so many Canadian families are struggling to heat their homes. Now the Liberals are going to triple the carbon tax and make everything even more expensive.

When will they cancel their plan to triple the carbon tax?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member across the way of what it means to stand up for Canadians. Over two million Canadians have been lifted out of poverty since this government has taken action. That is 450,000 families in the last year alone. Let me also remind members across the way that the Conservatives voted against and did not support the CCB, which lifted 435,000 children out of poverty in this country.

We are building an affordable child care system across this country, we have added \$500 for low-income renters and we have made sure children under 12 have dental care. We understand what Canadian families need now and in the future.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Superior Court has ruled that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a terrorist entity under Canadian law. The courts have shown leadership while the federal government refuses to ban the IRGC.

My question is for the Attorney General. Now that the precedent has been set, will he advise all federal government departments that the IRGC is to be considered a terrorist organization under Canadian law? Will he respect the court decision, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I want to underline that we stand with women who are marching for their rights in Iran. We stand with those who have been protesting here in Canada. We continue to engage with members of the community here, because we know this is a critical time to stand up for human rights.

As I have said on numerous occasions, that is why we have gone further than just looking at the IRGC as a problematic contributor to the transgression of human rights. We have targeted the entirety of the Iranian regime, including members of the IRGC, which is a very effective tool we can use to ensure that Canada will never be used as a safe haven for the transgression of human rights.

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● (1445)

HEALTH

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, health care in Alberta is in chaos. Kids are waiting 20 hours for care, paramedics are overworked and nobody can find a family doctor. Now the Alberta Children's Hospital is so overwhelmed that it has added a portable trailer in the parking lot to

treat sick kids. All this is going on while Danielle Smith is dismantling public health care and, in her own words, preparing us to pay out-of-pocket for care.

The Canada Health Act guarantees equal care for all Canadians. What is the government doing right now to protect our universal and public health care system?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in the House feels a duty to support the Canada Health Act, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is an important thing to do right now.

Our workers and patients are suffering across Canada. That is why we invested, just a few months ago, an extra \$2 billion in reducing backlogs in surgeries and treatments. That is why the CHT will increase by another 10% in March of this year. That is why we are investing \$3 billion in mental health, \$3 billion in long-term care and \$3 billion in home care. There is more we will be doing over the next few weeks.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our emergency rooms are overwhelmed, and Canadians with no mental supports are having to turn to these overcrowded ERs for help. The Liberals promised that mental health care would be treated as part of Canada's universal health care system.

With long wait-lists for treatment and the high cost of therapy, Canadians have been left with nowhere to turn, and the cost of essentials like food—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I cannot even get my question out.

The Speaker: Order. I understand that when a member is in close proximity to another member in the chamber, it is easy to yell or shout at them, but it is not respectful.

I want to point out the hon. member for Edmonton West. I could barely hear him, but voices really carry well. If he is going to heckle, maybe he could heckle a different way, but I recommend against heckling.

The hon. member can finish off his question, please.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, with the long wait-lists for treatment and the high cost of therapy, Canadians have been left with nowhere to turn. The cost of essentials like food is putting even more stress on Canadians struggling with their mental health.

When will the Liberals finally deliver a mental health transfer so that people can access the health services they need when they need them the most?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working with the provinces and territories to strengthen Canada's health system. We have already made historic investments to support mental health, including \$5 billion through the bilateral agreements with all provinces and territories, which are now providing \$600 million on an annual basis until 2027.

We know that more needs to be done. Further action includes engaging with provinces, territories and stakeholders to invest additional funding through the mental health transfer. We are also working on a comprehensive evidence-based plan, including the timely sharing of data.

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● (1450)

MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, keeping our oceans safe and clean is a top priority for many British Columbians. With dozens of vessels transiting every day in B.C. waters, protecting our oceans is of utmost importance to British Columbians.

Can the hon. minister inform the House of further ways that our government is keeping our waters safe from coast to coast to coast?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for Surrey—Newton for his leadership and advocacy on behalf of his community.

Ten days ago, I joined my colleagues in B.C., including the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, to announce \$1.2 billion for the next phase of the renewed oceans protection plan, which includes 29 new initiatives that will strengthen marine safety.

Our government continues to be committed to meaningful work with indigenous peoples and coastal communities so that we can ensure our oceans remain safe for all.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's carbon tax will increase the price on gas, diesel and home heating fuel. It will also increase the price we all pay for groceries, clothing, building materials and school supplies. Of course, it will force many businesses to pass these costs on to consumers.

An analysis done reveals that Nova Scotians will pay \$2,000 more a year in 2025 and \$3,100 more in 2030. Atlantic Canadians cannot afford the Liberal government's carbon tax plan.

When will the Liberal government stop forcing Atlantic Canadians to accept its terrible plan?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about a ter-

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rible plan. I will tell him what a terrible plan is. It is not taking action on climate change. His community and mine are both still dealing with homeowners cleaning up the debris in their backyards. His community and mine are both dealing with farms that have had silos torn down and farmers who are more than \$100,000 out-of-pocket so they can feed their cattle this season.

We are going to continue to do what we can to reduce pollution because it is the right thing to do. We have found a way to make sure that homeowners and families are left better off. Eight out of 10 families are left better off. We also introduced a new plan that will have \$5,000 in upfront grants so that people can reduce their power bills by installing heat pumps. It is confounding to understand why the member cannot support something so simple.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is very interesting. Perhaps the member opposite should go speak to his own premier, who is asking Canadians to weigh in on the Liberals' punishing carbon tax on Nova Scotians. We all know the tax is going to disproportionately affect low- and middle-income families and will cost as much as 14¢ more a litre at the pumps.

The “no carbon tax for Nova Scotia” petition is asking Nova Scotians to support a made-in-Nova Scotia plan that builds on our climate leadership, safeguards our environment and protects the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians. Will the Liberal government stop forcing its failed carbon tax plan on Nova Scotians?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about protecting the pocketbooks of Nova Scotians. I would find it interesting to hear him explain to his constituents why he voted against making sure that low-income families can afford to send their kids to the dentist. I find it interesting why he is not putting out social media posts about today's announcement that child care fees are going to be reduced by 50%. I find it interesting that he voted against a \$500 supplement for low-income renters.

The reality is that every step of the way since we formed government in 2015, we have had the interests of working-class and middle-class Canadians at heart. That will continue to be the case. We do not have to pollute to make sure people are better off. We can protect the environment and protect the economy at the same time.

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Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is interesting is that Nova Scotia Power does not allow homes to have a heat pump as their only source of heat. What is interesting is that home inspectors and insurance companies in Nova Scotia will not allow heat pumps as their only source of heat. Do members know why? The Canada building code prohibits them from doing so because they have to maintain a house at 20°C or more, which they cannot do in cold weather.

Will the government stop its fairy tale programs and stop forcing Nova Scotians to pay for unhelpful and—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a good thing Sherlock is on the case. We would have never figured this out. Holy smokes. It is unbelievable that somebody could have a heat pump and some other source of heating as well.

The reality is that we have a new \$5,000 grant that will give an upfront payment directly to homeowners. It is going to allow them to save thousands of dollars every year. It will help reduce pollution in our communities and leave—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind hon. members that the protocol is to ask a question and then listen. They cannot hear the answer if they are shouting.

The hon. Minister of Immigration has about 15 seconds left if he wants to finish off that thought.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I will simply say that we have found a way to save people money and reduce pollution. That is a good thing. If the Conservatives agree, I invite them to support us.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, between the monthly increase in their mortgage payments, the price of groceries, the cost of gas to drive to work and the cost to heat their homes, Atlantic Canadians do not know where to turn, yet the minister from Newfoundland and Labrador says he is sick and tired of them complaining about the cold winter.

Well, I am going to keep the heat on this cold-hearted minister. I implore him to beg his old buddy, the Prime Minister, to not force this carbon tax plan down the throats of Atlantic Canadians.

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be given yet another opportunity to tell a family of four in Newfoundland and Labrador that it will be receiving \$1,312 in cold hard cash directly to its bank account four times a year. That is \$328 starting in July, another \$328 when it is getting ready for the winter in October and another \$328 come January.

Will I take that as being cold-hearted? No, I will take that as good money, cold hard cash.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, next week, Canada is inviting—

The Speaker: I will ask the member to wait until everyone quiets down.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, next week, Canada is inviting the entire world to COP15 to talk about biodiversity.

In the meantime, in Newfoundland, five oil companies have won the right to do offshore exploratory drilling without an environmental assessment to find oil in the middle of a marine protected area. We are talking about a marine area that is home to humpback whales, blue whales, fin whales and right whales, an endangered species with only 336 individuals remaining in the world as of last year.

As far as I know, these species are part of our rich biodiversity. What credibility will Canada have at COP15 to talk about protecting biodiversity?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would point out that any proposal for production within the areas in question would first and foremost be subject to the Impact Assessment Act, would have to fit within the framework of our climate plan and would have to offer the best emissions performance, including net-zero emissions by 2050.

Biodiversity is very important to the Government of Canada and to Canadians across the country.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are more than just whales in the waters off Newfoundland. There is coral too.

Do members realize that the federal government has imposed restrictions on fishing to protect the coral? Fishers do not have the right to engage in any kind of bottom-contact fishing, and yet the federal government is allowing oil companies to drill for oil. That is a strange line of reasoning.

Will the environment minister use COP15 as an opportunity to explain to us why the protection of biodiversity is important for fishers but not for oil companies?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is very important to have an environmental assessment process in place for all oil projects, as well as for other mining and forestry projects.

It is important that we have a process to examine the environmental impacts. We put a process like that in place. That is very important, and that process will be carried out for the projects that my colleague mentioned.

● (1500)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is in and it is not good. Violent crime is up 32%. Canada's homicide rate is at the highest it's been since 2005. Gang-related killings are on the rise. What does the Liberal government choose to do? Rather than going after criminals and gun smugglers, it is going after farmers and duck hunters.

Will the minister finally admit that the Liberal soft-on-crime approach is not working and the evidence shows it has to end?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that we are absolutely not targeting law-abiding gun owners. The guns that we are going after are the assault rifles that were used in Portapique and Truro in Nova Scotia. The guns that we are going after are the guns that were used at the Quebec City mosque. The guns that we are going after are the guns that were tragically used in Polytechnique.

Those are the assault rifles that we are targeting in Bill C-21 and it would be time now for the Conservatives to stop filibustering, study the bill, debate the bill and pass the bill so we can end gun violence once and for all.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have failed and made life easier for violent criminals by repealing mandatory minimums. Many of these mandatory minimums were implemented by the Prime Minister's father. They have failed to stem the tide of illegal handguns coming across the border, including the four bridges in Niagara. It has been mentioned before that violent crime is up 32%. Statistic Canada now reports the homicide rate is up 3%.

When will the Liberals begin protecting Canadians and end their soft approach on crime?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to talk about our very smart criminal justice policy.

Serious crimes will always have serious consequences. Bill C-5 is moving past failed policies of the Conservative era, which clogged our justice system and filled our prisons with low-risk first-time offenders, time and resources that should be devoted to fighting serious crimes. In fact, former Supreme Court Justice Moldaver, who no one can accuse of being soft on crime, recently stressed the need for a different approach to less serious offences. Our communities are not safer for it.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to a survey, 84% of Quebecers are concerned about the growing violence on the streets of greater Montreal.

The Montreal police's annual report from 2021 confirms that crimes against the person have increased by more than 17% compared to the past five-year average. Crimes are committed with illegal firearms by criminals, not hunters.

Oral Questions

Will the Liberals finally do the right thing, deal with violent criminals, protect Canadians and leave our hunters alone?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concerns. That is why, in the economic statement, we added \$138 million to give tools and resources to the Canada Border Services Agency to stop illegal firearms trafficking at our borders.

That is why Bill C-21 provides for more tools to target criminal organizations, to stop the terror they inflict on communities with their guns.

It is time for the Conservatives to stop picking fights.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen a substantial increase in outbreaks of flu and RSV over previous years. Recent Canadian studies have shown that immunization rates for measles, mumps and rubella declined during the pandemic.

This year's flu season will be particularly dangerous for very young children and the elderly. Many parents in my riding, Hamilton Mountain, are concerned about their children's health.

Can the Minister of Health tell the House why it is so important to get vaccinated?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her question and her excellent work.

Obviously, we are as concerned as parents, grandparents, and teachers about our children's health. We are also keenly aware of the challenges that children's hospitals across the country are facing. That is why we encourage everyone, all families and children, to reap the benefits of vaccination.

Vaccines against COVID-19 and the flu are working, and they are free everywhere in Canada. They are available to all adults and all children six months and up. Let us protect our families and our communities.

Oral Questions

● (1505)

*[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it feels like everything is broken in Canada because of the Prime Minister and the Liberal government. Why should anyone be surprised? It is part of the Liberal playbook not to unite Canadians but to divide them.

The Prime Minister has been very effective at pitting Canadians against each other. Imagine a prime minister calling his own citizens racist, misogynists and extremists for not agreeing to his political ideology or his politics. Canadians are losing their hopes, their dreams and their dignity.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that he is here to serve and unite Canadians, not divide them like he has been doing for the last seven years?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that in the previous Conservative government, its members actually created a playbook to show how one could divide Canadians and committees, and play the kinds of games he is talking about.

What we saw at the Emergencies Act commission, which I believe is what the hon. member was referring to, was a government that faced a critical challenge in the country, where infrastructure was besieged and where Ottawa faced an illegal blockade. While the Conservatives were going and getting Tim Hortons and donuts for those people who were illegally protesting and blocking critical infrastructure, we were doing the hard work of keeping Canadians safe.

* * *

*[Translation]***CARBON PRICING**

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is creating chaos, and there is plenty of proof. Inflation is at its highest level in 40 years. In one month alone, 1.5 million Canadians turned to food banks. As we know, pregnant women are having to choose between feeding themselves and feeding their children. Canadians have had enough. This Liberal government must stop making day-to-day life harder for them.

Will the government scrap the carbon tax and give Canadians a break?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that many Canadians are really struggling because of inflation. That is why we have a responsible and compassionate plan. Here are some of the things we are doing: doubling the GST credit, giving money to people who need it to pay their rent, helping parents with dental care and increasing the Canada workers benefit. These are necessary and important measures for the most vulnerable Canadians. The Conservatives should support us.

HOUSING

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not working. The cost of housing has doubled since the Liberal government came to power. Young families are abandoning their dream of becoming homeowners. Students have to sleep in shelters. This is happening here in Canada, a G7 country. It is embarrassing. It is shameful.

When will this government let Canadians take back control over their lives?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know very well that Canadians are struggling today because of the global economic situation. That is why we put in place a plan to help Canadians with the GST credit, student assistance, the increase in the Canada workers benefit, rent relief and dental care.

If the Conservatives really want to help Canadians, they must support our plan.

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*[English]***INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, global food insecurity has been growing for the last several years, but it has been brought to a critical level because of Russia's genocidal war in Ukraine and Russia blocking the food exports from Ukraine that feed hundreds of millions of people in countries around the world. As a result, countless people in countries around the world are facing food shortages and are facing starvation, with the vulnerable suffering the most.

Could the Minister of International Development speak to what Canada is doing to fight food shortages and to fight starvation around the world?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the challenges Ukrainians face, they continue to look beyond their borders in supporting the fight against hunger in the global south. Our government commends Ukraine on its commitment to donating grain to help address the global food crisis as part of its grain from Ukraine humanitarian initiative. This is why Canada is providing \$30 million to the World Food Programme to facilitate additional shipments of Ukrainian grain moving through the Black Sea grain initiative.

With our partners, will continue to look at ways on how we can make sure that food is available for the most vulnerable.

• (1510)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, child care workers and advocates are holding a day of action. Their message is that child care staff are worth more than they are being paid.

As a former childhood educator, I know first-hand how inadequate pay and benefits make recruiting and retaining staff more difficult and the biggest barriers to expanding licensed child care and improving access is the shortage of child care staff.

Will the Liberals ensure that federal child care funding is used for livable wages and good benefits for child care workers?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her advocacy for a national child care system so we can make sure every child in Canada gets the right start in life.

Through every agreement that we have signed with the provinces and territories across the country, we continue to work with them year by year with the agreements that we have in place to ensure there is high-quality staff that are well paid for their work in the day care system. As we expand spaces, we will expand staff. We work with our provincial counterparts to make sure that all our child care systems are working in the best interests of our kids.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the actions of Iranian and Chinese operatives in Canada has received a pathetic response from the government. Canada has become a doormat for foreign interference.

Is the government aware of article 41(1) of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations? It states that all persons enjoying privileges and immunities in Canada have a duty to “respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State. They also have a duty not to interfere in the internal affairs of that State.”

Other nations expel pseudo-diplomats and agents. Does the government even understand the concept of *persona non grata*?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be unequivocally clear that the government has taken decisive action in sanctioning the Iranian regime, including, most recently, using a sparingly used provision under the IRPA to ensure that no one in the most senior echelons of the regime can set foot here or use Canada in any way as a safe haven to advance their transgression of human rights or terrorist activities.

We will stand with women in Iran. We will stand with all those who are protesting. We will stand with the community to stand up for human rights, both here and around the world.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have today for questions.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni is rising on a point of order.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, many times during question period, when a member rises on a very sensitive issue, you have made it clear to many members in the House that they must show respect, be quiet and let the question be put.

Today I was asking a very important question around mental health at a time in Canada when we have 10 suicides taking place per day. I was belittled. I was attacked by my Conservative colleagues. I am hoping that in the future, Mr. Speaker, you will take action and—

The Speaker: I just want to explain what happened, because it did happen during question period. Normally what happens is the Speaker will stop the question and then either continue it or take it from the top. However, if I allowed every member in the House to not be happy with what is going on with his question or her question and stop when they wanted, it would happen a little too often. I am sorry that the hon. member did not like the way it worked out.

