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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1000)

[English]

VACANCY

WINNIPEG SOUTH CENTRE

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation of the House of Commons for the electoral district of Winnipeg South Centre in the province of Manitoba by reason of the passing of the Hon. Jim Carr.

[Translation]

Pursuant to subsection 28(1) of the Parliament of Canada Act I have addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill the vacancy.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and recommendation 47 of former Supreme Court Justice Arbour's independent external comprehensive review, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, copies of the Minister of National Defence's "Report to Parliament on Culture Change Reforms in Response to Former Supreme Court Justice Arbour's Recommendations".

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[Translation]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's report on the access to information review.

[English]

OFFICE OF THE TAXPAYERS' OMBUDSPERSON

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2021-22 Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsperson's annual report, entitled "Service Matters: Numbers Speak Volumes".

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill S-4, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act and to make related amendments to other acts (COVID-19 response and other measures). The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report, entitled "The Defence of Extreme Intoxication Akin to Automatism: A Study of the Legislative Response to the Supreme Court of Canada Decision R v. Brown". Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

I would like to thank all of the clerks and the great legislative assistants and analysts who helped us with this report.

• (1005)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, presented on Tuesday, May 10, be concurred in.

Routine Proceedings

It is always an honour to rise and speak in the Canadian House of Commons on behalf of my constituents, and also as a free Canadian speaking of my own convictions. Debate in the House expresses the freedom we have and the blessing we enjoy by being in a self-governing democratic nation.

Today, I think of the words of Prime Minister Diefenbaker, who said:

I am a Canadian, a free Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship God in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.

Many Canadians have fought and died for these freedoms, but many of us have received these freedoms having never had to actually risk life and limb to defend them. For that, we are deeply grateful.

I believe that as the inheritors of Canadian traditions of freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and the self-determination of peoples, we have a responsibility to promote the expansion of these traditions throughout the world, recognizing and reflecting the universal aspirations of all people to live freely, to choose their own leaders and to have their inherent dignity recognized. Canada's traditions protect and preserve freedom, but those traditions reflect universal human aspirations. How can we, who have been so blessed, fail to use our power now to spread these same blessings to our suffering brothers and sisters around the world?

It is in that spirit that I put forward this motion, first in committee and now in the House of Commons, in hopes of advancing freedom and justice for the people of Tibet. I presented this same motion in the last Parliament. In both cases, it was adopted and referred to this House. With this concurrence debate, whereby the House considers formally expressing its agreement with this motion, we now finally have an opportunity for the Canadian House of Commons to decisively pronounce itself on Tibet's status and to make a clear call regarding Tibet's future. The motion states:

That this committee call for dialogue between representatives of the Tibetan people (his Holiness the Dalai Lama or his representatives and/or the Central Tibetan Administration) and the government of the People's Republic of China with a view to enabling Tibet to exercise genuine autonomy within the framework of the Chinese constitution;

This simple motion recognizes simple realities. The Tibetan people are a people. They have a shared culture, history and language. They have shared traditions and institutions. Though not presently in a free, self-governing country, Tibetans are a people who constitute a nation. As such, as a people, they have a God-given and internationally codified right of self-determination. The people of all Tibet, not just the more limited so-called TAR, have a right to choose their own leaders and to autonomously shape their own future.

Tibetan leaders, however, are not using this right of self-determination to seek full independence from China. Rather, they are seeking a middle way: genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution, which is perhaps similar to forms of federalism that exist throughout the world.

Tibetans do not seek independence. They seek peace, accommodation and compromise through the middle way approach. It should be a clear-cut matter of moral principle and of international law that the aspiration of Tibetans for genuine autonomy, as an expression

of national self-determination, should be recognized and supported. How can we justly recognize such aspirations in other cases but fail to do so for the people of Tibet?

This motion calls on the Canadian House of Commons to clearly add its voice to calls for dialogue, with a view to allowing the exercise of genuine autonomy by Tibet and its people. This motion calls on the Canadian House of Commons to do the right thing and to add its voice to the global push for recognition and adoption of the middle way approach.

To westerners, the word "Tibet" has many meanings and associations, from activism to literature to spirituality. However, the first thing to say, setting aside these common associations, is that Tibet was once a country like any other. It had politics, religion, commerce, diplomacy, arts, culture and many everyday people going about their everyday lives. It had challenges and it had immense opportunity.

Like Ukraine, Tibet had the particular problem of a neighbour that did not recognize its right to exist, although prior to 1950, the country of Tibet was actively pursuing negotiations for formal recognition with its neighbours. Sadly, after the Chinese Civil War, the Chinese Communist Party violently invaded Tibet and imposed the so-called 17-point agreement, an agreement that has, incidentally, never been honoured. Violent conquest and occupation should never be recognized as a legitimate way to establish a territorial claim, not in Ukraine, not in Taiwan and not in Tibet.

● (1010)

Following this invasion, the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, was forced into exile in India, from where he has since led an international resistance campaign that has spanned more than 60 years. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is of course the most recognized person in the Tibetan resistance struggle. He is clearly a remarkable figure. When I was first elected, I was honoured to have an audience with him in Dharamshala in India, which is his headquarters and also the headquarters of the Central Tibetan Administration. That simple conversation has deeply shaped my own thinking about human rights and Canada's role in advocating for it.

One of the most incredible things is to meet a person who we know has experienced deep suffering and injustice, yet when we observe them, we find they are nonetheless possessed with an electric joie de vivre and clearly derive joy and happiness not from the particulars of their circumstances but from an external reality. Such was my impression of the Dalai Lama, someone who has been forced to spend most of his life in exile and someone with significant status. He is perhaps the most recognizable person on the planet and is joyful, informal, friendly and extremely funny. Far from expressing bitterness or anger toward the nation that forced him into exile, he expressed goodwill toward China and a desire for it to pursue an ambition for greatness while peacefully engaging in dialogue and partnership with other nations. The Dalai Lama demonstrates a living out of the simple exhortation to love one's enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

It was powerful for me as a Christian to see this teaching of Jesus being lived so well by someone who clearly comes from a different spiritual tradition but nonetheless practises the wisdom that is common to both. Loving one's enemies is not just good spiritual wisdom. It has an important practical function in geopolitics. An enemy who is bent on causing suffering must clearly be stopped and defeated, and the call to love one's enemies has never been interpreted as an injunction to simply accept and permit violence. However, total defeat of an enemy is rarely possible. Tibet will continue to have China as its neighbour, regardless of the political forms by which either are governed. In the long run, therefore, they have to find a way to live together.

To quote Desmond Tutu, "There is no future without forgiveness." As such, some eventual reconciliation, facilitated by mutual love, goodwill and forgiveness, is the only path to stable and permanent peace. Love and goodwill toward an enemy can be the starting point for trying to persuade that enemy to change their ways, and it provides the basis for forgiveness and reconciliation after a conflict has ended.

I believe what the Dalai Lama means by dialogue is a rich and deep dialogue toward mutual understanding, not simple formal negotiation, and this desire for meaningful dialogue comes out of real love and goodwill. All nations facing conflict would do well to recognize the simple truth that they will remain neighbours until the end of time and that mutual recognition and self-determination, as well as some measure of love and goodwill, are the only viable alternatives to tension and conflict.

Jewish and Christian scripture says the following about how to treat one's enemy:

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. For in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head....

This particular passage has always confused me. Is the purpose of loving one's enemy a kind of jiu-jitsu move aimed at causing one's enemy to suffer, or is it based on genuine good intentions? Of course, it has to be based on good intentions and a genuine desire for reconciliation, but it is also true that these displays of goodwill from figures like the Dalai Lama are profoundly confusing and discombobulating for an aggressive power. They render the aggressive power's propaganda absurd and leave that power with a general loss on what to credibly say or do.

Routine Proceedings

In spite of his obvious desire for peace, dialogue and reconciliation, the Dalai Lama is portrayed in the most absurd and outlandish ways by the Chinese Communist Party. The CCP is at present so hard-wired to think in terms of advantage and violence that these simple calls for dialogue lead to theatrical and obviously absurd claims about the Dalai Lama's alleged real intentions. This is perhaps the effect of having the metaphorical burning coals heaped on one's head.