Now, let us go to the shouting that is going on. The hon. member was shouting and sometimes when it is close it really does make it difficult, so that is something I want to make sure everybody understands, including a member of the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni's party, who sits just behind him and who makes a terrible amount of noise when other people are asking questions.

I want to put that point out there for all the members, and I want everyone to listen. When someone else is asking a question or answering a question, I ask every one of us to be respectful. Thank you.

• (1515)

Mr. Mike Morrice: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker, from today in question period. I sit very close to the member for Edmonton Strathcona. I want to note that she made multiple attempts to get her question out. I recognize that Standing Orders 16 and 18 are designed to ensure that a member can hear themselves and that members near them can hear them speaking also.

I would just like to offer my support for the member for Courtenay—Alberni with respect to ensuring that Standing Orders 16 and 18 are enforced during question period.

The Speaker: Once again, I want to thank the hon. members, and I want to remind each and every one of them to respect each other in this chamber. They must not forget that they are putting out an example to the rest of the country and to people who are watching, along with children who are watching and trying to get an example. Therefore, trying to shout over each other does not set a good example.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, there may have been a particular problem with the audio, because the question from the member for Edmonton Strathcona was intended to be heard in the legislature in Alberta and the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Excuse my language. That is not a point of order, and I apologize for using language that is not parliamentary. That was my slip.

Now we will continue, if that is okay. Do we have any other points of order?

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning the list of members of committees of the House, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 18th report later this day.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING ACT

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-308, An Act respecting the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking.

He said: Mr. Speaker, human trafficking is a major problem here in Canada. It is very profitable; it is brutal and it is growing.

Fighting human trafficking must always be a priority for the Canadian government, and the bill I am introducing would introduce a national strategy to combat human trafficking. The bill would ensure that Canada undertakes a long-term approach to ending human trafficking and centres on the voices of survivors, providing robust supports, putting more traffickers in jail and empowering Canadians to tackle this crime in their own communities.

The national strategy to combat human trafficking act would require that the Government of Canada maintain a national strategy to combat human trafficking, that this strategy have clear objectives and timelines, that there would be a review every five years, and that there would be an annual report that would be tabled on behalf of the government to Parliament on the government's progress in combatting human trafficking. The Minister of Public Safety would have to make every reasonable effort to fulfill these obligations under the key international conventions that we have signed relating to human trafficking.

I am honoured to have the support of victims and victims' groups from across the country, anti-human trafficking organizations and frontline service providers, including Timea's Cause, the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, the Joy Smith Foundation, #NotInMyCity, BridgeNorth, Next Step Ministries, the Allard School of Law International Justice and Human Rights Clinic, and the All-

Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

Canada must take a zero-tolerance approach to human trafficking and prioritize the voices of survivors, and this bill hopes to do so.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

● (1520)

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

Hearing none, it is agreed.

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition on behalf of my constituents.

This was brought to my attention by one of my constituents. We have dozens of signatures from people in Calgary Rocky Ridge who are concerned about the ongoing situation with trafficking in organs obtained without consent, the scourge of organ transplant tourism and the need to deal with this in Canada by way of creating a law to criminalize such behaviour.

On behalf of my constituents, I am happy to table this petition.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House and present a petition concerning many of my constituents and other Canadians from coast to coast to coast on the ongoing threat to pollinators, particularly honeybees.

The petitioners call on the Government to Canada to catch up with the European Union and follow its lead in adhering to the precautionary principle and banning the use of neonicotinoid pesticides in Canada to protect our pollinators and our food.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by dozens of petitioners who are concerned about the international trafficking in human organs that are being removed from victims without their consent.

Senate Bill S-223 is currently being studied by the House of Commons standing committee, and petitioners are urging Parliament to move quickly on the bill, which would prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire or receive such an organ. International investigations conclude that the Chinese communist regime has been committing mass killings of Falun Gong prisoners of conscience for their organs, which are sold for profit, many to international organ tourists.

Legal experts say crimes against humanity have occurred, and they would generally encourage support for Bill S-223. They would like Parliament to move quickly on that.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a number of petitions in the House today.

The first petition is raising concern about a commitment made in the Liberals' last election platform. They said that they plan to politicize charitable status determination, effectively denying charitable status to organizations that do not share the Liberal Party's views on abortion. This politicization of the charitable status would jeopardize the good work being done by hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that happen to have a different perspective from the Liberal Party on these issues.

This would involve the application of another values test, similar to the Canada summer jobs program values test that was previously put in place by the government and roundly criticized. Petitioners note that all Canadians who are involved in charitable activities should not face discrimination on the basis of their deeply held personal convictions. Petitioners call on the House and the government 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 a values test. Petitioners also want to see the government reaffirm the right to freedom of expression.

• (1525)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the continuing detention and human rights abuses faced by Huseyin Celil. Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen. He has been detained in China for well over a decade, and the Chinese government has not recognized his Canadian citizenship. At times, sadly, there have even been mixed messages on that here in this place, but I think we have gotten that point squared away.

The Chinese government has continued to detain Mr. Celil, and petitioners have the following asks of the government. They want the government to demand the Chinese government recognize Huseyin Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular

Routine Proceedings

and legal services in accordance with international law. They also want the government to formally state that the release of Mr. Celil from Chinese detainment and his return to Canada are a priority of the Canadian government, of equal concern as the unjust detention of the two Michaels. The petitioners want to see the Government of Canada appoint a special envoy to work on securing Mr. Celil's release and then also seek the assistance of the Biden administration, as happened in the case of the two Michaels.

FIREARMS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am tabling raises concerns about Bill C-21. This is a bill that would make things much more difficult for law-abiding firearms owners, and it would not effectively tackle the real problems of crime in this country. Petitioners are concerned that the government is moving forward with amendments that would, in effect, ban hunting rifles and about the extreme overreach by the government while it fails to address real issues of crime.

Petitioners have a number of asks. The first is to not proceed with Bill C-21. The second is to take stronger action against criminals, smugglers and gangs rather than law-abiding citizens, and the third is to allow the airsoft industry to continue producing and selling airsoft guns.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next I am tabling a petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill that would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without consent. It also would create a mechanism by which a person could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if they are involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking. I believe the bill will be automatically reported to the House today. Petitioners are hopeful that this Parliament will be the Parliament that finally succeeds in passing legislation combatting forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, alongside other issues of human rights abuses we see in China, this petition raises concerns about escalating violations of the fundamental human rights in China of Chinese Christians. Petitioners highlight the persecution we have seen of Christians in China and how that is increasing, and they call on the government to prioritize the advancement of human rights in its relationship with the government of China and to include, as part of its broader human rights advocacy, attention to the worsening plight of China's Christian community.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to also add my voice to those of thousands of Canadians from across Canada who have signed a petition to draw the attention of the House of Commons to the plight of Mr. Celil.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Celil has been in prison for over 5,000 days. He is a Canadian citizen. He is of Uighur origin. He has been in jail since 2001.

The Chinese government has refused to accept his Canadian citizenship and has denied his access to lawyers, his family and Canadian officials, while he has been coerced into signing a confession. He has undergone an unlawful and unfair trial.

Evidence now makes it clear that the Chinese government's treatment of Uighurs meets most if not all the criteria for genocide, as outlined by the UN Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide.

Canada cannot remain silent. Therefore, the folks who have signed this petition are calling on the Chinese government to recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services in accordance with international law.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to do all that it can to secure his release, appoint a special envoy to work to help Mr. Celil and seek the help of the Americans in this challenging time.

● (1530)

UNLAWFUL TRAVEL ABROAD

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present is from Canadians from across the country who want to raise the urgency of protecting children from predators and sexual abuse. This is an issue that I have raised many times, and I have often confronted the government on its lack of action.

In June, the government was asked to inform the House of the number of passports that it had given to child sex offenders over the past few years. The Harper Conservatives left the government with a number of tools to be able to provide it.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to ensure that Canadians are not going abroad to participate in illegal activities such as organ harvesting and child pedophilia.

The folks who have signed this petition recognize that there is a bill in front of the House of Commons right now, Bill S-223, calling for a ban on Canadians going abroad or making it illegal for Canadians to go abroad to gain illegally harvested organs. This is a horrific act that is happening with more and more frequency.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to do all that it can to reduce the illegal harvesting of organs.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition that I have today is from Canadians from across Canada who are concerned about the Liberal Party's election platform from the last election, where it promised to revoke charitable status from pro-life organizations such as pregnancy care centres. These pregnancy care centres are invaluable for all of the communities. They counsel young women and save countless lives every year.

Revoking charitable status for pro-life organizations is a first step to more and more politicization of charitable status. This could also mean that churches, summer camps and all kinds of faith-

based organizations may have their charitable status jeopardized. This would result in a definite cheapening and thinning of our civil society.

The folks who have signed this petition are concerned about the thousands of innocent babies who lose their lives to abortion every year and call on members of Parliament to do everything they can to prevent, block, organize and vote against any effort from the government to revoke charitable status for pro-life organizations.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

DIVISION OF BILL C-27 FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOTING—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on November 22, 2022, by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby concerning the application of Standing Order 69.1 to Bill C-27, an act to enact the consumer privacy protection act, the personal information and data protection tribunal act and the artificial intelligence and data act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby stated that there is a clear link between the first two parts of Bill C-27, which respectively enact the consumer privacy protection act and the personal information and data protection tribunal act. He further noted that these elements were both part of the previous Bill C-11, which was introduced in the House during the 43rd Parliament.

However, the member argued that part 3, which enacts the artificial intelligence and data act, should be considered separately, because it does not directly concern privacy protection or the analysis, circulation and exchange of personal information. Accordingly, he asked the Chair to divide Bill C-27 for the purposes of voting, as Standing Order 69.1 permits.

[English]

The official opposition House leader concurred. He added that, outside of clause 39 of the bill, which mentions the new consumer privacy protection act in the definition of the term “personal information”, part 3 of Bill C-27 does not refer to parts 1 or 2. Furthermore, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets stated that parts 1 and 2 of Bill C-27 deal with privacy protection, which has nothing to do with the subject of part 3, the regulation of the new industry of artificial intelligence.

On November 23, the parliamentary secretary to the government House Leader pointed out that privacy protection is the common theme that links every part of Bill C-27. In his view, the bill’s three parts constitute a framework for protecting the privacy of Canadians from the risks posed by artificial intelligence systems. He argued that dividing the bill would prevent members from considering all the risks and impacts that new artificial intelligence technologies may create for the security of personal information. He also noted that privacy laws do not adequately protect the public from new artificial intelligence systems and that, as a result, Bill C-27 should be considered as a whole.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Standing Order 69.1 gives the Chair the authority to divide the questions, for the purposes of voting, on the motions for second or third reading of a bill. The objective here is not to divide the bill for consideration purposes, but to enable the House to decide questions that are not closely related separately.

The Chair has carefully reviewed the provisions of Bill C-27 and taken into account members’ statements on the issue of dividing it for voting purposes. The Chair agrees that the bill’s three parts are connected by a broad theme, namely, the use and protection of personal information. While parts 1 and 2 of the bill are closely related, this is not true of part 3.

The Chair is of the view that, given the lack of cross-references between part 3 and the preceding parts of the bill, with the sole exception being one reference to the new consumer privacy protection act—which serves to propose a common definition of the term “personal information”—dividing the bill for voting at second reading is justified.

[English]

In his intervention, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader emphasized the common theme that links the three acts enacted by Bill C-27. In a decision on a similar matter, delivered on March 1, 2018, which can be found at pages 17550 to 17552 of the Debates, Speaker Regan said the following, at page 17551:

...the question the Chair must ask itself is whether the purpose of the standing order was to deal only with matters that were obviously unrelated or whether it was to provide members with the opportunity to pronounce themselves on specific initiatives when a bill contains a variety of different measures.

In the absence of a clear link between the three parts of Bill C-27, other than the theme of privacy protection, the Chair is willing to divide the question. Accordingly, two votes will take place at the second reading stage for Bill C-27. The first will be on parts 1

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and 2, including the schedule to clause 2. The second will deal with part 3 of the bill. The Chair will remind members of this division before the voting begins.

If any part of this bill is negatived, the Chair will order the bill reprinted for reconsideration at committee.

I thank the hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DIGITAL CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2022

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-27, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues already indicated, this is a large and complex bill, and we believe that its individual components are too important for them to be considered as one part of an omnibus bill. I am pleased with the ruling of the Speaker.

There are three separate pieces of legislation to this bill. In part 1, the consumer privacy protection act would repeal and replace decades-old measures concerning personal information protection. In part 2, the personal information and data protection tribunal act would strike a tribunal to administer penalties for violations of the CPPIA. In part 3, the artificial intelligence and data act is brand new to the bill and sets up a framework for design and use of AI in Canada, which is almost entirely unregulated.

Long before the widespread use of the Internet, our Supreme Court was clear that privacy is at the heart of liberty in a modern state. The government should be taking every opportunity possible to enshrine privacy in our laws as essential to the exercise of our rights and freedoms in Canada. As Daniel Therrien stated in the Toronto Star earlier this month, “democracies must adopt robust solutions anchored in values, not laws that pretend to protect citizens but preserve the conditions that created the digital Wild West.”

The value of privacy should anchor the bill. Instead, the bill fails right out of the gate. The preamble states:

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the protection of the privacy interests of individuals with respect to their personal information is essential to individual autonomy and dignity and to the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms in Canada

Placing this value in the preamble of the bill where it has no teeth raises distrust rather than confidence that the government truly respects Canadians' privacy rights. The CPPA would require organizations, companies or government departments affected by the bill to develop their own codes of practice for the protection of personal information. While these codes must be approved and certified by the Privacy Commissioner, one can only imagine the variation of protection that would result. This requirement would add significant red tape and would be yet another onerous task borne on the backs of small and medium-sized businesses, which employ most Canadians. It would also create more work for the Privacy Commissioner in parsing through complicated codes created by larger, wealthier, powerful corporations, companies or government departments that have legal teams whose sole purpose is to find creative ways to perhaps game the system.

Although it would take more time and investment up front, the better option, in my mind, would be to create a standard code of practice that all entities have to follow. This could certainly be taken on as one of the first responsibilities of the expanded Office of the Privacy Commissioner in defining the universal code of practices, where confidence in the process would be greatest and where the greatest level of concern for individual privacy actually exists.

This bill states that personal information can be transferred without Canadians' consent for purposes ranging from research to analysis to business purposes, but it must be de-identified before this can take place. At first glance, this is a positive measure until it is compared with anonymization as an alternative. According to the bill, de-identify means "to modify personal information so that an individual cannot be directly identified from it, though a risk of the individual being identified remains." That leaves much to be desired when compared to the anonymization of personal information. In the bill, anonymize means "to irreversibly and permanently modify personal information, in accordance with generally accepted best practices, to ensure that no individual can be identified from the information, whether directly or indirectly, by any means."

Any attempt to identify individuals from de-identified information is prohibited, except in approved circumstances. While many of these approved circumstances relate to the ability of an entity to test the effectiveness of its de-identification system, the potential for abuse still exists. This bill would be improved by eliminating those chances for abuse. We should examine replacing de-identification with anonymization wherever possible.

In comparing Bill C-27 to the EU regulations, we see there are several ways in which the CPPA does not live up to what is widely considered to be the international gold standard of privacy protection, which is the European Union's 2016 General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR. There is a glaring example of Bill C-27's inferior protections: The GDPR processes personal data in such a manner that it can no longer be attributed to a specific individual without the use of additional information kept separately, subject to technical and organizational measures. This is a security and privacy-by-design measure of the GDPR.

Regarding what Bill C-27 considers to be sensitive information, there is nothing to indicate what sensitive information actually entails. It is also limited in its application. Only the personal information of minors is considered to be sensitive. All information Canadians surrender to any entity should be considered sensitive. On the other hand, the GDPR possesses a particular regime for special categories of personal data, including racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data and data concerning health, sex life and sexual orientation.

● (1540)

We are happy to see that consent is better defined in Bill C-27. However, exceptions for activities not requiring consent would remain in place. Some of them are so broad that an entity could interpret them as never requiring consent. These are loopholes that Canadians should not have to endure when they are required to check the box that they have read and accept terms before they are able to interact with a digital site.

For example, legitimate interests in a given situation may be used by companies to disregard consent. There is a danger that these interests will outweigh potential adverse effects on the individual. Attempting to define legitimate interests allows for too much interpretation, and interpretation is not something that lends itself to privacy laws. The use of personal information could also be exempt from consent if a reasonable person would expect the use of their information for business activities. There is no definition as to what a reasonable person is.

The bottom line is that there are far too many loopholes and vague terms. For the savvy, wealthy or well-lawyered, the potential for abuse exists. The GDPR, conversely, is unequivocal on consent. It must be freely given, specific, informed, unambiguous and in an intelligible and accessible form, and is only valid for specific purposes. Canada should have followed that example. Canadians cannot help but wonder why Bill C-27 does not.

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Under the proposed CPPA, there is no minimum age for minor consent, nor is “minor” defined. In the EU, the GDPR sets out a minimum age for a minor's consent at 16 years of age. Member states also have the flexibility to allow for a lower age, provided the age is not below 13 years.

If a breach of personal information does take place, Bill C-27 would make Canada slower to respond than its international counterparts. This bill mandates that a notification be made to the Privacy Commissioner of any breach that creates a real risk of significant harm as soon as it is feasible. The individual affected would also need to be informed, but, again, as soon as feasible.

The GDPR sets out that a mandatory notification must be made to the supervisory authority without undue delay, or 72 hours after having become aware of the incident in certain circumstances. Prior to the introduction of this bill, Canada was lagging behind internationally, and it still is, even after. The GDPR is already six years old. That is six years of extra time during which the Liberals have failed to develop this legislation to meet the robust international standard.

In Bill C-27, the Privacy Commissioner would be empowered to investigate any certified organization for contravening the act. The commissioner has been rightly asking for increased powers and responsibilities for some time, and this goes beyond a mere recommendation to violators to stop their actions. The commissioner would be able to recommend greater penalties of no more than \$20 million or 4% gross global revenue for a summary offence, and no more than \$25 million or 5% gross global revenue for an indictable offence.

These penalties should add more bite to what the Privacy Commissioner can do and impact how Canadians' personal information will ultimately be treated. The penalties would also apply to a greater number of provisions, such as actions that contravene the establishment and implementation of a privacy management program and failure to ensure equivalent protection for personal information transferred to a service provider.

However, these new powers for the Privacy Commissioner hit a dead end when taken in context with the second part of this bill, which establishes a tribunal. The personal information and data protection tribunal would consist of no more than six members, and only half of those members must have experience in information and privacy law. The Privacy Commissioner would have order-making authority and the ability to make recommendations to this tribunal regarding penalties. However, the tribunal would have the power to apply its own decision instead, which would be final and binding. Except for judicial review under the Federal Courts Act, the tribunal's decisions would not be subject to appeal or to review by any court. These are powers equivalent to a superior court of record.

The existence of this tribunal would dull the new teeth given to the Privacy Commissioner. While the commissioner could recommend that a penalty be levied for violations of the CPPA, it is the tribunal that would have the power to set the amount owed by these organizations.

• (1545)

The cost associated with striking this tribunal is also a concern. Despite the fact that its work would likely be limited to a handful of times per year to determine penalties, it would apparently require a full-time and permanent staff of 20. I am deeply concerned as the government also has a bad habit of striking advisory councils, or so-called arm's-length regulatory bodies, in advance of bills being debated and passed in the House, long before the ink on the legislation is dry.

My memory is drawn to when a bill was being debated in the House, and I inquired about the details of the proposed environmental council. I was told with great zeal that it had already been established, and the members had been appointed before the bill was even debated in the House.

Can the current Prime Minister tell us if this tribunal would be struck only after Parliament has dealt fully with this bill? Will the Liberals be transparent with Canadians on how the appointment process would be undertaken? Can they assure Canadians that a full-time and permanent staff of 20 has not already been determined? After seven years of Liberal power, the level of patronage in this place run deep.

Part 2, which is the personal information and data protection tribunal act, should be removed as it is a bureaucratic middleman with power that would conflict and create redundancy with the Privacy Commissioner's new powers. The new powers would mean little if they were not coupled with quick and effective consequences for violators. It would prolong decisions on fines and harm Canada's reputation of holding violators accountable.

It would also not align with our friends in the EU, U.K., New Zealand and Australia that do not use a tribunal system for issuing fines. It goes to show Canadians that when it comes to making big government needlessly bigger, the Liberals do it well.

The third and final part of this bill is the only entirely new component. The artificial intelligence and data act seeks to regulate an entity, artificial intelligence, that has not been regulated before in this country.

It would set standards for the creation and use of AI systems in Canada by both domestic and international entities. More specifically, international and interprovincial trade and commerce in artificial intelligence systems would be regulated through common requirements for the design and use of those systems.

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It would prohibit certain conduct pertaining to AI systems that could lead to harmful results for individuals and their personal data. There is that mention of personal data. This is a massive undertaking, attempting to regulate something that, up to this point, has been almost entirely unregulated.

I also understand that consultations on this were only initiated in June. Logic would dictate that such a bill requires careful scrutiny and time to get it right.

Requiring record keeping and human oversight are positive developments. What we find difficulty with is getting a clear picture of what the final framework would look like, as the minister alone would be empowered to establish these regulations. The minister would be able to act independently of Parliament in making rulings and imposing fines. In an age of uncertainty and new horizons for our relationship with AI, this is unacceptable. Parliament, at the very least, and independent experts and watchdogs should be central to the creation and enforcement of these rules.

• (1550)

It appears that once again the government has chosen to simply tack on a crucial area of concern to Canadians to an already complicated bill, and it wishes to again entrust sweeping powers to a minister to act independently of parliamentary oversight.

My final thoughts today on Bill C-27 are as follows. The Conservatives are considering this bill through a reasoned approach, and appreciate that stakeholders who have been calling for this legislation for years are watching today's debate closely.

It is absolutely clear that modern-day protection for the personal information of Canadians is required. They must have the ability to access and control its collection, use, monitoring and disclosure, and the right to delete it or the right to vanish.

How can we ensure that data is protected through watertight regulations and strict fines for abuse while also realizing that not every business affected by this bill would have the resources of Walmart or Amazon? Small and medium-sized businesses should be shielded from onerous regulation that stifles their growth. This is not to say that business interests should weigh equally with personal privacy, but there is a balance to be had, and I believe the Liberals do not have it right here.

Furthermore, in a cynical attempt to move their legislative agenda forward, the Liberals have bundled changes to privacy laws with a first-of-its-kind framework for artificial intelligence that once again intends to govern through top-down regulation and not through legislation.

The Liberals should commit today to splitting this bill up to allow Canadians a clear view of its intended impact. With that commitment, the Conservatives will be looking to do the hard work at committee to improve the long-awaited but flawed elements of this legislation. Even in an age of convenience, the world in which we live grows even more complicated by the day. Canadians deserve privacy protection worthy of 2022 realities and beyond.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam

Speaker, this is very progressive legislation that deals with an area of concern that Canadians have, and it is something the government is concerned about. That is why we have the legislation. It is for safety and privacy, which are of critical importance.

We are moving into a significant digital economy with databases. The issue is there, and I am interested in knowing where the Conservatives are going to fall on this legislation. When I listened to the member, she seemed to express concerns about this area, but there was no indication of whether the Conservative Party would be supporting the legislation. We just heard from the Speaker in terms of voting on the three parts.

Does the member have any suggested amendments that she is thinking about? I believe that Canadians need this legislation. Would it not be nice to have legislation of this nature pass second reading before the end of the year?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I do not know if, throughout my speech, members heard my concerns around the fact that this falls short of what our international colleagues have created. It is so much stronger in the European Union's 2016 general data protection regulation, or GDPR.

Obviously, we have indicated on this side of the House that we have a lot of concerns, especially with the lack of definition of so many terms that are included in this legislation. They need to be clarified. Otherwise, it is going to create all kinds of additional problems. What we need more than anything is clarity so that Canadians can have confidence that their privacy is being protected.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was fascinated by the part of the bill dealing with artificial intelligence. Personally, I thought that it proposed a general framework and the beginnings of a legal structure that were very interesting. The objective is to regulate pan-Canadian, interprovincial and other trade, as well as to prohibit certain practices.

Does my colleague agree with me on that, at least? It is an important step forward in a sector like artificial intelligence, which is so murky and so amazing at the same time.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I agree that this is an area in which Canada is way behind. It is absolutely crucial that we get started on creating that framework. However, what disturbs me is the fact that it was tossed into this bill that also deals with other issues, which are significant on their own. Consultation on this did not even begin until June. It is very rash of us to consider it in this legislation. I am thankful that it is going to be voted on separately.

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Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, this follows on the question that was just asked by my colleague. We recently saw that 19,000 Canadians were affected by the recent Equifax breach, for example. The Office of the Privacy Commissioner concluded that Equifax did not fulfill its obligations to Canadians. It entered into a compliance agreement with no fines, no penalties and no compensation for Canadian victims. We are seeing very different fines and penalties for Canadians and Americans, and Canadians are getting the short end of the deal.

Does the member feel it is important that we have parity and equivalency for citizens on both sides of the border?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, there are many areas where Canada is on the short end of the stick. I think of our ability to have Wi-Fi and cellphones at a reasonable price compared with other countries. In this case, it is really important that we do the due diligence needed. Canadians need to have the same level of ability to have their privacy protected that any other nation has. I would encourage members to look at the EU version of this and do a far better job of incorporating in this what is needed to function internationally with our allies.

• (1600)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I too share concerns with Bill C-27, particularly around the artificial intelligence and data act. Specifically, I agree with her. Having one minister solely delegated the responsibility for a wide variety of different regulations that might affect private as well as public data is too much. As Parliament, we should be looking into this and setting out the parameters.

The government has basically told the private sector that it can hold it accountable for serious harm, something it does not even define in the law, in Bill C-27, while at the same time giving itself the ultimate loophole. It says it can exempt itself. Not only that, but some of the organizations are trustworthy, as it says in the bill. The minister can say that any provincial or federal commission or body he or she wants can be exempted, allowed to use artificial intelligence and held to a different standard than the private sector is.

Does the member agree that this particular section, more than anything, needs to be looked at? I believe it is too much government overreach. It has essentially given itself the ultimate loophole.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, that is my deepest concern as well. We have seen the government, in other pieces of legislation, give itself the authority to create a situation that is out of the hands of Parliament and into the hands of a minister as to how things will be developed or implemented.

I certainly agree with the member. We need to do a lot more work and make sure that Canadians are truly protected, and not by just one individual at a certain point in time who has a great deal of power. In some cases in that situation, I would say too much power. We need to ensure that it is done properly with Canadians in mind.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I fully understand the stress the Canadian financial sector is feeling.

Unless we tighten the rules, Canada will not meet the European Union's expectations, which means Canada's financial sector could lose all or part of very important European markets. There is less pressure in Quebec because, thanks to its own legislation, it is already compliant.

Despite the pressure, the bill must be properly drafted. Is my colleague concerned that pressure from the financial sector could lead to a situation in committee where words and time are more limited?

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, this is an example of circumstances where Canadians are having trouble trusting the government to do the right thing and to truly have their backs in this area. We have already seen circumstances in the past year or two where the banks have had an unbelievable impact on Canadians' lives by having the powers entrusted to them to do things that are out of line and out of step with truly protecting the privacy of Canadians.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the tribunal aspect. It is very important that, in this bill, when it comes to privacy protection, besides the Privacy Commissioner, we would have another element of a tribunal. Most importantly, out of that process, there would still be the Federal Court. When it comes to citizens having their data breached, and the whole premise of this bill is to protect that of citizens, children and adults alike, there is still going to be a tribunal added.

Is there any other jurisdiction that is using a tribunal? If not, why does the member think it is included in this bill?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, it is deeply disturbing to me when I see that, among the European Union, U.K., New Zealand and Australia, none of our allies has chosen to use a tribunal. The power is there for their commissioners to make sure that the various entities are being held accountable with regard to an individual's privacy.

Their rules are far more specific than ours are in this bill thus far, and it just shows that we are weaker in truly protecting Canadians' privacy rights compared to our allies. It is a sign that we are doing things with an ulterior motive. That disturbs me, because it would again give power to a different organization within the system, which the government is creating to basically give different organizations, perhaps government departments, an out—

• (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Richmond Hill.

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Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act.

Privacy is a long-standing, fundamental right for Canadians, and we have never been more reliant on the digital economy. Even though we are living in this complex technological era, the current privacy law was last updated over 20 years ago, before smart phones or any social media platforms even existed. This brings us to the cardinal step our government is taking today.

We know Canadians need to have confidence not only that their is data safe and their privacy fully respected, but also that their government is striving to enhance the protection of their privacy through the implementation of timely safeguards in an era when the digital economy is driving transformative change. These objectives are exactly what the privacy protection framework of Bill C-27 would aim to accomplish.

We are introducing new legislation to ensure our country has critical protection in place to safeguard the security of Canadians. This legislation proposes not only to increase the confidence of Canadians in emerging technologies but also to strengthen privacy protection for consumers while supporting economic development that results from the responsible use of data and artificial intelligence. It would also pave the path for governing trade and commerce in the private sector, as it relates to regulating how private organizations handle personal information and develop AI systems.

Upon enactment into law, Bill C-27 would be one of the most substantial improvements to Canadian privacy laws in decades, but it would go further by establishing a legal framework to regulate high-impact AI systems to better protect consumers. In essence, this legislation proposes the following key enactments: the consumer privacy protection act; the personal information and data protection tribunal act; and finally, the artificial intelligence and data act, or AIDA. I will expand on each one of these major enactments in detail.

The enactment of the consumer privacy protection act proposes to achieve the following: first, to enhance Canadians' control over personal information by empowering them to request its deletion, and adding new transparency requirements for organizations when obtaining consent from individuals for their information; second, to create new data mobility rights that promote consumer choice and innovation; and third, to bolster our privacy enforcement and oversight by granting the Privacy Commissioner of Canada order-making powers to compel organizations to stop the use of personal information, through administrative monitoring penalties for serious breaches of law.

This aspect of the bill is of the utmost importance to nearly 200 of my constituents in the riding of Richmond Hill who have voiced their pertinent concerns regarding privacy protection and have spoken to me personally in relation to this legislation and what it seeks to achieve for Canadians. Through the mentioned key facets, my constituents, and in fact all Canadians, can rest assured that their

government's sole intention is to ensure Canadians' first-class privacy and data protection.

By enacting the personal information and data protection tribunal act, our government seeks to strengthen protection for minors' personal information, introduce greater flexibility for the Privacy Commissioner and explicitly foster more privacy expertise among key decision-makers. This would be achieved through the establishment of a new administrative tribunal to hear appeals of certain decisions made by the Privacy Commissioner.

• (1610)

The third and most crucial aspect of this legislation, in my point of view, would establish a new law on artificial intelligence.

According to a recent study by Nanos Research on behalf of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, key industry stakeholders have expressed a range of concerns regarding artificial intelligence. As technologies have matured, risks associated with AI systems have also come to light, including with respect to health, safety and bias. These concerns speak to the need to ensure the responsible development of AI. Moreover, as companies invest in increasingly complex AI systems, Canadians need to have confidence in AI systems they use every day.

It is therefore essential that the use and collection of data follow best practices to protect the rights and freedoms of Canadians. This brings me to the very reason why I personally identify this enactment as the most crucial aspect of this legislation.

It is in response to these legitimate concerns that our government proposes to introduce a new law to promote a unique approach to AI. It is an approach that would protect Canadians from discrimination, loss of autonomy and serious harm to their health, safety and economic well-being. The newly proposed AI law contains central provisions that would protect commercially sensitive information while ensuring that AI systems do not cause adverse effects on Canadians. Consequently, this approach would establish rules aimed at promoting good data-governance practices and respect for Canadian standards and values.

This new law would support responsible innovation by giving companies a clear framework for developing AI systems; compel organizations responsible for AI systems to mitigate potential harm to Canadians, including bias; establish an AI and data commissioner to support the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry in the administration of the act to encourage innovation in the marketplace; and, finally, impose serious penalties for all use of illegally obtained personal information.

It is also notable to mention that it would serve as a build-up on our government's previous investments and commitment to expanding the pan-Canadian AI strategy first launched in 2017 to enhance growth in Canada's digital economy.

Each of these acts would work to provide Canadians with more autonomy over their privacy and increase accountability of personal information handled by organizations, while also giving Canadians the freedom to move their information from one organization to another in a secure manner.

In quick summary, by introducing this groundbreaking piece of legislation, our government is working to strengthen and modernize our privacy laws and to protect Canadian consumers by limiting private companies' abilities to access private information in the digital sector. Most importantly, we would be creating new rules for the responsible development of AI alongside the continuation of the advancement of its implementation across Canada.

The digital charter implementation act would ensure Canadians have strong privacy protections and clear rules of the road for businesses, as well as guardrails to govern the responsible use of artificial intelligence. As I stand here today in support of this important piece of legislation, I am confident that, given our country's highly skilled workforce, with this vital step, Canada would be well positioned not only to play an important global role in the field of AI, but also to create an environment where Canadian companies could be world leaders in responsible innovations.

Most importantly, through this cardinal legislation, Canadians would be reassured that we would never compromise on trust and safety for their privacy, and that their government is wholeheartedly committed to advancing Canadian privacy protection laws while unlocking innovation that promotes a strong economy that works for everyone.

I would like to close this intervention by encouraging all my colleagues in the House to support this valuable piece of legislation. We can work together to move beyond traditional privacy protection to ensure data control for all Canadians and modernize our laws to adapt to the realities of a complex digital economy. This is the only way to advance Canadian digital technology and Canadian values across the world.

• (1615)

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to pick up on something my hon. colleague talked about around the tribunal. Given the fact that the EU and the United States do not have tribunals and given the fact that the Federal Court has the ability, presently, to appeal the Privacy Commissioner, I have a simple question for my colleague from the Liberal Party.

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Does he feel that having that tribunal included is a necessity and, if so, why would he feel that way?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, it is not a matter of whether it is a necessity. I think it is complementary and it strengthens the existing laws that we have. It also further ensures the protection of the data and provides a venue for the minister, as well as Canadians, to ensure that, if it comes to a point of contention, there are many venues to get the support they need.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

I would like to come back to the topic of adopting this motion and particularly the importance of sending Bill C-27 to committee, to make sure all the details are in place. It is important that the committee do its work properly. This is very technical.

Quebec has Bill 25. How can we ensure that there is no interference between Bill 25 and Bill C-27? How can we combine the work of both levels of government? This is a shared jurisdiction. Could my colleague comment on that?

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to acknowledge the leadership that the Quebec province has shown in developing legislation around privacy. I want to ensure the member that this legislation is very much a complement and a partner with that legislation. There are two other provinces that are faced with the same situation, B.C. and Alberta, as well as Quebec. The key thing is that we are taking a lot of best practices from the Province of Quebec in this, and we look forward to hearing more about that when the bill is unanimously approved at second reading and is sent to committee for further review.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed working with my hon. colleague on committee for several years. I would like to ask him about the delicate balance that we have here between the interests of businesses and that of the individual with regard to privacy, ownership of data and algorithms. I fall more to the individual and the person being protected, as to the strength of where we should go. I just wonder if he has determined where he is at right now.

The bill seems to be a little too slanted toward business organizations at the moment and their use of data. I wonder how he feels about that.

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Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, it is good to respond to my hon. colleague. We have had the pleasure of serving together at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. When the bill has passed second reading, it will be sent to that committee.