The CCP's response to the Dalai Lama and his message would be comically absurd if it was not so deadly serious. Despite being an officially atheist power, the CCP presumes to be able to make binding decisions about the reincarnation of Buddhist lamas so as to control their succession. This is an obvious political power move aimed at laying the groundwork to install a pliant, fake Dalai Lama in the future, but how can the CCP logically both reject the idea of reincarnation and claim to be the authority on reincarnation? These attempts to claim control over the Dalai Lama's prospective succession are part of a broader attack on religious freedom, as well as other fundamental freedoms, in Tibet and within the Tibetan diaspora.

• (1015)

In this vein, I quote from the 2021 United States Department of State report on human rights in Tibet, which is a catalogue of some of the worst imaginable violations of human rights. It says:

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by the government; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government; arbitrary arrest or detention; political prisoners; politically motivated reprisals against individuals located outside the country; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on free expression and media, including censorship; serious restrictions on internet freedom including site blocking; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; severe restrictions on religious freedom, despite nominal constitutional protections voided by regulations restricting religious freedom and effectively placing Tibetan Buddhism under central government control; severe restrictions on freedom of movement; the inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; restrictions on political participation; serious acts of government corruption; coerced abortion or forced sterilization; and violence or threats of violence targeting indigenous [peoples].

Disciplinary procedures for officials were opaque, and aside from vague allegations of corruption or violations of "party discipline," there was no publicly available information to indicate senior officials punished security personnel or other authorities for behaviour defined under [the] laws and regulations of the People's Republic of China as abuses of power and authority.

On these abuses, I highlight the ongoing disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, the second-most significant figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Neither he nor his parents have been heard from, have been seen or have been contacted by anyone. This disappearance began in 1995 when he was six years old.

I also highlight the case of Tenzin Nyima who died after being beaten to death after months of detention. Another Tibetan, Kunchok Jinpa died in hospital after being released from prison. I could highlight many of these cases of repression of fundamental human rights, of people being beaten to death or being arbitrarily detained.

Routine Proceedings

In a way, it would be simpler and shorter to outline the human rights violations that were not being committed in Tibet, because it seems that virtually every imaginable case of human rights violations is catalogued by those who track these human rights abuses. Nonetheless, in spite of them, the message of hope from the Dalai Lama and others is compelling as the movement for change and dialogue, the Tibetan resistance, continues.

Tibetan resistance builds on the message and the wisdom of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and it goes further. At the Dalai Lama's own prompting, the Tibetan diaspora built effective democratic institutions that form the Central Tibetan Administration. Effectively, the Central Tibetan Administration is a government in exile and a government for exile.

The Central Tibetan Administration has an elected parliament with representatives from the diaspora community all over the world. When parliament is not directly in session, it is represented by a residual standing committee. The Tibetan community worldwide also directly elects a sikyong or president who leads the Central Tibetan Administration and who has ministers with various responsibilities. In all of these respects, it functions much like our own government and like many other democratic governments around the world.

The CTA provides services to diaspora communities, supporting the strengthening of the diaspora and also the maintenance and expansion of Tibetan language and culture. It also engages in advocacy for Tibet and would likely lead dialogue with China on behalf of the Tibetan people. The very existence of the CTA demonstrates again that Tibetans are a people with autonomous democratic institutions as well as a distinct language and culture.

The existence of the CTA and other related institutions also demonstrates Tibetans' readiness for self-government. There can be no argument that Tibetans are not ready to govern themselves, because Tibetans are already doing it.

Not only do Tibetans govern their own country in living memory, but they have also developed new, integrated, fully functional and fully democratic institutions in the Tibetan diaspora. Tibetan people all over the world are deeply committed to these democratic institutions. Tibetan elections are serious and substantive affairs, and they feature high levels of participation.

• (1020)

Notably, while in Canada, a person can be both a proud Canadian and a proud Tibetan. However, many Tibetans living in a diaspora are not citizens of any other country. Officially, they are stateless, but substantively they have one identity and that identity is Tibetan. They participate in the democratic life of Tibetan exile, because Tibet is their home, Tibet is their identity, and by participating they are building up the democratic life of Tibet.

I salute all Tibetans, young and old, who participate in Tibetan democracy. Their participation gives them control of key aspects of their own lives, but it also helps to build up the infrastructure that will one day be able to return home.

Many people think of resistance as a kind of destructive act. Too many of those involved in modern resistance movements think in

terms of destruction. They think of destroying art, destroying houses of worship and destroying historical memory. Clearly, in the most extreme case of war, there is going to be collateral damage. However, if the resistance movement aims at the destruction of anything good, true or beautiful then the movement has clearly taken a dangerous wrong turn.

A resistance movement that seeks a better world should seek to create the good, true and beautiful. It should not seek to destroy things to make a point. Tibetan resistance provides that alternative model. Tibetans model constructive resistance, which involves building and creating beautiful things for their own sake but also recognizing that creation reinforces Tibetans' identity as a people and their readiness to return home.

The Dalai Lama expounds a spiritual doctrine seeking love, understanding and reconciliation. The Tibetan people have built effective democratic institutions to demonstrate their readiness to assume the leadership of their own territory. The cultural work of creation and celebration continues strongly as Tibetan culture has been shared with an appreciative world.

The Dalai Lama, the CTA and the Tibetan people together have put forward a clear and reasonable path toward justice: dialogue between China and Tibet with a view to recognizing the inherent right of Tibetan people to self-determination while keeping Tibet within the overall framework of the Chinese constitution.

This model of creative and constructive resistance provides an example to others around the world facing injustice or seeking to advance an important cause. Although I do not personally believe that non-violent resistance is obligatory in every case, I believe that even violent resistance should maintain a basic desire to minimize damage, to define understanding and to build up alternative frameworks and institutions that make peace and justice practically viable.

People facing authoritarian oppression anywhere should seek to build unified democratic institutions in exile and propose constructive and realistic ways forward. This model of effective resistance is why, more than 60 years after the invasion and occupation of Tibet began and despite all the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to wipe out Tibetan identity, the cause of Tibet is still widely known, defended and championed in every part of the world.

Therefore, as friends and allies of Tibet, we will not rest until the middle way approach is achieved. We will not rest until dialogue between China and Tibet has resumed and has concluded with the establishment of genuine autonomy for Tibet that gives Tibetans freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and self-determination. We will not rest because we love Tibet, but also because we recognize the universal right of all people to live in freedom, choose their own leaders and to practise their faith and their traditions without the interference of the state.

To paraphrase Diefenbaker, we work for the day when Tibetans inside Tibet will be free: free to speak without fear, free to worship God in their own way, free to stand for what they think right, free to oppose what they believe wrong and free to choose those who govern them. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts and ask a question of the member.

We have members on all sides of the House who are very strong and powerful advocates for issues related to human rights. It is interesting that the member has chosen to have that discussion. In doing very quick research, as the member was speaking, former prime minister Stephen Harper, according to Hansard, never once spoke about Tibet while he was prime minister. In opposition, he mentioned it four or maybe five times, according to my research, but never in government. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to this.

Canada does play a very important leadership role on the international scene regarding human rights. I believe that the Government of Canada has been there on human rights around the world, not only through this administration but also through the Harper administration in certain ways. I wonder if the member could provide any update on whether he believes that Stephen Harper made any sort of statement in regard to Tibet.

• (1025)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the hon. member could have done a bit more research regarding the record of the previous government when it came supporting Tibet. Many important steps were taken in regard to engagement with and support for Tibet. One of them was the former prime minister hosting and meeting with the Dalai Lama. In a constructive spirit, if the current Prime Minister of Canada would be prepared to take that step, I think that would certainly send a positive message.

The Government of Canada should be clear and vocal in its support for the middle way. I am hopeful that this motion we put forward on a number of occasions will pass now and that the House will clearly pronounce that these are important steps forward. There are many other steps the government needs to take. I suggest applying Magnitsky sanctions to officials involved in the violation of human rights in Tibet and supporting Bill C-281, which is the international human rights act.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, we see some hesitancy on the part of the government to condemn the actions of the Communist Party of China. I am wondering if the member could comment about this perceived hesitancy on the part of the Canadian government.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have observed over the last few years that the last two Canadian minority Parliaments have been able to play a significant leadership role in the world, when it comes to confronting human rights abuses being perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party. While Canada's Parliament has led in the world, though, the Government of Canada has been a laggard.

Canada's Parliament was the first to recognize the Uighur genocide. The Government of Canada has still not recognized the Uighur genocide. Canada's Parliament has passed various motions calling for action on foreign state-backed interference. We continue to hear news about government entities signing contracts that raise significant concerns from a national security perspective, because they involve Chinese state owned or affiliated companies.

Routine Proceedings

We have this interesting contradiction that I think people around the world are observing, which is leadership by a minority Parliament. It is often driven by the opposition, but often includes certain backbench members of the governing party, which is out of step with the unwillingness of the executive to be realistic about the threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party. Hopefully action by parliamentarians will continue to prod the government to do better.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member made one reference saying that Stephen Harper actually met with or had conversations with the Dalai Lama. There have been communications between the current Prime Minister and the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama at one point recognized Pierre Elliott Trudeau and commented in regard to the refugees who have come from Tibet.

Canada can play a leadership role, and there are many members of the House on both sides who understand the human rights violations and are strong advocates for those rights. The government has been and continues to be a strong advocate for human rights around the world. I am wondering if the member could provide any other additional thoughts in regard to the importance of Canada demonstrating that leadership, as our current Prime Minister has, and also the previous prime minister, on this particular issue the member made reference to with the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, if the member wants to take it in a partisan direction, as he clearly does, I will just say that for this Prime Minister, who clearly loves photo ops, this would be a case where a meeting and a photo would actually be quite meaningful. I would encourage the Prime Minister to take that opportunity, which is one that, as far as I know, he has not taken at any point during his premiership.

However, there are other steps the Prime Minister should take. He should endorse the middle-way approach. He should vote in favour of this motion. The government should bring forward legislation on reciprocal access to Tibet, modelled after bipartisan initiatives along these lines in the United States. The government should take action to protect victims of forced labour that we are seeing targeted at Uighurs, but I believe there is also forced labour that happens in Tibet. The government should make clear statements with respect to religious freedom in Tibet.

The government should adopt a similar framework to that contemplated by a new bill in the United States that would affirm Tibet's history and Tibetans' identity as a distinct people. The government should take real action on forced labour, again modelled after the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in the United States. The government should adopt Bill C-281, the international human rights act. It should use the Magnitsky act to target officials who are involved in gross human rights violations in Tibet.

Routine Proceedings

There are many concrete actions the Government of Canada can and should take. I have no doubt that, regardless of them, we will hear members like this one stand up and say “Oh, the government is great.” I guess that is his job. However, constructively, there are specific actions the government could be taking around Magnitsky sanctions, around reciprocal access and around religious freedom that the government has not taken and should take as soon as possible.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, last spring, I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, when he was in Ottawa. Since I was sitting on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, a few MPs and I were able to talk to him for an hour. He raised a very important point.

We are talking about human rights. He agreed that we were focusing narrowly on the war in Ukraine when there are numerous crises going on in the world. For example, there are crises in Tigray, Ethiopia, as well as in Haiti and Yemen. There is also a crisis in Tibet, which we are currently discussing, and, obviously, the Uighur genocide. That was a problem, in his opinion. Generally speaking, when its interests are at stake, the west raises concerns about human rights to intervene in certain crises, when there are many more crises elsewhere in the world.

What does my colleague have to say about western countries' tendency to react only when their interests are at stake by raising concerns about human rights when that is not really what they are talking about?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member's point that sometimes we maybe focus on certain human rights issues and not others for a variety of reasons that may not have pure motives is important to reflect on. Sometimes we have been particularly reluctant to criticize violations of human rights by the Chinese Communist Party because clearly the Chinese Communist Party is very powerful relative to other smaller entities that may abuse human rights. That does not necessarily take away the human rights obligations we have.

At the same time, it is important to note that the war in Ukraine is rightly something we have really seized on and focused on. It is about protecting the security of the people of Ukraine. It is also about recognizing that the war is exacerbating a global hunger crisis and that many people in Asia and Africa are vulnerable to starvation as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. If we permit this kind of violation of international law, we will likely see other states take similar steps.

We should not be paying attention to these conflicts as exclusive things, but rather recognizing the integration among the human rights responses that covers and looks at problems in different parts of the world.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with unanimous

consent, I would like to share my time with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

I also just want to acknowledge the death of our colleague and friend, Jim Carr, the long-time member for Winnipeg South Centre. As I look over to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount and see the flowers on Jim's seat at his desk, I am moved by his sense of compassion, his intelligence and his ability to reach across this aisle to make sure we do things together in a productive and constructive way. I try to do that all the time.

I fall short from time to time, but this morning I hope that we in the House will be tripping over ourselves in unanimity and in the sense that we stand together with the Tibetan people and their aspirations this day and every day.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address the House on the subject of human rights in Tibet and the Government of Canada's support of the foreign affairs and international development committee's recommendation for a resumption of a Sino-Tibetan dialogue process, which was suspended in 2010 by China.

The Government of Canada remains deeply concerned about the harsh human rights situation currently affecting Tibetans, including the punishing restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief and the systematic and widespread repression of linguistic and cultural rights.

Tensions between the Chinese government and Tibetans have remained high over several decades, the last 10 years particularly, which have been no exception. The Government of China continues to intensify its crackdown on Tibetans with increased surveillance, forced patriotic education and acts of protest by Tibetans, which could result in detention or worse. To the world's horror, there have been more than 150 self-immolations by Tibetan Buddhists during this period.

Canada continues to call on the Government of China to respect the rights of Tibetans, release prisoners of conscience and take steps to improve the human rights situation in Tibet. The Government of Canada has historically supported dialogue to resolve such issues.

We maintain engagement with members of the Tibetan diaspora, including Tibetan Canadians, and organizations that study and support the Tibetan community abroad. Contact with this community remains important to the Government of Canada. It informs our approach to advocacy for rights and freedoms in Tibet.

Canada recognizes the Dalai Lama as the important spiritual leader he is. I had the opportunity to meet him some 40 years ago and continue to be inspired by his intelligence, his wit and his wisdom. Canada bestowed honorary Canadian citizenship on the Tibetan spiritual leader, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, in 2006.

While we know there are long-standing grievances between the Chinese government and the Central Tibetan Administration, which is the government in exile, and His Holiness, Canada has always supported and advocated for substantive and meaningful dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The representatives of the Tibetan people have chosen to work toward a resolution of these issues that is acceptable to all sides.

Canada's approach to Sino-Tibetan relations is informed, of course, by our one China policy. Canada recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of China, including the Tibetan Autonomous Region. However, at the same time, Canada recognizes Tibet's distinct cultural identity, not as an independent political state separate from China, but as a distinct independent identity.

While Canada does not recognize the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, as a political governing entity, Canada does maintain informal engagements with it. Recently, for example, Canada welcomed the visit of the *sikyong*, Penpa Tsering, and his delegation in May of this year.

Canada has a long history of support for Tibetans, no matter who the party in power happens to be. The government began work to resettle some of the first Tibetan refugees in Canada in the 1970s. Over the past decade, the Government of Canada established special measures to facilitate the private sponsorship and immigration of up to 1,000 displaced Tibetans from India. Individuals were matched with sponsors through the Project Tibet Society, with the resettlement of 1,000 refugees completed in 2017. They contribute to our society. We welcome them and we encourage them to participate fully.

• (1035)

The extensive human rights violations occurring in Tibet are vastly under-reported. Access to Tibet remains strictly controlled by the Chinese government. On the rare occasions when official visits are allowed, they are highly scripted.

We were very keenly aware of that when our then ambassador to China, Dominic Barton, was allowed to visit Tibet in October 2020. He was able to visit the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, as well as the Shannan prefecture. While it was a tightly scripted visit, it was after five years of requesting we could have an ambassador get in and talk to Tibetan people about their aspirations. He gave our committee a very full report regarding what he saw and what he believed the Government of Canada should be doing.