I actually think it is a very balanced bill between privacy and ensuring that small businesses and organizations who use data have the guidelines to do the work they need to do to serve Canadians. I believe, through the de-identification or the anonymization of the data, the data of individuals is protected, while giving businesses the data that is needed to ensure they foster innovation while also being able to effectively run their businesses and compete not only locally but also internationally.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, my comments are similar to the member for Windsor West's, in terms of the balancing of the interests of business with the interests of the individual. To some degree, the bill fails to do both of those things. Businesses are looking for clarity and businesses are looking for a clear set of rules for how they can operate. I would note that, from clause 17 to clause 50, there are all of these exemptions. Exemptions do not allow for clarity.

I just wonder if the hon. member thinks there are enough exemptions in the bill.

• (1620)

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, can we have the support of the hon. member across the aisle to ensure that the bill can go to the committee, so that we can have the opportunity to have conversations such as the one he is tabling?

[Translation]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise before hon. members today to speak to the digital charter implementation act, 2022. More specifically, I would like to discuss the new artificial intelligence and data act.

This legislation seeks to not only enhance Canadians' confidence in emerging technologies, but also support economic development stemming from the responsible use of AI systems and data.

As many have noted, Canada is well placed to play an important global role in AI. Thanks to Canada's highly skilled and diverse workforce and experts at research centres across the country, we have a unique opportunity to create an environment where Canadian companies can be world leaders in responsible innovation, taking full advantage of the digital economy.

Pan-Canadian institutes such as the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute, or Mila, the Vector Institute in Toronto, and the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute in Edmonton reflect the abundance of Canadian talent and resources. What is more, according to Global Advantage, in January 2020, the number of AI companies in Canada, in other words, companies with a product or service that implements AI, has doubled over the past five years to 660.

[English]

The responsible use of data and AI systems has the potential to drive improvements in all sectors of the economy, leading to groundbreaking discoveries with significant economic, health, envi-

ronmental and social benefits, including streamlining processes and decision-making, eliminating inefficiencies and enabling better resource allocation.

AI is already augmenting processes and skills in every industry. As noted in the March 2021 report, "Artificial Intelligence Policy and Funding in Canada", by McGill University's Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Montreal, the Government of Canada is making massive investments in AI, with \$1 billion in government contributions provided across Canada as of August 2020.

In addition, in budget 2021 the Government of Canada committed to expanding the pan-Canadian AI strategy that was first launched in 2017 with an initial investment of \$125 million through the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. Budget 2021 proposes additional funding of \$443.8 million over 10 years, starting in 2021–22. It is clear that the government recognizes the potential of this industry and that the development of artificial intelligence technologies will play a fundamental role in the growth of the digital economy.

Canadians are also optimistic about the future benefits of AI. For example, a recent study by Nanos Research on behalf of ISED shows that Canadians are almost seven times more likely to say that the impact of AI will be very positive rather than very unfavourable. However, stakeholders have also expressed a range of concerns regarding AI and automated decision-making systems.

As some of these technologies have matured, risks associated with AI systems have also come to light, including with respect to health, safety and bias. The same Nanos survey I mentioned earlier noted that Canadians are most concerned about job loss, AI replacing humans, privacy and security, AI malfunction, and biased decision-making and ethics considerations.

These concerns speak to the need to ensure the responsible development of AI. The proposed consumer privacy protection act will address protections related to privacy and related security elements, but what about health, safety and bias? As machines learn from datasets they are fed, they may replicate many of the past failings that resulted in systematic disparate treatment of minorities and other marginalized consumers in vital sectors such as banking, housing and health care.

● (1625)

[Translation]

In order to increase Canadians' confidence in the use of AI technology, our laws need to be adapted to the realities of the digital economy. Some issues were identified through our consultations on digital media and the feedback we received following the publication of the consultation document on the modernization of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act.

Many stakeholders expressed concern regarding individuals' potential loss of control over the use of their personal information in the application of AI, the lack of transparency regarding the resulting decisions, and the impacts on individuals and groups.

While businesses are investing in increasingly complex AI systems and algorithmic technologies, Canadians need to have confidence in the AI systems they use every day. They also need to have recourse when automated systems make important decisions that can impact their lives.

The advancement of AI systems requires data, a lot of data. Personal information is particularly sought after to help develop algorithms and customize services. It is therefore vital that the collection and use of this data follow international standards and best practices in order to protect Canadians' rights and freedoms.

The artificial intelligence and data act is needed to address these types of concerns by establishing rules to promote a human-centred approach to artificial intelligence, good data governance practices and respect for Canadian standards and values. This approach will protect Canadians from a range of potential harms including discrimination, loss of dignity and autonomy, and serious harm to their health, safety, and economic and social well-being.

The artificial intelligence and data act will support responsible innovation by giving businesses a clear framework to guide the design, development and deployment of artificial intelligence systems.

[English]

The AIDA will ensure that entities responsible for AI systems that have a high impact on Canadians identify and mitigate potential harms, including bias. By aligning with internationally recognized standards, this will ensure market access for Canadian innovations. The proposed AI law contains provisions that protect commercially sensitive information while ensuring that AI systems do not have adverse or negative effects on Canadians.

More precisely, the AIDA contains obligations for organizations that design, develop or deploy high-impact AI systems to conduct assessments to determine the level of impact of their systems; adopt reasonable administrative, policy and technical measures to mitigate risks and assess compliance; maintain records about their artificial intelligence systems, and report harm or risk of imminent harm.

The AIDA will also give the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry the necessary tools to engage with organizations and to ensure compliance with the law. While voluntary co-operation will always be the first course of action, the AIDA provides that the minister may order an organization to provide documentation relevant

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to assessing compliance with the act. Under the AIDA, the minister may also refer questions to the other relevant regulatory bodies, such as the Privacy Commissioner or the Competition Bureau.

Also, in cases in which there are reasonable grounds to believe that the AI system may cause serious harms, the minister may order suspension of its use or operations. The minister will also be able to communicate compliance issues to the public as a means of further raising awareness about the requirements of the act.

● (1630)

[Translation]

The artificial intelligence and data act also creates a position of artificial intelligence and data commissioner to assist the minister in administering the act and to help businesses understand their responsibilities and how to comply. The commissioner will have a dedicated structure and budget for that purpose. These measures will help increase consumer confidence and their understanding of these technologies, support the ecosystem and maintain a flexible legislative framework that is responsive to international technological and regulatory developments.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take 15 seconds to congratulate my colleague on delivering half his speech in French. He has improved by leaps and bounds in less than a year.

Now, the moment we have all been waiting for, my question. Quebec has a law that protects its citizens' privacy, law 25. We talked about it earlier. In the early 2000s, PIPEDA's paragraph 26(2)(b) stated that the Governor in Council would, by order, respect Quebec's legislation. Essentially, the federal act would not apply with respect to personal information about individuals' property or their civil rights. In other words, the act would leave matters under Quebec's jurisdiction alone. Even though Quebec's law 25 already complies with EU expectations, Bill C-27 contains no clause guaranteeing that the federal government will respect the application of Quebec's law.

My question is simple. Will my colleague work to ensure that the federal government respects Quebec's law 25 and that there will be an order to that effect?

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Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and her comment about my French. I practice a lot, but not all the time.

I am going to answer her question about Quebec's law in English.

[English]

It is interesting that we are again following the Province of Quebec, much as we did with the child care plan we introduced in Canada. This piece of privacy legislation is really modelled and follows the Quebec law that was put into place. My understanding, from reading over the notes on the bill, is that where there is provincial jurisdiction that is deemed to be similar to the law we introduce, we will obviously hand it over or defer to the provincial legislation.

There is nothing that infringes on the law that is currently in place in Quebec. I applaud the Quebec provincial authorities for bringing forward legislation over the years that the federal government has looked to and modelled.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would note that from point 17 to point 50 there is a whole raft of exemptions for this bill. It is interesting to me that we are trying to build something that is predictable for the business community and protects the interests of the individual.

Does the member not think that several pages of exemptions does neither? It does not give definition to business and also does not protect the rights of individuals.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, once the bill arrives at committee stage there will be plenty of time to bring forth ideas and to strengthen legislation. That is the job of all members of Parliament here. We are sent here to improve legislation, so I encourage my colleague to do so.

All MPs know, from studying PIPEDA and other pieces of legislation that we have examined while sitting on committees, that because of technology, be it Facebook, Instagram or the use of AI, we need to revise our privacy laws. This is a good, solid step in that direction.

• (1635)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the issue of the tribunal is an interesting one. Does the member know what the cost of the tribunal will be?

We are taking away a potential resource from the Privacy Commissioner and/or the court system, and we will have to create an entirely new organization. I am curious to know what the cost of the tribunal will be.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor West, who I have travelled and worked with on the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary association. From my understanding of the bill, the tribunal will provide for access to justice and contribute to the further development of privacy expertise. That is very important in this day and age, when we are dealing with artificial intelligence and with a lot of data. We need to ensure that individuals' data is not misused, that we can move forward and that people can have confidence that their data is being protected.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise to discuss Bill C-27, an act to enact the consumer privacy protection act, the personal information and data protection tribunal act and the artificial intelligence and data act. There is a lot happening in Bill C-27. I have a lot of concerns about this bill, and that is why I will be voting against Bill C-27. It would not do the things we need to do to protect the privacy of Canadians.

I would first flag, in looking at this legislation, that the first act it would create is the consumer privacy protection act. Why is it not the Canadians' privacy protection act? Why are we talking about consumers and giving more ability to corporations to collect the privacy data of Canadians? That, to me, is very disconcerting and one of the things I want to talk about during my presentation.

The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, PIPEDA, was the very first piece of legislation we had back in 2000, so it has been 22 years since we have updated legislation related to the issue of the privacy protection of data that has been shared online. Of course, technology has evolved significantly over the last 20 years. If we look at PIPEDA, it all rolls back to 34 years ago when the Supreme Court of Canada said, "that privacy is...the heart of liberty in a modern state".

It said "privacy is...the heart of liberty", and that completely falls back on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Concerning fundamental freedoms, subsection 2(b) of the charter says, "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication" while subsection 2(d) refers to, "freedom of association."

We know very well that people's privacy has to be protected on anything they do online, what they do through mobile apps, what they do in their email communications and the collection of that data by service providers because, ultimately, anything we do online goes through a service provider on the Internet, and we have to ensure that our charter freedoms are protected to ensure our liberty.

We already know that under freedom of association, a lot of people who gather in Facebook groups and other fora on the Internet have already been violated by the Emergencies Act. We know that during the "freedom convoy" in the city, the government was harvesting data and that data was then shared by some means. With GiveSendGo, the data was mined off of it, shared on Google Maps and distributed across the country. People's individual financial information, the ultimate piece of privacy that should be protected, went across this country and the government failed to intervene.

Bill C-27 falls short on what needs to happen to protect privacy, recognizing how people are using the Internet and modern technologies, especially with mobile apps and everything that is happening on our phones. However, the protection of individuals is worth it and the privacy rights are worthy of constitutional protection, which Bill C-27 fails to recognize. We do not have a definition of privacy rights or a guarantee of privacy rights in Bill C-27, and that is why it fails.

I am the shadow minister of national defence, but earlier this year I served for a number of months as the shadow minister of ethics and digital information. I can say that, during my time serving on the ethics committee, it dealt with a number of issues. One of them, of course, was the use of Clearview AI, the facial recognition software that the RCMP and other police agencies use across this country. The ethics committee dug in deep and provided a report.

The Liberals let the RCMP make use of this technology under their tenure and did not say anything until it became public. Clearview AI, an American company, was scraping images off of Facebook and other social media such as Instagram to populate its database.

● (1640)

That information was then used, using artificial intelligence, to profile and identify people using mass surveillance techniques. We found through testimony that, not only was this done illegally, and the Privacy Commissioner ruled that Clearview AI had broken the law and that the RCMP had used it illegally, but also it was racially discriminatory as well, and it was a huge problem that people of colour and women were unfairly treated by this AI.

Bill C-27 would not regulate the use of facial recognition technology such as Clearview AI. Right now, we know the RCMP disagrees with the ruling of the Privacy Commissioner, so the question is whether CSIS, the Department of National Defence or the Communications Security Establishment are making use of similar types of technology. I will get into some of the recommendations from that report if I have time later on, but we did call as a committee, and it was adopted by the majority of members on our committee, for a federal moratorium on the use of facial recognition technology. We called for new laws, guardrails and safeguards to be built into legislation through PIPEDA and through the Privacy Act.

Bill C-27 would not provide that protection to Canadians. It would not ban or install a moratorium on the use of FRT, so that is absent.

Also, we asked that all companies be prohibited from scraping the images of Canadians off the Internet, whether it be through Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or whatever the app might be. We know that this causes potential harm to Canadians, yet Bill C-27 fails again to recognize this harm. The Liberals failed to incorporate recommendations coming from a standing committee of the House into this legislation.

One of the other things we heard about was that Tim Hortons was caught mass tracking Canadians who were using their app. If anyone who had the Tim Hortons app went to a Tim Hortons location and bought a coffee and a donut, that app was then used to

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track the behaviours of consumers of Tim Hortons as they were travelling for the next 30 minutes.

Again, this shows how the sharing of personal information and the mass data violation with the tracking of individual Canadians violated their privacy rights. Although Tim Hortons assures us they are not doing it now, we are not sure what happened with that data. Was it shared or sold to other corporations? Again, Bill C-27 would give companies, under clause 55 of the bill, a litany of exceptions to consent to sharing that personal information they collected through the use of their app. That would violate our privacy rights.

Although the Liberals have built in here words about consent and the ability for individuals to write in with consent or get removed, when it comes to terms and conditions, most Canadians, when they download an app and check the box to say “yes”, they have not read those terms and conditions. They do not know that some of these apps, as Tim Hortons was doing, were actually undermining their own privacy rights as they apply to the use of mobility data information, and because those terms and conditions are long, legalistic and cumbersome, people refuse to actually take the time to read it. Just because someone checks the box to say “Yes, I consent to using this app”, does not give those companies the right to violate the privacy of those individuals' outside of the commercial transaction that takes place between them and, in this situation, Tim Hortons.

The exemptions that are allowed under the bill for corporations need to be changed in the bill. There is no we can support it as Conservatives because they would be huge violation of privacy and of mobility, which are all things that are provided under our charter rights.

● (1645)

Under the government, we also saw the Liberal Minister of Health stand up and defend the Public Health Agency of Canada, which was caught red-handed having companies such as TELUS track the movement of Canadians via their cellphones. It said that it de-identified all the data it collected, but it wanted to know how Canadians were moving around the country underneath the auspices of the COVID pandemic and how transmission was occurring. That was a violation of privacy.

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At committee, we made a bunch of recommendations, which the government has failed to implement in Bill C-27. Bill C-27 gives companies, such as TELUS and other mobile service providers, the ability to track the movement of Canadians across this country. It may want to call it “meta data” or say it has been de-identified, but we also know from testimony at committee that it can re-identify the meta data that has been turned over to the government. We have to make sure that it is done in the public interest and under the auspices of national security, public health and national defence. If that type of data is being collected, then there has to be a way to dump that data and ensure it disappears forever.

One of the other studies we undertook was of the Pegasus software system, which is very insidious. It is being used for national security. A similar type of technology is being used right now by the RCMP, CSIS and others. It has the ability to turn people's cell-phones into video cameras and listening devices. It is a very cryptic, insidious spyware, or malware, that people can get on their phones by accidentally clicking on a piece of information, like opening up an email, and it will download. Then they can listen to the individuals in that place.

They do not have to bug people's houses anymore. They do not have to use high-grade technology to listen to the interests of individuals because it gives them the ability to turn cameras on to watch what they are doing, and turn microphones on to hear what they are discussing without them ever knowing it.

We want to make sure charter rights are protected. There are times we have to use this in the collection of data. There was definitely the admission by members of the RCMP that they have used it over a dozen times. They have their own system, not Pegasus, but one similar to it. We know that to use that type of technology, to protect the rights of Canadians, there should be a warrant issued to ensure there is judicial oversight, even if it is being used by the Department of National Defence and CSE, we have to make sure it is not being used against Canadians and only deals with those national threats they refer to as threats that are foreign entities. That is something that Bill C-27 fails to recognize.

I should say this as well. We heard at committee that this type of technology is being used against politicians, that there is foreign interference out there. As we have come to learn on different occasions, there are countries out there and other agencies that are interested in what we are saying as politicians, not just here in the House, but the private conversations we have in caucus, among colleagues, when we get together at committees, at pre-committee meetings, and the discussions we have in our offices. Our phones have become listening devices, so we have to be aware of that.

One of the things we have always talked about is what the gold level standard is to protect individuals, the citizens of our country, and to ensure their privacy rights are paramount in all the discussions we have. At the same time, we know there are going to be advances in technology, and the need at times to have police agencies, the Department of National Defence and the military use technology that could violate the rights of some people, but always with that judicial oversight that is provided underneath the charter. That gold standard is the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation. We see that the gold standard goes well above and beyond what Bill C-27 is trying to do.

• (1650)

Bill C-27 falls way short. We heard at committee that with the data collection taking place on apps, online surveillance measures have to provide the right for data to be forgotten, or the right to data disposal or erasure, another terminology that is used. It is about making sure that data collected, even if it is for the public good or even if it is metadata, is disposed of at the end of the day.

It should not be that I consent to have my data removed from a database by checking something off or having to write in an app being used to buy coffee at the neighbourhood store, for example. It should be that it is our right to be forgotten and that after a certain time frame, data is erased forever from the database where it is being held and is not used again for commercial purposes, nor used, sold or traded among commercial entities.

The gold standard that the European Union has is not included in Bill C-27. Again, that is why we have so many concerns.