In Tibet, heavy investment in infrastructure is accompanied by heavy government surveillance and efforts to restrict the movement of people, religious practices and other freedoms of Tibetans. While official economic statistics may tell a story of growth, the reality is many Tibetans have faced persecution and remain exiled from their homeland.

Canadian officials continue to raise concerns over the treatment of Tibetans, both publicly and privately with our Chinese counterparts, calling on the Government of China to uphold the human rights of Tibetans.

Routine Proceedings

In June 2021, Canada delivered a joint statement confronting and challenging China in the strongest of words on the human rights situation in Xinjiang at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. It was co-signed with 43 other countries and referenced the situation in Tibet.

In March 2021, at the 46th session of Human Rights Council in Geneva, Canada expressed concerns over deeply troubling reports of deaths in custody of Tibetans. As part of China's universal periodic review at the United Nations Human Rights Council in November 2018, Canada called on China to end prosecution and persecution on the basis of religion or belief, including for Muslims, Christians, Tibetan Buddhists and Falun Gong practitioners. We intend to support the continued challenge of China's human rights record during its upcoming appearance in 2023 for the fourth universal periodic review.

Canadian officials have advocated directly to Chinese authorities for unhindered access to the Tibet Autonomous Region for UN agencies, academics, researchers and foreign correspondents, as well as ongoing visits by other Canadian diplomats other than our most recent ambassador to China. We have also raised specific cases of concern for Tibetans detained in China directly by Chinese authorities.

The situation for Tibetans in China remains serious and must never be forgotten by anyone in the House, and it will not be forgotten by the Government of Canada. Canada will continue to press for access to the Tibet Autonomous Region for the Tibetan people and speak out for their rights and their freedoms in their homeland and around the world.

Canada remains seriously concerned by recent events in Tibet that demonstrate the urgent need for dialogue between China and Tibetan representatives to reach an early, peaceful and sustainable resolution.

It is for this reason the Government of Canada supports the call for the resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue process and is in full agreement with the report coming from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

The Sino-Tibetan dialogue came to an end in 2010 at China's behest. Reports indicate that, in 2010, China objected to the Dalai Lama's breaking the preconditions for the talks, which were attempts by the Tibetan side to incorporate into the negotiations representatives from the CTA, which was known as the Tibetan government-in-exile prior to 2011. As mentioned, China does not recognize the CTA. Second, China accused the Tibetan side of attempting to include discussions of autonomy for Tibet rather than solely focused on the TAR.

We need dialogue on these issues. We need to respect the aspirations of the Tibetan people. We need to understand their needs for a unique identity within China. We recognize, with the one China policy, China's principal governance of the country of China. However, at the same time, we know that countries are better when they recognize minority rights and when they continue to call upon all of us to be our best.

Routine Proceedings

In closing, the need for dialogue is urgent. The situation of human rights in Tibet is grave. We will continue to raise our concerns with Chinese officials on these matters. We will call on China to respect its own laws and its international obligations at every opportunity. We support this report.

• (1040)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think it is important to identify one distinction, and that is the distinction between speaking of human rights issues in Tibet and speaking of the political status of Tibet. These are both important questions, and they are distinct questions.

We should speak about religious freedom and human rights for Tibetans, but we should also discuss the reality that Tibet was taken over through a violent invasion. The purpose of dialogue, as outlined in the report, is to establish genuine autonomy within the framework of the Chinese constitution as a way of resolving the question of political status.

I wonder if the member could share what the government's position is, specifically on the middle way approach, on the proposal for genuine autonomy and the political status of Tibet.

• (1045)

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada supports, fully, the middle way approach. This is our understanding of the best way to move forward for the rights of the Tibetan people.

I do not think Canada, the Canadian Parliament or the Canadian government should ever dictate what happens in the solutions to these issues. That is for the Tibetan people to engage with themselves. We will be supportive. We will encourage. We will start with calling upon China to end its human rights abuses, and we will call for dialogue as we approach the middle way, which we fully support.

That is Canada's call. In fact, the report was very short. We will simply say that we support the report and the resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue, which we fully support leading toward the middle way.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note that, in the Indo-Pacific strategy document, there is specific reference to human rights concerns in China and specific reference to the plight of Tibetans. I note that because it is important that our government is taking note of that.

Could the parliamentary secretary comment on reciprocal access and access to the Tibetan region? That is something that did exist at one point in time, when Canada was providing development funds into the TAR, but it has since ceased.

Could he comment upon the issue of accessing the Tibetan region, particularly where Canadian funds are being spent through international development assistance?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's comment references our new Indo-Pacific strategy, which I think is both a strong and brave document outlining our approach to

the entire region. It highlights both economic opportunities and cultural engagement, while also reminding the whole world that Canada will always do those things ethically and with human rights as our principle guiding force. Of course, we mention Taiwan. Of course, we mention Tibet and the aspirations of the people within that region.

With respect to our ongoing dialogue, we will continue to recognize that, for a dialogue to happen, access has to happen.

As I said, it was in October 2020 that Barton, the then ambassador to China, was able to travel to the autonomous region, Lhasa and the Shannan prefecture, and that was one example of how difficult it is to get in there. We need access for Tibetans to return. We need access for academics, human rights groups and independent NGOs to go in, assess the situation, assist and encourage the dialogue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could also talk about the specific concern we are hearing from the Tibetan-Canadian community about how the Chinese Communist Party seeks to threaten and intimidate the Tibetan diaspora outside of Tibet.

It has been well documented in various reports that this is a strategy of the Chinese Communist Party. We have had the case of Chami Lhamo here in Canada and other cases of Tibetan-Canadian activists working on Tibet issues who have faced threats and intimidation. Frankly, I think that the government has been slow to take some critical steps on this.

What is the government prepared to do, concretely, to support the Tibetan diaspora here in Canada and address the issue of foreign state-backed interference in our country?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Madam Speaker, as the government has said repeatedly in recent days, weeks and months, there is no place for foreign interference in Canada. There is no place for foreign intimidation in Canada. There is no place for the suppression of human rights by a foreign power in Canada.

We will continue to act on that daily.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by acknowledging the news we heard yesterday about the passing of the member from Winnipeg. Jim Carr was an incredible parliamentarian and an incredible colleague. He will be dearly missed by all of us in this chamber and by all Canadians.

I also wanted to acknowledge that today is Khushali. To all the Ismaili Canadians, like myself, who are celebrating Aga Khan's birthday, I say *Khushali Mubarak*.

To all of the Tibetans in my community of Parkdale—High Park, to Tibetans across Canada and to Tibetans around the planet who are tuning into today's debate, *tashi delek*.

Today is a very important occasion because we are debating, in Canada's Parliament, the issue of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. It comes at a momentous time. Just three days ago, we celebrated Human Rights Day.

Routine Proceedings

December 10 is also the 33rd anniversary of the day on which the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. That prize was awarded to him by the Nobel committee because the Dalai Lama made significant contributions then to peace making, and he continues to make significant contributions now. Fundamental in his approach of compassion and reconciliation is the idea of dialogue.

Today, we are talking about the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. That dialogue was, at one time, quite robust. Between the period of 2002 to 2010, there were nine rounds of discussions held between representatives of the Tibetan people and representatives of the People's Republic of China in various parts of the world, such as in parts of Europe and in Beijing.

Since January 2010, since the ninth round of discussions, nothing has happened in this dialogue. It has clearly stalled. For 12 years, we have been waiting for this dialogue to resume. It is my fundamental conviction that dialogue is the only way forward, and that is what His Holiness is constantly talking about.

The way forward is not through confrontation. The way forward is not through military conflict. The way forward is through dialogue. What is important in debates like today's is that China needs to understand that Liberal, democratic nations of the world, the countries of the west, are calling for that dialogue to resume. Canada is calling for that dialogue to resume.

What needs to be resolved? Three fundamental things need to be resolved through the Sino-Tibetan dialogue, and these are things that I have learned about extensively from the thousands of Tibetan Canadians who I have the privilege to represent in my community of Parkdale—High Park.

The first is basic linguistic freedom. It is the ability to use, to learn and to cultivate the Tibetan language itself. Instead, right now we have quite a frightening phenomenon of colonial boarding schools in China. They are schools where children are forcibly housed away from their families.

Recent reports say that between 800,000 to 900,000 Tibetan children under the age of 18 are being forcibly removed from their families; housed in schools; prevented from speaking, learning or cultivating their Tibetan language skills; and are being forced to learn Mandarin.

If that sounds eerily familiar, it should be to any Canadian who knows about our own history with the residential school system. We are only now coming to grips with reimbursement, making reparations and coming to grips with the devastating legacy of the residential school system in this country. I shudder to think that the same could be occurring, as we speak, in China.

The second main point about the Sino-Tibetan dialogue is to talk about cultural freedom. This is the freedom not to be subsumed under dominant, Han Chinese culture, but instead to be able to celebrate the rich, historic and profound culture of the Tibetan people, which dates back to antiquity.

That flourishing of the culture must not be monetized, as we are seeing with tourist tours occurring at the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Instead, it must be celebrated in a legitimate manner by the Tibetan people themselves.

Third is religious freedom, the freedom of worship. That includes the freedom of Tibetans, which they rightfully have and must have, to openly practice Tibetan Buddhism within the Tibet Autonomous Region and to openly display pictures of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in their homes and in their communities.

I want to talk about the number of self-immolations that have been occurring. Since the winding down of that dialogue in 2010 to this year, 159 Tibetans have self-immolated. This is their only means of protesting. They are sacrificing their lives in such a graphic manner to protest the current discrimination and human rights abuses that people face in Tibet right now. That is a shocking statistic.

We heard the parliamentary secretary speak about the visit of Dominic Barton to the Tibet Autonomous Region. We know from reports that we have gathered through our own intelligence that, right now in Lhasa, in and around the Potala Palace, when we see security officers, we are more likely to see them carrying a fire extinguisher than a firearm. Why is that? It is because the Chinese security police and police officials are so concerned about the potential for more self-immolations. This is glaring evidence of the depth of the problem, that people are taking their own lives as a form of protest against the discrimination that continues to occur.

● (1050)

We heard the parliamentary secretary just advocating for something called the middle way approach. This is critical to understanding what we are talking about. This is not about separatism. This is not about clamouring for revolution or independence. This is about seeking autonomy for a group of people within the People's Republic of China. It would be within the federation of China, within the Chinese Constitution.

What they are looking for is a middle way that lies between two different sort of goals. It seeks genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in three traditional provinces. It is non-partisan. It is a moderate position that safeguards the vital interests of people to preserve their culture, their religion and their national identity.

What is important is that it would relate to things like autonomy over religion, culture, education, economy, health, ecology and environmental protections. If that sounds familiar, it is because it is. It is the kind of decentralized federation we already have here in Canada, the kinds of authorities we already bestow upon provinces. That is what the middle way approach seeks. It is critical in understanding, and that understanding could be fostered only through a resumption of the dialogue.

Our government has been supportive in the past. We have heard talk about the first wave of Tibetans coming to this country in 1971, and there have been renewed efforts since then. We have had work happening on the ground, both in the Tibetan region and in other parts of South Asian, with entities such as Agriteam Canada. We have been dealing with the funding and development needs of the Tibetan diaspora in places such as India and Nepal. I personally was very happy and proud to be able to advocate with success for \$5 million of development assistance that we delivered in the 42nd Parliament to the Tibetan diaspora in India.

Routine Proceedings

We have also been vocal in our defence of human rights in calling out human rights violations. Members have heard about we did at the Human Rights Council in June 2021. In March 2021, at the 46th session of the Human Rights Council, we expressed deep concerns about what is happening with the custody of Tibetans. In November 2018, at the UN Human Rights Council, during China's universal periodic review, we called on China to end the prosecution and persecution on the basis of religion or belief, including for Tibetan Buddhists.

These are critical steps that we are taking, but we know that these steps have only become more difficult because of the aggressive positioning of the current government in China under Premier Xi. It has become a disruptive power, and we know that. Our approach is to have eyes wide open.

There are many reasons to be concerned about the basic protections not being afforded to minorities in the People's Republic of China. We could talk about Uighurs, the Falun Gong, the crushing of the dissenters in Hong Kong, but critical amongst these causes is one of the oldest struggles, and that is the struggle for basic human rights on the part of the Tibetan people. The Global Affairs Canada response to this foreign affairs committee report noted some of the actions we are taking.

We are continuing to monitor the cases of human rights defenders and seeking participation in trials. As I spoke about in my last intervention, we are seeking unhindered future access into the region, both for UN officials, Government of Canada officials and for the Tibetan people themselves. The whereabouts of the Panchen Lama need to be resolved. Canada has also been unequivocal in this regard. The Panchen Lama, when he was taken in 1998, was the youngest political prisoner on Earth at age six. He has never been seen in public since 1998. The whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima must be assured.

I will add another matter that must be resolved, and that is the issue of religious of succession. I am speaking about the sovereign right of a religious community to determine their next incarnation of the 15th Dalai Lama, when that becomes necessary. That is a decision for Buddhist leaders and not for the Communist Party of China. I will be unequivocal in taking that position.

What I would say in conclusion is that my job as the member of Parliament for Parkdale—High Park, my job as the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet group, is to make good on the commitment I made directly to His Holiness the Dalai Lama when I had the privilege of meeting him in March 2018. He said to me, “Make sure that the world in the west does not forget my people and our cause.” What I say to him is,

[Member spoke in Tibetan]

[English]

This means that I will not forget the Tibetan cause.

• (1055)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about many important issues, including reciprocal access, human rights, the middle way approach, the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama and other human

rights abuses and language and cultural rights. I am pleased that in the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet group we have been able to work collaboratively and talk about many of these important issues.

One important piece of advancing human rights has to include talking about accountability for perpetrators of human rights abuses. That is why I see the framework of the Magnitsky act as being critically important. The government has, in a very limited way, put sanctions on a number of individuals involved in abuses against Uighurs, but we are calling for more action there, as well as use of the Magnitsky act against officials involved in human rights violations in Hong Kong, Tibet and other parts of the People's Republic of China.

I wonder if the member could speak to the fact that Magnitsky sanctions have not been used significantly, certainly in recent years, and what steps we could consider for getting the government to apply Magnitsky sanctions to more people.

• (1100)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his contributions today and on many other occasions, on this issue and many others, in terms of holding the Chinese regime accountable.

In terms of Magnitsky sanctions, it is right to note that the legislation was passed in the 42nd Parliament. There was a gradual uptake in terms of leveraging the Magnitsky sanctions. They have been used extensively vis-à-vis Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, but I will agree with the member that it needs to be leveraged a bit more widely.

I was happy to see sanctions being imposed on certain Chinese actors with respect to what is taking place. We know there are a number of concerns that need to be addressed. I mentioned many of them in my statement, and I hope that with the launch of the Indo-Pacific strategy, we are more forthright with respect to what the Chinese regime represents and how sanctions can be applied to address numerous human rights concerns in that part of the world.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciated the speech made by the member across the aisle. It was a thoughtful speech, full of nuance, insight and goodwill. It was good to hear. Sometimes, members on the other side of the House say all sorts of ultra-partisan things, and it is difficult to find something interesting that we can build on. That is not the case today, and I appreciate that.

I like to see such a proactive attitude. The government wants to find a way to improve the situation in Tibet. I give it credit for that.

I heard my colleague refer to what is happening here in Canada. He said that we have an interesting division of powers and that the government is not entirely centralized. I found that interesting, although we cannot in any way compare the situation in Tibet with the situation in Quebec. I do not completely agree with my colleague on this.

How could he do more for Quebec so that Canada is an example for China on the international stage?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the contribution of the member opposite.

With the Constitution of Canada, which dates back over 150 years, and with the changes that were made regarding the province that my colleague represents and all the other provinces, we have a way of managing the federation that gives the provinces a lot of power. That is what the Tibetans are looking for.