When we look at clause 55, which has already been mentioned by a number of my colleagues, it has a boatload of exemptions built in for corporations to get around the removal of privacy data. These exemptions allow them to write in, make changes and share data. We have to make sure the onus is not on Canadians to get their privacy information back or to get their privacy information removed. The onus should be on corporations to prove why they need it. The onus also has to be on the government. This is about transparency and accountability. There needs to be a realization that Canadians deserve an explanation as to why some of their data may be used, even if it is de-identified, and why it would be used for the buildup of public policy or to deal with issues like a pandemic.

Just to move forward a bit, I note that given some of things we saw at committee when we were looking at facial recognition technology, the power of artificial intelligence and the growing power of AI, we made a number of recommendations. They included that whenever the government looks at using artificial intelligence or FRT for military, defence or public safety, it needs to be referred to the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians for study, review and recommendation, and it needs to be reported publicly. There also needs to be a public artificial intelligence registry for the algorithmic tools being used. However, we do not see that registry for artificial intelligence companies in Bill C-27.

I have already talked about the right to be forgotten and said there needs to be a set period of time. I have talked about the prohibition on the practice of capturing images of Canadians from public platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We also need to make sure there is a federal moratorium on using FRT until we have proven it is needed by police agencies, the justice system has proven that it works and we are sure it is not racializing Canadians in its use. Ultimately, the Privacy Commissioner and judicial authorization have to override that.

As Daniel Therrien, the Privacy Commissioner, said about the RCMP:

[It] did not take measures to verify the legality of Clearview's collection of personal information, and lacked any system to ensure that new technologies were deployed lawfully. Ultimately, we determined the RCMP's use of Clearview to be unlawful, since it relied on the illegal collection and use of facial images by its business partner.

Its business partner was Clearview AI.

There is an ongoing need to ensure that charter rights and international human rights are brought together in a collaborative way in how we all form our opinions on Bill C-27. I hope the bill is taken back and redrafted, and if not, I hope there is an opportunity to make massive amendments to it so that it actually takes into consideration the privacy rights of all Canadians.

• (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before we proceed to questions and comments, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Public Safety; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Climate Change; and the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note that the last time we had any real changes to the privacy legislation of this magnitude was a couple of decades ago. We did not even have iPhones 20 years ago, so I would ultimately argue that there is a need for change.

Tim Hortons aside, I believe the legislation we are talking about provides a good balance between consumer rights, the issue of privacy and the whole digital market out there. No doubt, it would be nice to see the legislation go before committee and, ideally, for that to take place sometime before the end of the year.

Given the urgency of the issue itself and the fact that we have not seen anything for 20 years, would the member agree that it would be nice to see the legislation pass before the end of this year?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the Liberals have been in government for the last seven years, and they have not brought forward this legislation with any urgency, it seems. It has been on the docket and off the docket a number of times.

The member talks about consumers rather than Canadians. Let us stop looking at people as commodities. Let us look at them as individuals with rights.

Government Orders

One thing the Liberals could put into the bill, as recommended by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, is details on how Canadians can opt out of being surveilled and on how their data is collected. Why is that not in here? We have a national do not call list, and we can sign up for it so we are not getting bothered all the time by telemarketers. Why would we not have a national opt-out clause for Canadians' data collection, whether for government interests or commercial interests, so they have the ability to say no because they want their privacy rights to be respected?

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman mentioned some things that are not covered by Bill C-27. The law they have in Europe right now requires businesses to have two ways to identify individuals, but the trend is moving toward having three.

Does my colleague think that Bill C-27 should also legislate on the number of methods of identification that businesses should be required to use? It does not do so right now, which is why we need to carefully study it in committee.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I do not believe that the bill lives up to the gold standard of European Union law. The European Parliament has been very good at having general data protection regulation. That is the gold standard. The bill does not provide the types of safeguards that protect the interests of Canadians.

We need an ongoing discussion on how the personal information of Canadians is protected. Bill C-27 does not provide all the guardrails required for the protection of individual Canadians. A task should be given to the industry committee or the ethics committee to dive deeper to make sure we have an opportunity to hear from more witnesses and to provide the amendments that are so desperately needed to the bill. I think it actually needs to go back to be redrafted.

• (1700)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for a very thoughtful speech. As a member of Parliament grappling with Bill C-27, I have to say that I am grateful that his party assigned him to this area of work sometime in the past, because this is enormously complicated.

The bill is three acts in one, and I would ask the member what we should do at this point. The Speaker has now given a ruling that says we will be able to vote separately on the AI piece of the bill, but I do not think that is good enough. I do not know if the committee will be able to set aside witnesses and only look at the AI piece in a concentrated fashion.

Government Orders

I would support anything we could do as opposition members of Parliament to make sure the bill is not rushed and to make sure that the artificial intelligence pieces are treated as separately as possible so that we have a good amount of time for amendments and understanding while not rushing it through.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member. We want to get this right. This should not be rushed. It is not about getting this done by Christmas because we have a legislative agenda to hammer through, as the member for Winnipeg North continues to cheerlead. What we need is to take our time.

We can split the bill into three ways and assign them to committees other than the industry committee. We can give the bill over to public safety to look at the use of the legislation from the standpoint of policing. We can shuffle off the piece on artificial intelligence to the ethics committee, making sure that it has the time to dive deep into it and hear from witnesses about how we can improve upon the bill.

Ultimately, what we could do is defeat the bill at second reading, send the government back to the drawing board and have it do a broader consultation on how this bill should be written so that it addresses the needs of the industry but protects the rights of Canadians.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would bring to the member's attention the studies we undertook at the ethics committee, where it was reported that agencies of the federal government, including the RCMP and PHAC, did not follow the existing Treasury Board guidelines on the adoption of new technology. I think all parties agree that we need updated legislation, but the government is not even following the rules that it already has.

Does there need to be more than just new regulation and protection for Canadians' privacy? Is it not also important that the government actually follow the rules that it creates, which it has not done with respect to Canadians' privacy?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his time as chair of the ethics committee and for the great job he did.

We heard from a lot of experts, and the committee found over and over again that the government was not following its own rules, including those in the Privacy Act and PIPEDA, which is antiquated, as the member for Winnipeg North pointed out. It does not even follow the guidelines that the Treasury Board has.

If the government cannot even follow the rules as they are currently, it leaves us feeling hopeless that it is going to follow the rules of any new legislation we bring in. However, I would hope that a future Conservative government would make sure legislation provides that privacy rights and the charter's freedom of expression and freedom of speech are solely protected in legislation for Internet use. That has to be the guiding light in all documentation and legislation we provide.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, given the issues of the bill and the complexity of it, I was really grateful for the intervention by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby about the NDP request to separate the votes. We cannot

actually separate the bill so that it goes to different committees. We are stuck with having a separate vote on artificial intelligence.

I know the parliamentary secretary wants to rush the bill through by Christmas, so would it not have made more sense to have three separate bills because there are three extensive pieces of legislation? If the Liberals want to move the bill quicker, perhaps they would be willing to actually separate the bill for separate studies in the House of Commons. It requires them to do this, unfortunately, not the opposition.

● (1705)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I agree that we should be dealing with this in a more focused way. Instead of having one big omnibus bill, this should be split into smaller bills so we can have a more fruitful debate and have a chance for more expert input. Then we would have more parliamentarians engaged in drafting any potential amendments to any legislation. As it is right now, the bill will be referred to only a couple of committees, and we have a timeline, which seems to be pushed by the government, that does not work.

The Privacy Commissioner, Daniel Therrien, notes that “most Canadians whose data was used did not know their data was used. The parties, both the government and the private sector, could have done more to inform users that their data was used for these purposes.” That was the data collection done through PHAC. He also said, “the second issue is whether it is good legislative policy that de-identified information falls outside the reach of privacy laws.”

The Liberals are trying to correct that through legislation. However, as David Lyon said, “high-level studies from various places, one from Imperial College London and the university in Leuven, show that 99.8% of Americans could be reidentified in a dataset that used 15 demographic attributes.” That is disconcerting, and that is why this legislation falls short.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I am very pleased to be here to discuss Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act of 2022. The bill would implement a new world-class regime for the protection of consumers and to ensure that Canadians have confidence that businesses are handling their personal data responsibly and are developing and deploying new technologies in a responsible and ethical way.

The bill also includes important changes that would support responsible innovation in an increasingly digital and data-driven marketplace. It would modernize Canada's regulatory framework for privacy protection in the private sector in a manner that supports innovation and is interoperable with the data protection laws of Canada's major trading partners.

The bill would also reinforce Canada's commitment to responsible artificial intelligence development, or AI development. As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, and indeed as the MP for Halifax, with its burgeoning tech sector, I can tell members from first-hand experience that Canada is a world leader in AI, with top talent and innovative companies.

In a world that is increasingly reliant on digital technologies, the bill would build on Canada's advantage by creating a foundation of trust and ensuring that companies meet the highest standards of responsibility when developing and deploying AI. We need to ensure that Canadians' personal information is protected, but there is also a need to support Canadian businesses so that they can grow, prosper and innovate in this increasingly digital world.

We recognize that technology is growing rapidly and providing companies with large amounts of personal information. This information fuels business decisions. It informs the creation of new products and services for customers. This innovation is critical, but we absolutely have to ensure that this innovation happens in a responsible way.

Therefore, in my limited time today, I am going to focus my comments on the first and third parts of the act, with a focus on enabling and supporting responsible innovation.

I will begin with the first part.

The proposed new Consumer Privacy Protection Act, or CPPA, retains the principles-based approach of our current private sector privacy law in order to continue harnessing the success of a flexible and adaptable privacy law.

We know circumstances are changing all the time. To better reflect advances in digital technologies, the emergence of AI and other new technologies, the CPPA contains a number of provisions to support industry innovation without compromising the protections Canadians depend on.

First, the CPPA includes a new exception to consent, to cover specified business activities, and it introduces the concept of legitimate interests into Canada's privacy framework, with updates that take into consideration what we have heard from stakeholders on the previous proposal that came before Parliament in 2020, back when I was parliamentary secretary to the then minister of heritage and we were considering this.

The objective is to help reduce the administrative burden on businesses and on individuals in situations in which seeking consent is not meaningful, for example, the use of personal information for the shipping of goods that have been requested by the individual.

In these situations, the customer clearly anticipates receiving a shipment, and the company should be able to undertake this shipment without the law adding an extra burden to provide this ser-

vice. Importantly, this exception may not be used in situations in which the organization intends to influence the individual's behaviour or decisions.

Moreover, given the need to consider interests and potential impacts on individuals, the organization will be required to assess the potential impacts on individuals, implement measures to eliminate or mitigate such impacts, and comply with any prescribed requirements. The Privacy Commissioner may review such assessments on request.

All in all, the inclusion of a targeted legitimate interest exception aligns the CPPA with international best practices, including those of the EU.

Second, the CPPA defines and clarifies how businesses should handle de-identified personal information, in other words, personal information that has been modified to reduce the risk that an individual could be recognized or identified.

This framework takes into account the feedback we heard from the previous proposal. The bill also defines anonymized information and confirms that information that has no risk of identifying an individual falls outside the scope of the act.

The bill before us today would incentivize organizations to de-identify personal information before using it for research, development and analysis purposes, further protecting Canadians' privacy.

• (1710)

We know businesses need to invest in R and D to improve their products, which benefits customers by providing them with new and innovative products and services. This provision would allow businesses the flexibility to use de-identified data for R and D, adding value for both customers and firms. However, the CPPA confirms that this information would still stay within the protection of the act and under the oversight of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, as one would expect.

Recent years have also shown the critical role data plays in developing evidence-based policies and responding to public crises. Whether it is to respond to public health needs or the now-present challenges from climate change, or even planning a city, data is needed to help us rise to these challenges, but it must be used responsibly and in keeping with our values.

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That is why the CPPA introduces a framework that would allow for the use of data in ways that would benefit the public good. It would do this by allowing companies to disclose de-identified data to specified public entities, such as hospitals, universities and libraries. These disclosures would be permitted only where specific criteria are satisfied. That is, the personal information must not identify an individual, and there must be a socially beneficial purpose, like those related to health, public infrastructure or environmental protections. This would ensure that the privacy of individuals is protected, while making sure we would be using everything at our disposal to respond to increasingly challenging global issues.

Third, the CPPA introduces a new framework for codes of practice and certification systems that would enable businesses to proactively demonstrate their compliance with the law. For example, companies that are engaged in a particular business activity could collaborate on the development of a code of practice that outlines how they comply with the specific provisions of the law. With the approval of that code by the Privacy Commissioner, organizations would have greater certainty that they are meeting their obligations.

Similarly, the bill provides a scheme for recognizing certification systems that demonstrate compliance with the law. Organizations that choose to participate in approved certification schemes would benefit from a reduced risk of enforcement actions under the act. This would be especially helpful for small- and medium-sized entities that do not necessarily have extensive legal resources at their fingertips. These new frameworks for recognized codes and certifications would make it easier for businesses to demonstrate their compliance with the law to customers, to business partners and to the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

I would like to move now to the third part of the legislation, the proposed artificial intelligence and data act, or AIDA, which would support responsible innovation by giving businesses a clear framework to guide the design, development and deployment of artificial intelligence systems, or AI systems. AI systems have many benefits and operate across national and provincial boundaries.

As I mentioned, Canada has become a global leader in artificial intelligence through the pan-Canadian AI strategy. However, as the technology has matured, risks associated with AI systems have also come to light, including with respect to health, safety and bias. In order for Canadian innovators to maintain this status, common standards are needed for international and interprovincial trade in AI systems.

The bill would guide innovation by building confidence in the technology and protecting Canadians against the harms such systems can cause. Specifically, AIDA would ensure that entities responsible for high-impact AI systems identify and mitigate potential harms, including bias. By aligning with internationally recognized standards, this would ensure market access for Canadian innovations.

Lastly, an artificial intelligence and data commissioner would be created, with the dual role of support the minister in administering the act and playing a supportive role in helping businesses understand their responsibilities and how to comply. We believe the government is paving the way for Canada to be a world leader in inno-

vation by providing Canadians with clear rules on how it may be developed and used.

I believe it is imperative the House move to pass this bill. The digital charter implementation act would not only protect the personal information of Canadians and lay the ground rules for the responsible design, development, deployment and operation of AI systems in Canada, but also enable the responsible innovation that will promote a strong Canadian economy. With this bill, the government is sending a clear message that responsible innovation is critical for Canada's future economic success and competitiveness.

• (1715)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, former Liberal bagman David MacNaughton, who was subsequently appointed to be the ambassador for Canada to the United States, went on to become the president of Palantir. It is the Dyson of data scooping and meta tag recombination.

His first order of business was to attempt to secure a contract with the Canadian federal government, but he had violated the cooling-off period for being a public servant. What assurances do Canadians have that this will be secure enough and that we will be protected from this legislation's being used as political weaponry on the taxpayer's dollar?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I begin by pointing out that Canadians have never been more reliant on digital data. In fact, a previous hon. member of this House, Scott Brison, famously quipped that we have Blockbuster legislation. We have Blockbuster law in a Netflix world. It is clear we need to update this.

To the member's question about enforcement and making sure there are repercussions for the misuse of data or for violating the proposed act, the act would create the data commissioner. It would give the commissioner powers to impose administrative monetary penalties. In contrast to today's legislative landscape, I think the proposed act would address the member's concerns.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Halifax for his speech. I am sure he will work hard in committee to defend the integrity of this bill. He can count on the Bloc Québécois's support for the principle of the bill.

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The Chair delivered a ruling earlier this afternoon about how Bill C-27 should be divided into two parts. I would like to hear his comments on that. What impact will that have on the bill? Does he think that will jeopardize certain aspects of Bill C-27? What will be the consequences?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): For clarification, I would point out that Bill C-27 has not been divided and only the vote will be done separately.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent work on the industry committee. We accomplish good things there together, and there are many more to come.

This ruling was handed down today by the Speaker. We are going to figure out what it means. In terms of process, there may be some implications. Whatever the process implications are, I do not think it impacts the content and the imperative that we move ahead with updating our digital privacy laws in Canada.

I look forward to working with him and all members of the industry committee to get this across the finish line.

• (1720)

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, Bill C-27 does not explicitly apply to political parties, and in the past we have seen the possibility of privacy breaches and misuse in the political arena.

Should the bill be amended to specifically include political parties?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, the content of the bill has been driven by past consultations on its previous iteration in 2020. It has been driven by discussions with industry partners and with social and civil society groups.

We are very confident that the contents of the bill, as it stands now, will address the gaps and how out of date it is. I believe the concerns around political parties are covered under the Elections Modernization Act, which we passed in the previous Parliament.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know it is very important, when we look at different aspects of the bill, for it to be balanced, as the member has mentioned, between business, ethics and consumer protection. We believe in privacy as a fundamental human right.

One of the definitions he talked about was de-identification versus anonymization. De-identification was used in ethics. We studied the Telus data for good program, whereby data was just given from Telus to consumers to the government during COVID. De-identification means that the risk of the individual being identified remains, whereas anonymization means that information is scrapped.

Can the member comment on whether he sees anonymization being used more than de-identification?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Madam Speaker, my view on this is that we need to give Canadian creators and innovators every advantage we

can to innovate and keep Canada in a competitive position, while at the same time protecting the privacy of Canadians and individuals. There is absolutely a balance there, and we have to find where that line is. I look forward to the good work ahead on the industry committee, where we can help to find that balance.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge that I am standing today, as any day that I am on Parliament Hill, on the Algonquin land of the Anishinabe peoples. I say a large *meegwetch* to them.

I am speaking today, as we all are, to Bill C-27, which is really three bills in one. My other parliamentary colleagues have already canvassed the bare outline of this, in that we are looking at three bills: an act to create a consumer privacy protection act; a personal information and data protection tribunal act, which largely replaces some of what there was already in PIPEDA in the past; and a brand new artificial intelligence and data act.

I want to start with the artificial intelligence and data act because it is the part with which all of us are least familiar. Much of what we see in this bill was previously before Parliament in last session's Bill C-11. There is a lot to dig into and understand here.

As I was reading through the whole concept of what kinds of harms are done by artificial intelligence, I found myself thinking back to a novel that came out in 1949. The kind of technology described in George Orwell's book, famously called *1984*, was unthinkable then. The dystopian visions of great writers like George Orwell or Margaret Atwood are hard to imagine. I will never forget the scene in the opening of *The Handmaid's Tale*, where a woman goes into a store and her debit card is taken from her. At that moment, we did not have debit cards. Margaret Atwood had to describe this futuristic concept of a piece of plastic that gave us access to our banks without using cash. No one had heard of it then.

There are words from George Orwell, written in 1949, about the ways in which artificial intelligence and new technologies could really cause harm in a dystopian sense. In *1984*, he writes, "It was terribly dangerous to let your thoughts wander when you were in any public place or within range of a telescreen. The smallest thing could give you away."

More recently, there is the song by *The Police* and written by Sting and others. I will never forget that once I went to a session on rights to privacy being under assault and a British jurist brought with him for his opening of the speech, "Every breath you take, And every move you make, Every bond you break, Every step you take, I'll be watching you."

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We live in a time when artificial intelligence can be enormously invasive of our privacy with things like visual recognition systems, as the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman was just speaking to. These are things that, for someone like me born in 1954, are all rather new, but they are new for people born in 1990 too. It is very new technology and bringing in legislation to control it is equally new and challenging for us as parliamentarians. The whole notion that we are going to be able to spot the ways in which artificial intelligence can affect our democracy is something that will take time.

We talk about harms from this kind of technology, from capturing algorithms, from invading our spaces. We do not have to look any farther than the way Cambridge Analytica was used by the Brexit forces in the U.K. to harness a public outrage against something based on a pile of disinformation, by targeting individuals and collecting their data. That kind of Cambridge Analytica concern also gets into part 1 and part 2 of this bill. We really do need to figure out how to control the digital tech giants harvesting our information.

As an example used earlier today in debate, there is the idea that big digital giants and large corporations can profit from data without the consent of Canadians who may have put a family photo on social media, never knowing that their privacy has been invaded and their personal information and photos have been used for profit without their permission. In this sense, I am going to flag that in the context of the artificial intelligence and data act, I hope we will be taking the time necessary to hear witnesses specifically on this.

We have developed a pattern in recent years, which is to say the last decade or so, of having three or four witnesses appear on panels. All of us in this place know that committees are trying to hear from a lot of people and receive a lot of evidence. It will do us a disservice in our dive into the artificial intelligence and data act if we combine panels of people who are experts on PIPEDA and people who are experts on other aspects of this bill, with panels on artificial intelligence and data.

The committees that study this bill will control their own process. Committees are the masters of their own process, but I would urge the government, the Liberal legislative managers of this piece of legislation, Bill C-27, to follow the lead of the Speaker's ruling earlier today. If we are going to vote on the artificial intelligence act as a separate piece when we come to vote, we could at least make an effort to ensure that the concentrated effort of committee members and hearing witness testimony is not diluted through several different pieces of legislation and panels with three or four witnesses.

• (1725)

Members' questions will inevitably and invariably go to one or two. In this format of panels and pushing witnesses through quickly, we lose a lot of content. Compared with when I worked in government back in the 1980s, which I know seems like the dark ages and no one in this room was on committees in those days, committees would hear from a witness who could speak for 15 minutes and then we would have the rest of an hour to ask that one witness questions. Now that we are into something as complicated as this area, I would urge the committee to give it that kind of attention or

to ask the government to send part 3, the artificial intelligence and data act, to a different committee, so that the study can be thorough and we can educate ourselves as to the unintended consequences that will inevitably occur if we go too fast.

Turning to the parts of the bill that deal with privacy, I want to put on the record again a question that was raised just moments ago about whether privacy legislation should apply to political parties in Canada. At the moment, it does not. Political parties are exempted from the kinds of privacy protections that other organizations, NGOs and corporations must use to protect the privacy information of their customers, consumers and citizens.

[Translation]

The Green Party of Canada believes it is essential that political parties be added to the list of organizations that have an obligation to protect the privacy of Canadians.

[English]

I will say quickly that I tend to agree with the first analysis of one of the NGOs that are very concerned with privacy information. OpenMedia, in an article by Brian Stewart, says very clearly that this legislation could actually make things worse for some privacy protections. They give the efforts of Bill C-27's consumer privacy protection act and its personal information and data protection tribunal act a grade of D. In other words, it passes but just barely. There will be many witnesses.

I can certainly confirm that, as a Green Party member of Parliament in this place, I will be bringing amendments forward, assuming this bill gets through second reading, which I think we can assume, and ends up at committee.

In the time remaining, I want to emphasize that Canada is aware that privacy is a fundamental human right. It is part of the UN declaration on the rights of individuals. I echo some of the sentiments from the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman in asking why we are looking at consumer privacy. Maybe we should change that word to Canadians' rights and privacy.

I also agree with many members who have spoken today about the problems of subclause 18(3) and the number of exemptions along with the question of what is a "legitimate" reason that people's privacy can be invaded. That should be further clarified. I find "a reasonable person would expect the collection or use for such an activity" to be fine, but the exemptions seem overly broad.

If I dive into anything else I will go over my allotted time.

This is important legislation. We must protect the privacy of Canadians. I think we will call on all parties in this place to set aside partisanship and make an honest effort to review it. That is not to delay it but to make an honest effort to review the bill before it leaves this place.

• (1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe it was in response to a question by the leader of the Green Party that a member of the Conservative Party responded by implying that the best thing we could do would be to defeat the legislation and send it back to the drawing board. I do not believe that would be the position of the leader of the Green Party, but I do have a question for her.

I can appreciate there is a fear factor. We want to be cautious as we move forward, and what I suggested before in my question is that it seems to me there is a great deal of interest on all sides of the House to get into the nuts and bolts of the legislation. Given the limited time for debate in the House, would it not be better to see the legislation go before a committee because a committee has a lot more time to get into the details of the legislation?

After all, we would still have all of third reading and so forth. That is why I made reference to whether we should be looking at trying to get this legislation through second reading before the end of the year, given the importance of the issue.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary will not be the least bit surprised that I hope his government will not use time allocation again to reduce the time available for debate, and I likewise would urge all parties in this place to ensure everyone who speaks to the legislation has really studied it, knows it well and is prepared to speak to it without notes. I think that would speed along the process of second reading.

There are also concerns with the legislation that I have not referenced yet, but I see an hon. colleague in this place who is certainly as concerned as I am about the rights to children's privacy. We have to be very concerned with the invasive use of images and the right of individuals to be able to get what is now called either erasure or the right to be forgotten.

However, I agree with the hon. member. I would like to see the bill go to committee. I will vote for it, but I have a lot of concerns.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her engagement. In light of what we have seen in the last two and a half years with the government engaging in serious violations of Canadians' privacy and personal freedom rights, and given the fact it allowed the Public Health Agency of Canada, without judicial authority or approval, to track Canadians on Canadian soil, does the member think the legislation would prevent future episodes of that kind of thing from happening to Canadian citizens?

• (1735)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I know that my hon. colleague from Provencher and I disagree on some aspects of the facts around the Public Health Agency, but I know there certainly are concerns. I have agreed in this place before that, if an app is tracking personal

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information, whether it is a Tim Hortons or, worse, the government, we need to pay close attention to that. I think the legislation would make positive steps forward to prevent that, but I do not think we can say with confidence that the legislation absolutely would ensure it never happens again.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her speech. She talked about the importance of data protection.

This bill is aimed at the private sector, but it does not address the public sector, even though the government itself has failed to protect data, as in the case of CERB fraud.

Should the bill also regulate government data to ensure that the public interest is protected?

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on this.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. As he said so well, recent examples of fraud show that we must address these issues. We must protect the privacy rights of Canadians and Quebecers. We must do more with this bill.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about rights, and I agree with her that privacy rights are an important part of the digital age. Like other rights, we must be clear where we stand on them.

I am wondering if the member agrees with me in questioning whether making it easier for the Facebooks and the Googles of the world to use Canadians' personal information in ways that have nothing to do with their services in the guise of helping small business is the right place to stand. That is certainly one of concerns I have.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I think history will look back at the Googles and Facebooks of this world and put them in a category with evil flesh merchants of times gone by. They are appalling, and they get away with murder. They get away with stealing our privacy for their profit.

All of these so-called platforms should be treated as publishers so that common law could deal with them, and they could not be anonymously destroying people's lives. People would know who said what. The publisher would be held to account and could be sued for abuses, which are spread, and for disinformation.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, whom I commend for his hard work.

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Today, I am pleased to speak to a bill that is as necessary as it is complex. As written, the bill has some grey areas, some things the Bloc Québécois has reservations about, but we do think it has a lot of potential.

Bill C-27 enacts the consumer privacy protection act. Sponsored by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, the bill is at second reading. It would create three different acts: the consumer privacy protection act, the personal information and data protection tribunal act, and the artificial intelligence and data act. That last one is very interesting.

In essence, Bill C-27 seeks to strengthen the protection of anonymity and privacy. Now that digital technology is omnipresent in our lives, it is harder than ever to make sure our privacy and personal information are protected.

Until now, organizations of every kind have taken advantage of the absence of a legal consumer protection framework. In Canada, personal information is a commodity without a legal owner.

Just look at the Cambridge Analytica scandal during the 2016 U.S. election. Bill C-27 aims to change this sorry state of affairs, which is threatening our democracy, our privacy and social peace. The bill not only limits and restricts the excessive freedom enjoyed by organizations that collect and share our data, but it also gives them responsibilities. In short, it puts the individual and the idea of consent back at the centre of reflections on digital exchanges, and that is significant.

The Bloc Québécois supports this bill because it partially fills a legal void in Canada. I say “in Canada” because the Quebec National Assembly passed Law 25 on the protection of personal information way back in September 2021. It is a well-written law. Bill C-27 is actually largely modelled after it, and we are very proud of that.

Given that the protection of personal information is a shared jurisdiction, it is vital to the Bloc Québécois that Bill C-27 not take precedence over Quebec law. This does not seem to be the case at this time, but it will be up to the committee to verify this and ensure that it does not.

Speaking of the committee stage, many grey areas still need to be clarified. According to Daniel Therrien, a former privacy commissioner of Canada, Bill C-27 is too timid in its current form.

I myself have thought of something that could be studied at the committee stage, and that is image copyright. Since we are speaking about consent, the protection of anonymity, personal data and the need to adapt our legal framework to the digital era, I believe that it would be highly relevant to address this subject.

Just like the digital world, the world of photography has changed a great deal over the past 20 years. Thanks to smartphones, and the fact that just about everybody owns one, or even two, more and more photos are being taken. According to some estimates, more than three billion photographs are taken every day around the world. An image is a form of personal information. The use and sharing of images are intrinsically linked to the principle of consent. If no consent is obtained, that is a breach of privacy.

I believe that our current interpretation of image copyright is too strict, and this is detrimental to street photography and photojournalism. My father, Antoine Desilets, a photojournalist, was also a street photographer in his own way. Street photography is generally defined as photography done outdoors whose main subjects are people in spontaneous situations and in public places such as streets, parks, beaches and protests.

● (1740)

A good example of this kind of photography is the famous photograph *The Kiss by the Hôtel de Ville*, taken by the renowned French photographer Robert Doisneau. That shot has actually been the subject of multiple lawsuits, with every Dick and Jane claiming to be one of the two main figures in the picture.

Let me tell a little story from closer to home. In 1987, a Quebec photographer and friend by the name of Gilbert Duclos took a picture of a woman in the street. After the photograph was published in a magazine, the woman decided to sue Gilbert Duclos. She claimed that she was being mocked by her friends and felt that she had been wronged.

After a two-year legal saga that reached the Supreme Court, the woman won. For more than three decades, that decision, known as the Duclos decision, has been a precedent.

The debate was recently reignited by the case of a veiled woman and her husband who were photographed at a flea market in Sainte-Foy. Since the photograph had been published without their consent, the photographer was forced to pay \$3,500 to each of the two people in the photograph, even though the individuals were veiled. There is no doubt that the Duclos decision was used to bolster the plaintiffs' case.

Today, it is very easy to take a photographer to court and win. This means that many photojournalists and street photographers get sued, so unfortunately, they have to practise a form of self-censorship to protect themselves and the newspapers they work for. I believe this self-censorship has grave consequences for the arts, journalism and archive building. As it happens, on October 1, a group of 12 street photographers, led by the esteemed Jean Lauzon, published a book entitled *Le droit à l'image* as a commentary on this very issue.

The Bloc Québécois believes that the committee that will study Bill C-27 will have to take its time and question all the experts it needs to consult in order to come up with an ironclad law. I have a suggestion. Since we are discussing consent, privacy, the right to anonymity and personal data in the digital age, why not invite experts such as Jean Lauzon to help us understand how to modernize image copyright?

Also, when does an image of an individual taken in a public space become private? Once again, there is the need for oral or written consent on the one hand, and perhaps the definition of the concept of a subject on the other. There is a whole host of factors to consider.

For the rest, I am in favour of Bill C-27 because it gives hope that we are going to begin to plug the gaping hole that our data is currently circulating in, allowing it to be sold and exploited.

It will be especially important to ensure that the Quebec legislation takes precedence over the Canadian legislation, as is customary in matters of shared jurisdiction.

• (1745)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member raises a fascinating issue, which is the capturing of images and how one would protect the privacy of the individual, especially when it is in a public setting. I think that could be applied in many different ways. It would be interesting to see how that sort of a discussion would, in fact, take place at a standing committee.

The member is right in the sense that the legislation is not that far off. I do not know all of the details of it, obviously, but I am led to believe that Quebec has done some fabulous work on this issue. I wonder if he could provide any insights into how the Quebec legislature dealt with the capturing of images and the public versus privacy issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question.

The Quebec legislation does not go quite that far, but the issue remains. The jurisprudence dates back to 1987, after all.

When my colleague refers to photos taken in public, the definition of the words “public” and “private” is not clear. I might be in the street kissing my mistress. That is my private life, but at a location that, within the meaning of the current federal legislation, is a public place.

There is a host of concepts of the kind that ought to be delineated and more precisely defined in order to bring some much-needed clarity to the whole issue. It is really too bad that Mr. Duclos is still burdened by this jurisprudence.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, would the member agree that the creation of two new categories of data exempt from privacy measures is a worrisome gesture by the Liberals and could be a gift to the very technology giants to which they have such close ties?

• (1750)

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, our colleague is always full of surprises.

Basically, I think this bill is relevant. Overall, it is relevant. In this day and age and in light of the current context, this bill is pretty much a necessity.

I am concerned about how the bill will be dealt with in committee. When it comes to bills like this one, the committee has an extremely important role to play. Beyond the wording of the bill, it is the work that is done in committee that will be critical for the future.

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[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to call the attention of the House and the member to subclause 15(6) of the bill, which states, “It is not appropriate to rely on an individual’s implied consent if their personal information is collected or used for an activity described in subsection 18(2) or (3).”

If we look at clause 18, it states that one can use a person’s implied consent when collecting information. It is fascinating to me that this bill says, on the one hand, that one cannot use implied consent, but then the exemptions part says one can rely on implied consent. What are we trying to do with this bill? It is really muddying the waters for me, and I am wondering if my hon. colleague has a comment about that.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, there will be more to come on that.

In the case of photographs, it is not easy to define what implied consent involves. In some situations, implied consent from the subject may be a look that says that they consent. It may also involve asking the subject if they agree to be photographed. In other cases, it may involve written consent.

That is why I think it is extremely important and relevant for the committee to do an exemplary job, and not just with regard to photography, which is part of who I am. In order to do that, the committee needs to invite all kinds of experts.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill after my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, whom I would like to congratulate. I am also pleased to be following my colleague from Trois-Rivières, an ethics expert who enlightened us on the potential impact of this bill and the dangers involved.

Unfortunately, very few people are interested in this type of bill, and yet, in the digital age, we cannot afford not to regulate the use of personal information. We cannot deny the fact that the digital shift has exploded in Quebec and elsewhere over the last decade, and it has greatly changed our lifestyles.

It is impressive to see which path companies have chosen during the pandemic, and I think it is a timely discussion to have today. However, I would like to draw attention to the new part of the bill that deals with artificial intelligence. I think it deserves serious consideration.

Part 3 of the bill raises many questions, and opinions from experts in the field of artificial intelligence are mixed. The use of artificial intelligence is a rapidly growing field that risks expanding beyond our control and jurisdiction if we do not begin to regulate the practice and define certain concepts.

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Recent developments in AI in general and deep learning in particular have led to the creation of autonomous intelligent agents, which are essentially robots capable of deciding what to do without third-party intervention. These agents' autonomy raises new questions about civil liability, so we have to think about criminal provisions that would apply if someone were put in a dangerous situation, for example.

How should we approach this, and what legal status are we granting them? What legislative framework is the best fit for these autonomous agents?

At this point, we think some important definitions are missing. The law clerks who are examining the bill's provisions from a legal standpoint told us that again today. What is a high-risk intelligence system? What is a high-impact system?

The algorithms produced in applications that use artificial intelligence enable artificial beings to create goods or services or to generate predictions or results. If we compare them to human beings and use the existing framework, how will we interpret the notions of independence and unpredictability attributable to these artificial beings? The experts will help us understand all that.

Quite a few goods already exist that have a layer of artificial intelligence built into them, and 90% of those goods should not pose a problem. Experts at Meta have even said that this technology has reached its limits, because the data to train an algorithm is insufficient in quantity and lacks depth.

Let us get back to the main problem we have with Bill C-27. Until the department clarifies its thinking on what constitutes a high-impact system, it will be difficult to assess the scope of part 3. Let us assume that everything can be considered high risk. This would mean that many companies would be accountable. If we had greater accountability, the Googles of this world might be the only ones that could risk using artificial intelligence.