For example, Quebec has immigration rights. That is the kind of control and power that Tibet is looking for. It wants the same thing for its economy, culture and religion. If Canada can be example to the rest of the world in conflicts like this, it will help to resolve problems in a non-violent manner.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I start today I would also like to express my deep condolences to the friends and family members of our colleague, Jim Carr. As members can see, I sit very close to where the member sat. I know he was a strong parliamentarian, and I thank his family for sharing him with us. I am very happy we were able to pass his private member's bill before he passed.

I would also like to express my condolences to those who worked quite closely with Mr. Carr in this place. I know many members, both of his own caucus and from all parties, were very close colleagues of his, and I give my sympathies to them as well.

Today we are speaking about Tibet and the challenges the Tibetan people are facing. I welcome every opportunity to speak about human rights, to speak about the rights of people around the world and to speak about the rights that are being denied to the people of Tibet. It is vitally important that as parliamentarians in Canada we are constantly aware of the human rights abuses that are taking place around the world and that we use whatever power and voice we have to raise those human rights abuses.

I was a member of the foreign affairs committee that did this recent study on Tibet and the Sino-Tibet dialogue, and I heard testimony from numerous people who told us about the challenges the Tibetan people are facing, so I am very happy to be able to stand and to speak about the need for continued dialogue and the need for Canada to continue to support the Tibetan people.

We are seeing the Chinese Communist party perpetrating human rights abuses among a number of different groups and a number of different people. There are definitely parallels, when we see the suppression of rights of the Tibetan people, with regard to the Uighur people. There are definitely parallels when we see how the Chinese government is shutting down dissidents and silencing dissidents within its population.

Therefore, of course the opportunity to speak to this is very important, and I know others before me have said this, but I want to also acknowledge that December 10 was international Human Rights Day. It is a day to acknowledge the importance of protecting human rights and a day to recognize those who defend human rights at risk to their own safety.

Routine Proceedings

I am going to give a few examples of people who have done that. In the Philippines, Cristina Palabay has suffered serious threats from her government after she testified before our parliamentary committee, the international human rights subcommittee. The government is threatening her; her life is at risk; there are risks to her of being red-tagged by the Philippine government.

In Iran, the IRGC is executing protesters and arresting artists, human rights defenders and all those protesting for freedom. Semiramis Babaei is one of those artists. I know her cousin, a Canadian citizen, is deeply concerned about her safety.

In China, Huseyin Celil, a Uighur activist, has been illegally incarcerated for 16 years. For 16 years his wife and children have not heard from him and have not known how he is. Even now, Dong Guangping, who spoke against the Chinese government, is missing, and his family, his wife and daughter who live in Canada, have no idea of his whereabouts.

In Russia, we have Vladimir Kara-Murza, who has been imprisoned because he spoke out against Putin's brutal attack on Ukraine.

This is just a handful of individuals who have risked and continue to risk their lives for democracy, for human rights and for justice in their countries, and if my standing in this place and saying their names can protect them, help them, amplify their calls for justice and ensure human rights are protected around the world, then today and every day, every one of us must say their names: Cristina Palabay, Huseyin Celil, Dong Guangping, Vladimir Kara-Murza.

● (1105)

However, as we come together today to talk about the challenges that human rights defenders face, as we come together to talk about the challenges that the Tibetan people face, I want to raise some concerns I have about the process by which this came forward.

I have concerns that there are individuals within this place who are using tools to bring forward debate not because the debate is something that is pressing at the moment, but rather to stop the actual work of this place. I am concerned about it because we are seeing the exact same thing happening in the foreign affairs committee.

The foreign affairs committee did this important work to look at what is happening in Tibet, to examine the need for further Sino-Tibetan dialogue and to continue that dialogue, and to have Canada have a voice to press the Chinese government to act in a more ethical, more important manner. However, that same committee can no longer work. We are being prevented from doing very important work, and I will give members some examples of that.

Routine Proceedings

Right now, we have yet to release a report on what is happening in Ukraine with the illegal invasion by Russia of Ukraine and the attacks on its people, on civilians, the horrendous violence that is being perpetrated against the Ukrainian people, the illegal invasion of a sovereign nation, an ally of Canada, that is being done by the Russian Federation. We have not released a study on that to Parliament. We have not tabled the findings of our study, because we have not been able to get that through the foreign affairs committee.

We have a study on Pakistan. Everybody in this House should be deeply concerned about the response to the horrendous and horrific flooding in Pakistan. We should be tabling a report on the study we did on the flooding in Pakistan, on the way our development dollars are spent and the way the government is using development dollars to help people around the world. We cannot do that, because our foreign affairs committee is not able to get that work done.

I am deeply concerned about what is happening in Iran. As I mentioned in my statement, we are hearing horrendous stories of protesters being executed. People who are simply standing up for their human rights, simply asking for the right to live in their country, for the right to democracy, for the right to justice, are being executed in their countries right now. As a foreign affairs committee, we have an obligation to be examining what is happening in Iran and recommending actions for our government to take. That is vital work for the foreign affairs committee to be doing.

I, in fact, brought forward a study that I think is extremely important for the work that we do as a country, on looking at our sanctions regime. Yesterday, I spoke to Bill S-8 about the sanctions regime, about how our sanctions regime is not as effective, not as strong and not as capable as it should be. I brought a study forward at the foreign affairs committee, and we were meant to study it during the fall session, but of course that also did not happen.

Finally, I would also point out that since the spring, since April, the foreign affairs committee has attempted to look at the reproductive rights of women in every corner of the world. This, for me, is probably one of the most important issues we face. This is something that implicates almost every single human being, certainly 50% of the world. We know tens of thousands of women die each year because they do not have access to reproductive health care.

We know that what we are seeing south of us in the United States is very problematic. In fact, the Supreme Court of the United States of America has made a decision to take away the rights of women. That has implications that ripple around the world. As the foreign affairs committee, we have an obligation to examine what those impacts are.

• (1110)

We have an obligation to bring forward any recommendations that will help women around the world access their right to bodily autonomy and health care, but we are unable to do that right now, to be honest, because of one member of the foreign affairs committee. I will not even say it is the party, because I have worked very well with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and I have worked extremely well with the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington. However, there is one member within our committee of 11 who has completely destroyed the ability of the foreign affairs committee to do any meaningful work.

I want us to think about that for a minute. I want us to contemplate the fact that the rules of this place allow it. They allow one member to take over a committee and impose his will on that committee. However, is that democracy? Is that something in which our constituents, those of Edmonton Strathcona, or in other ridings in Alberta or around the country, would like to see their members engage? Do they want us to work collaboratively to find solutions, to find ways for us to go forward, or do they want to listen to somebody speak for hours and hours on nonsense? These are some of the questions I have for my constituents.

Speaking of my constituents, today I was supposed to have a very important meeting with the Alberta Federation of Labour. Of course, we all have very busy lives. We have our time in the House, but we also have other obligations that we undertake. One of the most-important issues for me right now is helping Albertan workers transition to a future economy, so I meet as often as I can with the Alberta Federation of Labour. I know it is at the forefront, representing the needs and rights of workers with respect to transitioning to a future-facing economy. However, I am not at that meeting today because I am in the House, again, because the Conservatives are trying to prevent the House from doing the work we had determined we would do. I have concerns about that as well.

One of the things that most bothers when I look at this is that, as a parliamentarian, I am not part of the government; I am part of the opposition. The opposition has an obligation to hold the government to account, to watch what it does, to evaluate that, to suggest changes and to call it out when we do not agree with the actions it has taken. When a member of the Conservative Party filibusters the work we are trying to do, it means that nobody is keeping an eye on the government's actions. We are not doing our job as parliamentarians to hold the government accountable.

I know that my colleagues within the Liberal Party, within the government, do not always necessarily welcome our advice, but I think they recognize the value of having a democracy where we work together on building consensus and making laws and regulations stronger. I think we all know that is the best way for us to work together.

This is all to say that I have deep concerns about why I am now giving a speech in the House on something that is interfering with some of the business of the day, which we thought we would be engaging in today.

However, I do not want to, in any way, take away from the fact that the foreign affairs committee did a study on what was happening in Tibet, and it is a very important study. I was very happy to take part in that. I was very happy to table that study to the House of Commons and have the House and the government respond to it. I was very happy to see that Tibet was included in the Indo-Pacific strategy and that the government brought forward that strategy. However, my worries on the rationale for the debate at this time still stands.