The bill does not need to cover everything a machine can do for us or everything software can do once it is developed and generates predictions and results like a calculator.

If we compare it to the European legislation, we note that the latter is currently targeting employment discrimination systems, systems that would determine whether or not a permit to study there can be granted. That is essentially the limit of what the machine can do in our place.

Although the law in this document concerning artificial intelligence is far from being exhaustive, I believe it is important that we start somewhere. By starting here, with a framework, we can lay the groundwork for a more comprehensive law.

My speech this evening will help my colleagues better understand what needs to be clarified as soon as possible so we can have an important discussion about how to regulate the applications that use artificial intelligence and how to process these systems' data.

First, we will have to implement regulations for international and interprovincial exchanges for artificial intelligence systems by establishing Canada-wide requirements for the design, development and use of AI systems. Next, we must prohibit certain uses of AI that may adversely affect individuals.

• (1755)

The legislation is very clear on many other aspects, including on the fact that there would be a requirement to name a person responsible for artificial intelligence within organizations that use this technology. The responsibilities are fairly extensive.

In addition to the artificial intelligence and data act, which is in part 3, Bill C-27 also includes, in part 1, the consumer privacy protection act, as well as the amendments to the former legislation. Part 2 of the bill enacts the personal information and data protection tribunal act, while part 4 includes the coming into force provisions of the bill.

As my colleagues explained, the other sections of the bill contain a lot of useful elements, such as the creation of a tribunal and penalties. One of the acts enacted by Bill C-27 establishes a tribunal to process complaints under litigation when it comes to the use of private data. In case of non-compliance, the legislation provides for heavy penalties of up to 3% of a multinational's gross global revenue. There are provisions that are more in favour of citizens when a company misuses digital data.

Yes, this bill does have its weaknesses. I believe those weaknesses can be addressed in committee, but they may require the introduction of new legislative measures. Public services, however, are not covered by this bill. Data in the public sector requires a greater degree of protection; this bill covers only the private sector. Take, for example, CERB fraud and the CRA. In 2020, hackers fraudulently claimed \$2,000 monthly payments and altered the direct deposit information for nearly 13,000 accounts.

The government can do more to tackle fraud. Unfortunately, this bill offers no relief or recourse to those whose information has already been compromised. There are digital records of nearly every important detail about our lives—financial, medical and education information, for example—all of which are easy targets for those who want to take advantage. It has been this way for a while, and it is only going to get worse when quantum computers arrive in the very near future.

This means that we must find and develop better means of online identity verification. We must have more rigorous methods, whether we are changing our requirements for passwords, for biometrics or for voice recognition.

Recently, at the sectoral committee, we heard about how easy it is for fraudsters to call telecommunication centres and pass themselves off as someone else to access their information. We must improve identity verification methods, and we must find a way to help those who are already victims of fraud. We must do so by amending Bill C-27 or introducing an additional legislative measure.

Since this is a fairly complex bill, it will be referred to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, where we will have the opportunity to hear from experts in the field. At this step, I would like to recognize the leadership of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and his team. We have been reassured by the answers we have received.

Since Quebec already has data protection legislation—Bill 64, which became law 25—we want to understand when the federal act will apply and whether the changes we requested to Bill C-11, introduced in the previous Parliament, were incorporated into this bill. I want to say that we are satisfied with the answers we have received so far.

We will do our due diligence because this bill includes a number of amendments. Obviously, the devil is in the details. During the technical briefings held by the department since Bill C-27 was published, we asked how much time businesses would have to adjust their ways of doing things and comply with the legislation.

We expect that there will be a significant transition period between the time when Bill C-27 is passed and when it comes into force. Since the bill provides for a lot more penalties, the government will likely hold consultations and hearings to get input from stakeholders.

In closing, I would like to say that I have just come back from Tokyo, where I accompanied the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence Summit, where Quebec and France took the lead. The first summit was held in 2020. I would like to list some important values that were mentioned at this summit that deserve consideration and action: responsible development, ethics, the fight against misinformation and propaganda, trust, education, control, consent, transparency, portability, interoperability, strict enforcement and accountability. These are all values that must accompany open data and ecosystems.

● (1800)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would concur with the member and the many others who are, in essence, saying that Bill C-27 is a substantive piece of legislation that is ultimately designed to ensure privacy for Canadians.

As I made reference to earlier, I think we could look at how effective the legislation of the Quebec legislation has been, which was passed just over a year ago, and what the response has been to it. I understand that was what the member was saying. Taking into consideration AI, the tribunal, digital and just how much the digital economy has grown, 20 years ago is the last time we have seen any sort of substantive changes to our privacy legislation.

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I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to why it is important that we update and modernize. After all, 20 years ago, we did not even have iPhones.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his remarks.

Indeed, I think such a bill was urgently needed. I commend the government's leadership and congratulate it on having understood the errors in Bill C-11 and making some improvements.

I met with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry in January, when it was time to think about developing this bill. I emphasized the importance of the Quebec legislation and of ensuring its primacy. I thank him for listening to me and for the respect evident in Bill C-27.

With respect to the urgent need to take action, Europe is putting a lot of pressure on us. Indeed, Europe has set guidelines and is currently threatening to withdraw its confidence in our artificial intelligence systems in Canada, particularly in the banking sector. It was necessary to act; better late than never.

I hope the principle will be adopted quickly, but more importantly, I hope that the committee work will be thorough and that the experts will be heard. This will be more than welcome.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have concerns around the fact that we are expecting the government to do a good job.

The member mentioned CERB, which was, in many ways, abused. We are aware that the government, in an effort to roll it out quickly, removed all the checks and balances on the system. How does that build confidence for him and other Canadians to put their trust in its ability to do this correctly?

● (1805)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, trust is a major issue. Far too often, we are negligent. How many times do we just click “I accept” in an app without reading the consequences of what we are accepting? Our data is being sent all over the world.

Artificial intelligence is something that scares me, truth be told. A guest speaker came to Parliament, to a room in the House of Commons, and this is what he told us. What does AI say is the fastest way to get to Toronto? Just simulate an accident or a speed trap so that people get off the road. That will allow us—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe there is no interpretation.

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It is working now.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue can restart his answer.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, it is not easy. What I was talking about was trust.

Artificial intelligence is something that scares me, on the whole. A guest speaker came to a meeting held on Parliament Hill, and he told us about the risks.

Say we want to drive to Toronto and there is a lot of traffic. What can we do? We can ask AI to tell us the fastest way to get to Toronto. One option is to simulate an accident, which will ensure that the road is cleared. Another is to say that police have set up a speed trap or something. AI can be used to generate very realistic photos, such as a Parliament building on fire. Fighting disinformation is a major challenge.

Everyone has an individual responsibility. All too often, when using an app, we quickly click “accept” rather than doing our due diligence. That has consequences.

As I was saying earlier, we send a lot of data abroad. With the arrival of quantum computing, we may suffer the consequences of sending all this data to the cloud.

I do not think it is too late to have a law that sets out a framework, to improve the legislation and especially to ask experts to tell us how this bill can be improved. I am thinking about the people at the International Centre of Expertise in Montréal on Artificial Intelligence, those at the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute, or Mila, and those at the University of Montreal. These people work in this field every day and have a contribution to make. I look forward to hearing from them at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague.

Bill C-27 does not explicitly apply to political parties. As we have seen in the past, the potential for invasion of privacy and misuse exists in the political arena. I was wondering if my colleague would agree that the bill should be amended to specifically include political parties.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith for her question. Indeed, political parties have responsibilities. They have people's personal data. We need to act. If we can include it in the bill, I am all for it. We have a responsibility as parliamentarians.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country. Today we are debating Bill C-27, an act that would enact the consumer privacy protection act, the personal information and data protection tribunal act and the artificial intelligence and data act.

Canadians know we no longer live in the year 2000, but unfortunately much of our digital regulation still does. We have come a long way since Canadians' primary online concern was Y2K. The

last time Parliament passed a digital privacy framework was PIPE-DA, or the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, on April 13, 2000. The most popular website in Canada that month was AOL.

When Parliament last wrote these regulations, millions of homes did not have dial-up, let alone Wi-Fi. Cellular phones lacked apps or facial recognition, and people still went continually to libraries to get information, and did not have the Alexas of the world as an alternative. They also called restaurants directly for delivery. Digital advertising amounted to flashing banners and pop-up ads.

In only 22 years, we have experienced a paradigm shift in how we treat privacy online. Personal data collection is the main engine driving the digital economy. A Facebook account is now effectively required to use certain types of websites and help those websites; a laptop can create a biometric password for one's bank account, and Canadians are more concerned about privacy than ever before.

One of the most common videos I share with residents in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country is one relating to privacy concerns during my questioning at the industry committee in 2020, as many people reached out to me about privacy concerns. It was to a Google Canada representative regarding cellphone tracking. This was in the immediate aftermath of reports of Canadians' cellphone data being used to track people's locations during the pandemic.

Cellphone tracking is something I continue to receive correspondence about, and I am sure other members in the House do as well. As traditionally defined, our right to privacy has meant limiting the information others can get about us. The privacy of one's digital life should be no different from the physical right to privacy on one's property. Canadians must have the right to access and control the collection, use, monitoring, retention and disclosure of their personal data.

Privacy as a fundamental right is not stipulated in the legislation we are discussing today, Bill C-27. It is mentioned in the preamble, which is the narrative at the beginning, but that is not binding. It is not in the legislation itself. While the degree to which someone wishes to use this right is ultimately up to the individual, Parliament should still seek to update the rules using detailed definitions and explicit protections. Canadians are anxious to see action on this, and I have many concerns about this legislation, which I will outline here today.

As drafted, Bill C-27 offers definitions surrounding consent rules to collect or preserve personal information. It would mandate that when personal information is collected, tech companies must protect the identity of the original user if it is used for research or commercial purposes. The legislation outlines severe penalties for those who do not comply and would provide real powers of investigation and enforcement. It presents Canada's first regulations surrounding the development of artificial intelligence systems.

Even though Bill C-27 presents welcome first steps in digital information protection, there is still a long way to go if we are to secure digital rights to the standard of privacy regulation Canadians expect, and most importantly, the protection of personal privacy rights. As is mentioned in Bill C-27, digital privacy rights are in serious need of updating. However, they are not in this legislation.

• (1810)

I agree with the purpose of the legislation, but many of my concerns are about inefficient, regulatory bureaucracy being created and the list of exemptions. Also, the artificial intelligence legislation included in this bill has huge gaps and should really be its own legislation.

From a purely operational perspective, while the legislation would empower the Privacy Commissioner's office with regard to compliance, it also constructs a parallel bureaucracy in the creation of a digital tribunal. If Bill C-27 is enacted, Canada's Privacy Commissioner can recommend that the tribunal impose a fine after finding that a company has violated our privacy laws. However, the final decision to pursue monetary penalties would ultimately rest with the new tribunal. Will this result in a duplicate investigation undertaken by the tribunal to confirm the commissioner's investigation?

As someone who has operated a small business, I am all too aware of the delays and repetitiveness of government bureaucracy. While it is important to have an appeal function, it is evident in this legislation that the Liberals would be creating a costly, bureaucratic, regulatory merry-go-round for decisions.

Canadians looking to see privacy offenders held accountable need to see justice done in a reasonable time frame. That is a reasonable expectation. Why not give Canada's Privacy Commissioner more authority? Of course, Canadian courts stand available. The EU, the U.K., New Zealand and Australia do not have similar tribunals to mediate their fines.

In addition to concerns about duplications of process, I am worried that we may be leaving the definitions of offending activity too broad.

While a fairly clear definition in Bill C-27, which we are debating here today, has the consent requirement for personal data collection, there is also a lengthy list of exemptions from this requirement. Some of these exemptions are also enormously broad. For example, under exemptions for business activities, the legislation states:

18 (1) An organization may collect or use an individual's personal information without their knowledge or consent if the collection or use is made for the purpose of a business activity described in subsection (2) and

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(b) the personal information is not collected or used for the purpose of influencing the individual's behaviour or decisions.

On plain reading, this exemption deals more with the field of human psychology than with business regulation.

Also in the legislation is this:

(3) An organization may collect or use an individual's personal information without their knowledge or consent if the collection or use is made for the purpose of an activity in which the organization has a legitimate interest that outweighs any potential adverse effect on the individual resulting from that collection or use

There is also an exemption to consent that would allow an organization to disclose personal information without the individual's knowledge or consent for a "socially beneficial purpose". This is defined as "a purpose related to health, the provision or improvement of public amenities or infrastructure, the protection of the environment or any other prescribed purpose." Who determines what constitutes a socially beneficial purpose? This sounds incredibly subjective, and I have a lot of concerns when legislation is this vague.

Let me give a very simple example. Suppose a person using a coffee company app occasionally adds flavourings to their coffee while doing a mobile order. That company could recommend a new product with those flavourings already in it while a person is not physically in their business. Is this not personal information that is collected and used for the purpose of influencing an individual's decision, as in this legislation?

This example is not hypothetical. In an investigation from actions in 2020, Tim Hortons was caught tracking the locations of consumers who had the app installed on their phones even when they were not using the company's app. Tim Hortons argued that this was for a business activity: targeted advertising. However, the report from the federal Privacy Commissioner found that the company never used it for that purpose. Instead, it was vacuuming up data for an undefined future purpose. Would Tim Hortons have been cleared if the current regulations in Bill C-27 were in place and if it had argued that the data was going to be used for future business activity or for some socially beneficial purpose, which is an exemption in the legislation?

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• (1815)

While I worry about the loopholes this legislation, Bill C-27, may create for large corporations, I am equally concerned about the potential burden it may place on start-ups as well. This legislation calls for companies to have a privacy watchdog and to maintain a public data storage code of conduct. This is vital for companies like Google, Facebook or Amazon, which have become so integral to our everyday lives and oversee our financial details and private information. Having an officer internally to advocate for the privacy of users is likely long overdue. However, while that requirement would not put much financial burden on these Fortune 500 companies, it could undermine the ability of Canadian digital innovators to get started.

Canada has seen a boom in small-scale technology companies for everything from video game and animation studios to wellness or shopping sites for almost every good or service one could imagine. Digital privacy laws should be strong enough to not require a start-up with just a few staff to have to be mandated to have such a position internally. We should ensure that a concept of scale is appropriately applied in regulating the giants of today without crushing the future digital entrepreneurial spirit of tomorrow.

I would like to address the presence of Canada's first artificial intelligence, or AI, regulations in this bill. While I do welcome the progress on recognizing this growing innovation need for a regulatory framework, I question whether it is a topic too large to be properly studied and included in this bill. In just the last few months, we have seen the rapid evolution of the ability of AI to create an online demand digital artwork, for example, thanks to the self-evolving abilities of machine learning.

The impact of AI on everything from our foreign policies to agriculture production is evident. Computer scientists observed a phenomenon known as Moore's law, which showed that the processing power of a computer would exponentially double every two years, and in the 57 years since this was proposed, this law has apparently not been broken.

I am concerned that most of the rules around AI will be in regulation and not in legislation. We have seen the Liberals do this many times. They do not want to do the hard work to put policies into legislation that will be brought to Parliament and committees to be debated and voted on. They prefer to do the work behind closed doors and bring forth whatever regulations they want to impose without transparency and scrutiny. We have seen the Liberals conduct themselves many times in this way.

Experts in the field have already made the case that Bill C-27 falls seriously short of the global gold standard, the EU's 2016 General Data Protection Regulation. Canadians deserve nothing less.

Though Conservatives agree with the premise of strengthening our digital privacy protection, this bill has many concerns and gaps. Clause 6 outlines that privacy protections do not apply with respect to personal information that has been anonymized. To anonymize is defined in the legislation as "irreversibly and permanently modify personal information, in accordance with generally accepted best practices, to ensure that no individual can be identified from the information, whether directly or indirectly, by any means."

There are a lot of risks around this. Under this legislation, information could be disclosed in numerous ways, and that is very concerning. This goes back to what I mentioned at the beginning of my speech with respect to my questioning of Google Canada early in the pandemic about tracing the locations of people through their phones and sending it to the government.

The legislation creates more costly bureaucracy. It does not protect personal privacy as a fundamental right. It has questionable exemptions to protect the privacy of people based on ideologies. It allows the government to create large areas of regulations with no oversight or transparency and it is far from the gold standard that other countries have.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to some things that were mentioned previously. I am forming the opinion that the Conservative Party does not support having a tribunal. I guess I am looking for clarification on that point.

Is it the Conservative Party's approach to say that, once the commission has made a decision, a tribunal would not be warranted and that the only recourse would be to take it to a federal court? What would it replace the tribunal with, or would it replace it with anything?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment from the member opposite. One thing in this legislation is to create a whole new bureaucracy. When we look at the gold standard that exists in other countries around the world, and I mentioned them in my speech, they do not have a need for such an organization or department to exist. It is questionable where this came from.

Why not give more authority to the Privacy Commission and its commissioner? This is really not the gold standard that other countries have, and they already have a lot of regulations that are further along than what we have. The questions are, where did this idea come from and why do we feel we need this in Canada when a lot of our allies do not have this type of requirement?

• (1825)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limouilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is intended primarily for the private sector. It is virtually silent on the subject of the public sector's duties and obligations. As things stand, it is up to victims to fight tooth and nail to prove that fraudulent activity occurred and that they themselves are not new fraudsters. This applies to all levels of government.

I would like my colleague to comment on public sector accountability for cleaning up fraud victims' records when the fraud was caused by the public sector's weak identity verification methods.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, there is different legislation that is covered for the government, but philosophically, absolutely the government should be held accountable for keeping Canadians' information safe. We know there have been breaches over time. We had a recent one with the ArriveCAN app. There was information that was sent out to 10,000 people that was not accurate. We know there have been other breaches over time.