• (1115)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, with the greatest respect for my colleague, her implication that this concurrence debate is interfering with the business of the House seems to demonstrate a lack of understanding of the fact that there was extensive dialogue among party House leaders about negotiating the ending period of this week and how we would wrap up before Christmas, in particular how this concurrence debate would take place. Sometimes concurrence motions are put forward with more limited notice, but this was discussed and will proceed according to an agreed upon framework.

I would respectfully encourage the member to maybe seek some feedback on that from other members about the conversations that took place. I will leave that for the member's consideration.

She did not really speak about Tibet in her speech. Of course there are many human rights issues, I agree, but I wonder if she wants to take this opportunity to share her thoughts specifically on the issue of Tibet and on the political status of Tibet, as the motion seeks to invite the House to comment on that.

• (1120)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, there were discussions among the parties around our not being interested in doing this debate at this time, that it was not appropriate. However, that does not seem to have stopped the Conservative Party.

Certainly, when I raised the issue of Tibet at the beginning of my speech, I know that some members were not in the House at that time. I would never dare name who was not in the House when I was speaking about this and things that were important to me with regard to Tibet. However, I have stood many times in the House to ask and plead that we not politicize human rights, that we in fact look at human rights as something that we have a moral obligation to fight for and that we have a moral obligation to fight for human rights in Canada and around the world equally.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to pick up on my colleague's last comments in regard to human rights' advocates and the questions I asked earlier. There are very strong advocates on all sides of the House on the issue of human rights. I think of individuals like Irwin Cotler, who has been a powerful advocate not only within Canada but internationally.

Could she provide her thoughts with respect to the strong leadership role that the House of Commons can play in the world today? That is one of the reasons why we should try to depoliticize the issue of human rights as much as possible.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, there have been some really incredible leaders in the House of Commons who have fought for human rights. I as a New Democrat often think of Paul Dewar and Hélène Laverdière and the work they did on human rights.

I have to be honest, though. I stand in this place knowing that many of the members of my caucus have fought for human rights. The member for Winnipeg Centre, for example, has been a tireless advocate for indigenous women and the rights of indigenous people in our country. While we do have a long history of fighting for hu-

Routine Proceedings

man rights in this place, that history continues with some extremely strong voices that we have in this place right now. It is vitally important to depoliticize that and for us all to move in the same direction.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. Her comments are always insightful.

I would like to get back to China and Tibet. This morning, we are talking about protecting the religious and language rights of Tibetans, who are facing the People's Republic of China, a vast empire. We are still wondering how to deal with China. What can Canada do to influence China?

It feels that the opposite is happening, that China is interfering in our affairs. Recently, we heard that in Toronto there were police service stations controlled by China. That is something. A Chinese spy who worked for Hydro-Québec, an immense Quebec infrastructure, was exposed. That is significant.

The Prime Minister of Canada had dinner with members of the Chinese community in Toronto and, a few days later, certain members of that community were granted approval to operate a new bank. It seems that China has a lot of influence on Canada, but what can we do to turn the tables, especially in the case of Tibet, which we are currently discussing?

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question and a difficult one. I do not pretend there are easy answers to this, because we do have the need to work with China. We need to work with China on issues around climate change. We need to work with China on issues around trade and health care, those sorts of things. However, there is an opportunity for us to raise our voice and identify when human rights abuses are being attacked.

Canada can work with its allies. We can develop greater relationships with countries in the region. We can develop greater relationships with like-minded democracies. Working with those democracies, collectively we can express our concerns. We can raise issues with the current actions being taken by governments like the Chinese government.

Even when we look at a massive economy like India, the Modi government is committing human rights abuses against religious minorities. Canadians have an obligation. We want to continue to work with India, but we do have an obligation to call those things out.

With regard to interference on Canadian soil, every member of the House should be deeply concerned with that. We should be given as much transparency and ability as we can for us to do our job with regard to that.

• (1125)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work at both the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the Special Committee on the Canada–People's Republic of China Relationship.

Routine Proceedings

There are multiple levels or areas where this issue can be brought up. With respect to this motion, the content related to it and the human rights issue for Tibetans, could this be brought up at the foreign affairs committee or in the Canada-China relations committee?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I sit on three committees. The third is the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. It would be an excellent place for us to look at the rights of the Tibetan people.

I also sit on the Canada-China committee, which is another opportunity for us to look at this issue. Of course, there is the foreign affairs committee, but unfortunately the foreign affairs committee is no longer able to do this work. It is currently being filibustered, because one member of the Conservative Party does not want to speak about women's rights and does not think the rights of women warrant a study.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Edmonton Strathcona has been speaking up time and time again on women's rights, yet we see the Conservative Party is against basic reproductive freedoms. Its members are politicizing issues of human rights elsewhere, targeting other countries, yet it is them who have shut down committees on addressing fundamental rights of women in Canada.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what she thinks about the Conservative Party being so committed to denying basic reproductive rights to women. What does it say about the party today?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, one of the biggest questions I have with regard to this is that if members of the Conservative Party are so staunchly against providing reproductive health care to women around the world, one would think they would have the bravery or the moral fortitude to stand and defend that position. If this is something they truly believe, one would expect they would want to have a study on it so they could bring forward their beliefs. Unfortunately, they do not want to even do that. They will not defend their beliefs; they will just filibuster so we cannot do the study.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the report tabled by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

In fact, unless I am mistaken, this is the second report. The report was therefore adopted several months ago, after a meeting with the Rinpoche, the civil leader of the Tibetan administration in India.

Although our Tibetan friends continually repeated that China has no historical claim to the territory of Tibet and that demands for Tibetan independence continue to be legitimate and relevant, they are willing to enter into negotiations with the People's Republic of China. They are willing to find middle ground so that the Tibetan people in the People's Republic of China can find a way to flourish without being subject to the "sinicization" policy that has been accelerating at a brutal pace since the 1950s.

This report was adopted unanimously by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and should

have been adopted unanimously here in the House as well. Why then are we debating a subject that we all agree on? Why must we question the appropriateness of ratifying the report tabled by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development? It is simply because some political parties keep reports in their back pocket so they can use them, not to debate the substance of the issue, but for dilatory purposes, to delay the House's work.

We should have had a debate or at least adopted the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development a long time ago, but here we are many months later, right before Christmas, debating that report. The House directs its own work, so we could very well have simply decided, by mutual consent, to unanimously adopt this report. We would have fully supported the House concurring in this report, which I think is important and which calls for negotiation rather than confrontation. How can we oppose negotiating? By force of circumstance, we must always be open to negotiation.

Tibetans, who have established, legitimate rights to their independence, are now saying that, if they have to deal with what they have been dealing with since the Chinese invasion in the 1950s, they might as well be realistic about it and try to arrive at an arrangement. How can anyone be against virtue and apple pie? We would have liked to see this report adopted unanimously without debate, but the Liberals and the Conservatives are engaged in some sort of procedural guerilla warfare and, to be honest, I find that extremely harmful.

● (1130)

My colleague from Edmonton Strathcona mentioned this a few moments ago: The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, after being paralyzed for almost two months in May and June on the issue of women's reproductive health, is paralyzed yet again. The Liberals are not leading the way when it comes to completing and finalizing two reports that were almost finished, one on the floods in Pakistan and the other on the situation in Ukraine. I will repeat this simply to drive home how people are setting aside important issues to engage in a catfight, which is totally unacceptable. These reports are about the floods in Pakistan that claimed the lives of hundreds of victims and about the situation in Ukraine; I do not think we need to count the number of victims this conflict claims every day. Rather than taking the 10, 15 or 20 minutes needed to finalize the two reports, the Liberals, who knew very well how the Conservatives were going to react, decided to set the reports aside and focus once again on women's reproductive health.

Let me make myself clear: I think women's reproductive health is extremely important. Women the world over end up in extreme poverty trying to get an abortion with what limited means are available to them, if they survive at all. The Liberal government, which calls its foreign policy feminist, is therefore obligated to openly, directly and uncompromisingly address the issue of women's reproductive health around the world. We, on this side, happen to be feminists. We want to address this issue as soon as possible.