It is imperative that Canadians know that the government is also held to account for the information it holds in all the different departments a Canadian citizen might correspond with.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the private right of action would allow individuals and groups of consumers to seek compensation in court. This has been used effectively in the United States to remedy violations, but it is very burdensome in Bill C-27 to make it even usable.

For example, if the Privacy Commissioner does not investigate or rule on a complaint, an individual has no right of action. If the Privacy Commissioner does investigate and rule on a complaint but the tribunal does not uphold it, the individual has no right of action. These are a couple of examples.

Does my hon. colleague feel that this bill should be amended to fix this?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have seen over time from the Liberal government is building up bureaucracy, building up red tape and making things more difficult for people. Just as a general philosophy, any time we can strip away red tape, create efficiencies and take away bureaucracy, it is a good thing.

Of course, we need to have rules and policies in place. We also need to have the department serving Canadians, and that should really be its focus. It should be focusing on making sure people follow rules, but as soon as we get into difficult, bureaucratic regimes and a lot of red tape, it makes it more difficult for everyone.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the question from my colleague from Beauport—Limouilou.

I would like to hear what my colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country thinks about the government's public data. Is it not time for the government to implement other ways to verify identity?

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I am talking about at least a factor of two verifications, maybe even three. This may be data such as a password, but it may also be by voice recognition, by facial recognition, by text, and so forth. It may be time for the government to move on to something else.

Could we have more robust means of protecting Canadians' data?

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, I am not sure what the specific ideas might be but I think, in general, any time we can do anything to protect the privacy of Canadians, whether it is within government or within the private sector, whatever all those different levels are, it is a good thing. I know it is something people are extremely concerned about.

As I mentioned in my speech, I often get local residents reaching out to me about privacy concerns they have.

We need to do everything we can within our legislative powers to make sure people's personal privacy is protected.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last time we visited this topic, we were talking, of course, about the Minister of Public Safety's claim that police had asked for him and his government to invoke the Emergencies Act.

We know now that this was not true. This is pretty consistent with the government. It is part of a pattern, a pattern of disinformation and a lack of transparency.

Since the minister made that false claim, we have heard the stories of the ArriveCAN app. We have more than \$54 million spent on this app, which wrongly sent thousands of Canadians into quarantine. It could have been built for many orders of magnitude less, some say hundreds of thousands of dollars, some say, at most, \$1 million, certainly not \$54 million.

We cannot get the details. The Liberals will not even tell us who did the work. They will not even tell us who the subcontractors are.

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While we wait for the government to slowly produce invoices for us, and as parliamentarians and Canadians pore over that data, I will note one of the hard-working staff members who has been on my team for years. He is tireless in his pursuit of the truth and answers and accountability, a great Canadian, Jordan Johnston from Victoria-by-the-Sea, Prince Edward Island. Everyone back home should be really proud of the work Jordan does. He was poring through the information the government gives us in drip, drip, drips.

We see a lack of transparency from the government at every opportunity. It promised in 2015 that it would be open by default, but it is anything but that, whether it is with the minister's false claims on the police requesting that the government invoke the Emergencies Act, which was really just used as a way for the government to punish people it disagreed with, or with the ArriveCAN app. It does not want to tell us which Liberal insiders got these contracts. It does not want to tell us who got rich on the arrive scam.

We are going to keep asking the government for answers. We are going to keep demanding accountability. It looks like it is going to keep misleading Canadians and providing disinformation to throw us off the trail of whose pockets are being lined and who is getting rich on these contracts.

My question to the government is very straightforward. It goes back to the promise it made in 2015. It speaks to the times we have heard the Prime Minister say that the story in *The Globe and Mail* was false, or the stories in the newspaper of late about what the Prime Minister said about having been briefed about foreign interference in our elections, when he will not tell us which 11 candidates were receiving cash from communist China. He will not tell us. He says those stories in the media are false.

The Liberals are not being straightforward with Canadians. We want transparency. Canadians deserve it. Conservatives demand it. When will the government finally be transparent with Canadians?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to have a chance to debate the hon. member opposite.

We want to unpack a couple of things in the member's questions in relation to what we saw last winter. This past winter we saw a state of emergency declared in Ottawa with protesters blocking key infrastructure and harassing and intimidating citizens. We also saw interference with transportation and other critical infrastructure throughout the country, which was preventing the movement of people and essential goods.

The illegal blockades we witnessed were well funded and constituted a serious threat to national security. We knew through our engagement with partners that law enforcement had certain tools available to address illegal protests and blockades. Existing powers included those under provincial and municipal statutes in place to address traffic and noise violations. However, as all Canadians saw, despite those existing tools, the situation was rapidly changing and changing in a bad way. We saw it reach a point in which local law enforcement, for example here in the nation's capital of Ottawa, required additional assistance to address the unique situation posed by the illegal blockades.

We also saw that the economy as a whole was being affected by the situation, with the safety and security of Canadians in more than one province affected. We knew the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act was becoming clearer. Invoking the act was a measure, and the Prime Minister and others have spoken to this, of last resort, which is the situation we found ourselves in.

The new measures the act provided were additional to the existing tools, and they were squarely aimed at public safety and protecting our country's interests. The new measures were temporary and in place to address a specific emergency. They helped to prohibit unlawful assembly that interrupted the movement of people and goods, affected trade or interfered with critical infrastructure.

They also helped to deter the financing of the occupation and end material protests to the illegal demonstrations. They helped to secure our border crossings, bridges, airports and other public institutions. As well, thanks to the temporary measures available under the act, we saw vehicles towed, including, most vividly, here in Ottawa, where Wellington Street and the streets of the downtown core were finally given back to the public of Ottawa. We saw the act being used to bring about the peaceful conclusion of the illegal blockades at ports of entry, at the border, deterring unlawful actions and encouraging, in fact, peaceful protest.

On February 14, we invoked the act, at the right time, for the right reasons, in the right way. We revoked it at the right time, for the right reasons, in the most responsible way.

Now we find ourselves looking back, able to take a necessary look at what was done and what could be done, quite frankly, differently. Along with the significant limits and safeguards that provided, we knew that accountability mechanisms were also built into the very act. That includes the Special Joint Committee on the Declaration of Emergency scrutiny and the invocation of the act. It includes the work of the Public Order Emergency Commission, which is examining the aspects of the public order emergency and the Emergencies Act.

This is the accountability Canadians demand. It is exactly what they will get thanks to our responsible, timely and effective use of the Emergencies Act, just as the act intended.

● (1835)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's response. I do not think I have had the opportunity to engage in debate directly with the member before.

Aside from what the government members perceived, and in spite of their discussions and their trepidations, the situation is that the minister claims something happened that is not supported by the evidence that was offered under oath by the heads of the relevant agencies: the OPP, the RCMP, the Ottawa Police and the military police. None of them asked the minister or the government to invoke the act. We know that CSIS has said that it did not meet the threshold required.

Canadians want transparency. They want accountability. They want honesty. When are they going to get it?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, I do believe that the process is doing what it is supposed to do, in terms of providing Canadians an oversight and overview of what transpired.

I would respectfully disagree with the member opposite. Last winter, as I mentioned in my statement, participants in illegal blockades and protests adopted a number of threatening acts, disrupting the peace and impacting the Canadian economy. Quite frankly, the folks in Ottawa and in other parts of Canada were under siege. I think we took the necessary steps in short order. The review process is showing that we did the right thing.

● (1840)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise to take up a point that I debated in this place when we first had the news from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in the spring of this year, that we have less time than we thought in responding to the urgency of the science. The panel reported that, if we did not reduce our emissions rapidly, we would lose any chance of holding to 1.5°C global average temperature increase, and that we had to stay below 2°C.

At that point, in my question to the government members, I quoted the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres. He, when speaking recently of the promises made in Paris at COP21 in 2015 versus the delivery on climate action by governments around the world, said that some governments are promising to reduce emissions, but emissions are increasing. He said, “Simply put, they are lying.” I asked the hon. government members, when the UN Secretary General was speaking of governments that were doing one thing and saying another, whom did our government think António Guterres was referencing.

Since the time of my question, it has been clear that the government has provided additional support to the expansion of fossil fuel development. Now we have a very clear difference here, and I want to set out the problem because I want to be fair to all concerned. The government of the current Liberal minority, supported by the NDP in their confidence-supply agreement, appears to believe, or at least wants Canadians to believe, that reaching net zero by 2050 is a target that will ensure we can hold our increase in global average temperature to 1.5°C, or at least as far below 2°C as possible.

The Liberals put forward this notion, and they emphasized it again in the climate accountability act that was passed in the last Parliament, even though it is not true. It is not true that achieving net zero by 2050 assures us of a livable world. In fact, the science in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's sixth assess-

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ment report makes it very clear that the 2050 target of net zero is irrelevant if emissions continue to rise in the near term. In other words, again from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a 2050 target without emissions must peak globally and begin to fall dramatically at the latest before 2025 or any hope of 1.5°C or 2°C is gone.

A 2°C world is unthinkable, yet we are on track to it. Again quoting António Guterres of the United Nations, when COP27 opened earlier this month in Sharm el-Sheikh, he said that the world is “on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator.”

Therefore, again, what government does the Canadian government believe the UN is referencing when it says that some governments are promising and doing the opposite? He said, “Simply put, they are lying.” As well, to whom does the government think it is referring to when it says “foot on the accelerator”, when we have a government that is insisting on building pipelines, expanding production and drilling off Newfoundland? Whom is the United Nations referencing?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend and colleague for the question.

I cannot speak for the Secretary-General nor speculate about which leader he is referring to. However, what appears to be underlying his statement is a deep concern with the state of global emissions despite several decades of international co-operation and political commitments. I share this deep concern and so does our government.

With less than a decade left to 2030, and with countries around the world quickly moving to a cleaner economy, Canada's 2030 target of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels is ambitious, necessary and achievable, reflecting both the scale of the climate crisis and the economic opportunity that climate action presents. This target reflects Canada's highest possible ambition in light of its current national circumstances.

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Canada's 2030 emissions reduction plan is a road map that goes sector by sector, outlines the measures and strategies for Canada to reach this target and lays the foundations for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. This plan includes \$9.1 billion in new investments and a suite of new measures to help mobilize Canada towards a truly sustainable economy and becoming a leading competitor in the global transition to cleaner industries and technologies. This plan also builds on the strong foundation set by the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change and the strengthened climate plan. As well, since 2015, the government has delivered \$100 billion in investments for climate action.

These efforts are working. Thanks to the actions of millions of Canadians, we have been able to halt our once-upward trend of emissions and bend it downward. This road map will build on this progress and chart the course to lowering emissions by 40% below 2005 levels.

Of course, ambitious action by Canada alone is not enough. Climate change is a global crisis that requires global solutions. Under the Paris Agreement, all have adopted national emissions targets. Like Canada, many have recently come forward with even stronger commitments. Still, there is much more to be done at the global level, and Canada will continue to play a key role and strongly advocate that all countries, particularly members of the G20, do their part to achieve the 1.5°C temperature goal.

We need more countries to adopt stronger targets and formal commitments to achieve net-zero emissions. We need to see greater public and private investment in low-carbon solutions. We need to see an even more deliberate and rapid move away from unabated coal. As we move forward in driving down Canada's own emissions, we will continue to engage with international partners from all over the world and advocate for increased ambition.

• (1845)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the exchange I just had with my friend and colleague, the parliamentary secretary, exactly explains our problem.

Canada's targets are currently out of sync with what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says we must do. Spending billions of dollars on good programs is excellent, but while this government gives with one hand, it takes with the other. For climate action, absolutely promote heat pumps and electric cars, but it is a drop in the bucket while bucketfuls of effort continue to go to increasing our production of oil and gas, which when burned in other countries puts us on the highway to climate hell.

Our foot in this country is on the accelerator. If I do nothing more before I die than to get this Prime Minister to get his heavy foot off the accelerator, I will die happy.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, just to repeat, the 2030 emissions reduction plan provides a credible pathway to the lower range of our target of 40% below 2005 levels. Enhanced climate ambition from provinces, territories, municipalities, industry and the financial sector, as well as the acceleration of clean technology and innovation, and the deployment of that technology, will drive further reductions. These collective efforts will give Canada the accelerated momentum that is needed to achieve the upper bound of Canada's

emissions reduction target and put us on track to net-zero emissions by 2050.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am here today because I asked a question on November 17 of the government about when it will finally return our coastal waters to wild salmon, specifically by getting open-net fish farms out of the water. The evidence is clear that these fish farms are polluting and destroying marine ecosystems and livelihoods, yet the Liberal government continues to prop up rich Norwegian CEOs, who are the owners of these fish farms, and allow them to continue on with business as usual while destroying marine life and the future of wild Pacific salmon.

The minister's response, particularly in light of the detrimental consequences on our environment and coastal communities, was beyond inadequate, so I am here today to ask for action.

Last Friday, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard and I were invited to and attended a ceremony and meeting on the Tsleil-Waututh first nation's territory, with chiefs and representatives from first nation territories across B.C., including representation from Snuneymuxw, which is found in the riding I represent, Nanaimo—Ladysmith. They were focused on the protection of wild Pacific salmon and were united in their wish to get open-net fish farms out of the water.

In this meeting, the minister and I had the honour of participating in a salmon dance, which, as a side note, is something I will carry with me forever in my memories. It was an honour. Chiefs shared the many ways that first nations and wild salmon are interconnected, not only regarding food security but regarding social, ceremonial and first nations' inherent and constitutionally protected rights to harvest fish and provide for their communities. In fact, 90% of B.C. first nations rely on wild salmon. Despite this, we are seeing historic low returns.

Vital wild salmon are facing many threats, such as the impacts of climate crises, including extreme weather, flooding, heat domes, forest fires and warming waters, and all of this while we are continuing to allow fish farms in our coastal waters to damage our marine ecosystems. We see salmon left to swim through diseases and sea lice found in key migratory routes, which is all spewing from polluting fish farms that are being allowed to maintain and continue business by the government.

We heard from first nations chiefs in this meeting, who spoke to the diseases being carried by fish exposed to the impacts of fish farms. They were being described as glowing and covered in sores and sea lice, which has never been seen before. There are endless examples of impacts, and first nations chiefs across British Columbia described to us impacts on both wild salmon and their coastal communities.

I am wondering if my colleague can provide us with action and the reassurance today that we are going to move away from open-net fish farms and finally follow through with a plan to get them out.

• (1850)

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and I sit on the fisheries committee together and I have a great deal of respect for her and her work.

We recognize that wild Pacific salmon are of great importance to the communities in British Columbia both culturally and economically, and that wild Pacific salmon are facing historic threats from a variety of stressors. It is therefore a priority of the Government of Canada to protect and restore our oceans and coasts.

We are taking a wide range of actions to halt and reverse the decline in wild Pacific salmon populations. For example, with the funding announced through budget 2021, we are investing \$647 million over five years to conserve wild Pacific salmon. The minister has also been mandated to continue to work with the Province of British Columbia and indigenous communities to create a responsible plan to transition away from open-net pen salmon farming in coastal B.C. waters by 2025.

We are fully committed to this and indeed are making progress toward a plan. On July 29, Minister Murray released a discussion framework that outlines a proposed vision for open-net pen—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I remind the member that using the name of a minister is probably not the best thing to do.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, on July 29, 2022, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard released a discussion framework that outlines the proposed vision for open-net pen transition in B.C. in a manner that progressively minimizes or eliminates interactions between salmon open-net pens and wild salmon, while also taking into account social, cultural and economic objectives.

The proposed framework is helping guide comprehensive engagement with first nations in B.C., the province, the aquaculture industry in B.C., environmental stakeholders and other interested parties, to hear their diverse perspectives on the transition of open-net pen aquaculture in B.C.

Over the coming months we will continue to gather input and take into account the many diverse views on aquaculture. The feedback and input received during this engagement will be instrumental in the development of a final transition plan, which we expect to complete in the spring of 2023 and which will build on four objectives.

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The first is to create a pathway for existing aquaculture operations to adopt alternative production methods that minimize or eliminate interactions between farmed and wild salmon.

The second is to improve transparency on how the government assesses and responds to new scientific information, to build confidence and trust in the aquaculture industry.

The third is to provide greater opportunities for collaborative planning and decision-making with first nations partners.

The fourth is to advance innovation and attract investment to support the adoption of alternative production technologies in the province of British Columbia.

While the transition plan is being developed, licences for marine finfish aquaculture facilities in the province of B.C., outside of the Discovery Islands area, will also be renewed for two years. The renewals include stronger requirements for aquaculture facilities, including the implementation of standardized reporting requirements and sea lice management plans, as well as wild salmon monitoring.

We will continue to work with partners and key stakeholders to advance sustainable aquaculture in B.C. The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard is fully committed to promptly developing a responsible transition plan for open-net pen aquaculture, in partnership with B.C., the province, first nations, industry and other interested parties.

We believe this work will drive Canada toward technological innovation and place us at the forefront of modern, sustainable aquaculture.

• (1855)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Mr. Speaker, the science is clear. We know open-net fish farms need to get out of our water. We are hearing from first nations chiefs who are very clear that they want open-net fish farms out of the water. We have seen Washington state say “no more” to fish farms in the water. The Shíshálh Nation has also said no to fish farms in the water.

I am hearing an argument that the scientific evidence is inconclusive, which is untrue. There is clear scientific evidence that shows that these fish farms are damaging, and even if that were not the case, we need to be implementing a precautionary approach to ensure that we are erring on the side of caution in protecting wild salmon.

When will the government finally get fish farms out of the water and protect wild salmon?

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, given the unprecedented threats that the wild Pacific salmon are facing, we agree that we must take action to conserve and protect them.

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That is why the government, through the minister's mandate letter, is developing a planned transition for open-net pen salmon aquaculture in coastal waters. We will continue to engage, as I said in my previous statement, with all of the stakeholders in B.C., to put forward a plan that transitions us in a coordinated, strategic and outcomes-based way.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:59 p.m.)

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