I have already discussed the issue with my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. I think that the Conservatives are open to eventually calling a ceasefire and putting this behind us. At the same time, they will be able to explain their point of view on women's reproductive health. Right now they are giving the impression that it is not an important issue and that we should not debate or discuss it. The words “contraception” and “abortion” give some Conservatives chills, so much so that they do not want to discuss the issue at all, and yet, it is a fundamental issue, and I think I know that our Conservative friends would agree to discuss it all the same.

I think that when our Liberal colleagues announced that the committee would not finalize the report on the flooding in Pakistan and the report on the situation in Ukraine, but would instead move directly on to women's reproductive rights, it was intended as an affront. Obviously, it provoked our Conservative friends and gave rise to more filibustering at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which I think is both shocking and shameful. If there is one House committee that should be as non-partisan as possible, it is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

I had the chance to reiterate this several times in committee, but now I have an opportunity to say it here in the House. As members know, I served a stint as an MP in another life, and I sat on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for a long time back then, as I do now. The importance of this idea that the committee should be one of the most non-partisan in Parliament and the House of Commons was proven throughout almost the entire 12 years I served as an MP the first time.

Ever since I came back to the House in 2019, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development has been the scene of frankly disgraceful confrontations between the Liberals and the Conservatives. When the Conservatives are not blocking the committee's work, the Liberals are. Either the Conservatives block the government, or the government blocks itself.

• (1135)

In my 12 years as a member of Parliament, I had never experienced a time when the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as it was called at the time, before the name was changed to Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, was paralyzed not for a meeting or two, but for weeks on end, due to partisan games between our Liberal and Conservative friends.

While all this is going on, we are not finalizing the report on the flooding in Pakistan; we are not dealing with the incredibly important issue of the situation in Ukraine, where people are dying every

day; and we are not even talking about the important issue of women's reproductive health.

Routine Proceedings

Today we are debating a motion that should have been adopted unanimously without any debate at all. We have been debating it for two hours because the Conservatives decided that, in response to the Liberals' provocation, they would engage in this procedural guerrilla warfare that is going on at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Remember that our Conservative friends have moved 300 motions so far, enough to keep us busy until about 2075.

Will this vicious circle ever end? It makes no sense. Could we not simply sit down, talk like responsible adults, and find a way to move forward with the report on the flooding in Pakistan, finalize the report on the situation in Ukraine, and get cracking on the study on women's reproductive health as soon as possible?

At the moment, none of this is happening because the Liberals have decided to provoke the Conservatives and the Conservatives, who are no better, have decided to let themselves be provoked and react to what is happening. The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development is stuck in filibustering mode again, which I find shocking, as I said, and fundamentally unacceptable, intolerable even. This committee should be one of the most consensus-focused committees at the House of Commons, and it is unacceptable that it is being paralyzed by procedural bickering between the Liberals and the Conservatives. That is crazy.

I will conclude by explaining why I believe this committee is, or at least should be, one of the least partisan at the House of Commons.

The first reason is very simple. On the issue of values, internationally, aside from a few minor differences, there is very little to separate the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP on foreign affairs. Some may be surprised to hear me say such a thing, but in terms of values, we think largely alike. Apart from a few episodes, during the Stephen Harper era, for instance, I would say that Canada's foreign policy has been relatively constant since the Second World War, regardless of whether the Liberals or Conservatives formed government. In terms of values, aside from the short interlude of Stephen Harper's Conservative government, I would say that there is little distinction between the various political parties, and this affinity should be reflected in the quality and harmony of work at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. That is the first reason I think this committee is normally the least partisan. Given the situation, I would say that this is the reason it should be the least partisan.

Routine Proceedings

It may be surprising to hear such a comment from a nasty old separatist, but the other reason is that Canada would do well to show the world a united front instead of appearing in disarray. My colleagues will be startled to learn that sovereignists see no benefit in making Canada look bad on the international stage. Just because we want independence for Quebec does not mean that we want Canada to be in bad shape and to come off poorly on the international stage.

• (1140)

I could reel off a whole list of reasons, but those are the two fundamental reasons I think that this committee should be one of the least partisan committees at the House of Commons. That is what I believe, and I am happy to reiterate it loud and clear. I ask my colleagues in the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party to put an end to the procedural bickering that is keeping the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development from doing its job.

I am dismayed and disgusted by the feeling of a job left undone. In a few hours' time, when we rise for the holidays without completing the report on the flooding in Pakistan, without completing the report on the situation in Ukraine and without starting the discussion and study on women's reproductive health, I will be ashamed.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate some of the remarks the member put on the record, and in part I agree with him. When we look at the many different political issues that we face as a House, the issues related to foreign affairs should, as much as possible, be depoliticized. I like the characterization the member has referenced.

I have had the opportunity in the past, at both the provincial and federal levels, to sit on committees that are far less partisan. I found that the most effective non-partisan discussions take place when there is a consensus versus a hard vote. The moment we start putting in hard votes, especially if it is done to make one MP look worse than another, partisanship often kicks in.

I am interested in knowing the member's thoughts on whether the foreign affairs committee should be striving to base its decisions on a consensus as opposed to a hard vote. Does the member have some opinions on that?

• (1145)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I think that my speech flows naturally on from the question that my colleague just asked.

Of course, the more consensual our decisions can be, the better. However, there is something fundamentally disturbing about the fact that, at the end of a parliamentary session, for example, Liberal members are starting to systematically filibuster to prevent the committee from adopting a report if that report is even the slightest bit critical of the government. This has forced the opposition to react unanimously, which is something that does not happen very of-

ten. On at least two occasions, the opposition unanimously presented a dissenting report.

It is very unfortunate that such a thing should happen at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. I will give a more recent example. Sometimes, everyone seems to agree, and the report seems to be acceptable to everyone. Then one of the parties, the Conservative Party to be specific, will surprise us by producing a dissenting report—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I must allow members to ask other questions. The hon. member can say more when he answers the next questions.

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly enjoyed my time on the foreign affairs committee working with my colleague. I found him to be a very insightful and knowledgeable person when it came to foreign affairs.

I appreciate his comments about the committee being tied up. However, we are here today for a motion about the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. I know he said it is obvious we should pass it, but the Tibetan community is likely watching. I wonder if he would like to elaborate on the importance of this motion to that committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, since it was a Conservative member who asked the question, I will finish my previous reply very quickly. I will simply say that the Conservative Party surprised us by suddenly producing a dissenting report that it had never really discussed. The issues mentioned in the report were never really raised in the debates. I disapprove of that approach.

Now, to return to the question from my hon. colleague, whom I have had the great pleasure of working with on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, I would simply say that he is absolutely right. The Tibetan community in Canada certainly must be wondering why we are in this situation today. The report was adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs several months ago, but it is only now, with Christmas approaching, that we have suddenly decided to start debating it. I think that the community expects us to adopt it, so let us do just that.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated that my hon. colleague talked about values and said there are things that should be above partisanship. Human rights is certainly one of them. I think most of us in this chamber would agree that women's rights are human rights, but not the Conservatives.

One of the fundamental issues of women's rights is the right to control their own bodies, not to have men tell them what is going to happen with their bodies, nor politicians and Conservative backbenchers, nor the church. The right of women to control their own bodies is a fundamental human right. I would think that in 2022 we would all agree on that, yet we see the Conservatives using tricks time and time again in committees to shut down important discussions on human rights because they are out to deny women their most basic right, the right to control their bodies.

What does my hon. colleague think of the values in the messages the Conservatives are sending in their attack on women's rights again and again?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for his question.

As I said in my speech, I have had discussions with my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan on the issue and I am convinced that the Conservatives have things to say. Aside from their desire to prevent debate from taking place, they have things to say on the issue of women's reproductive health.

The more they filibuster, the more they give the impression that they are not interested in the issue or that they have no solutions to offer concerning women's reproductive health. Let us, then, move on quickly to this study and hear the Conservative Party's proposals; I am sure they have some. It cannot simply be that they do not want to talk about it. It is an extremely important problem around the world and Canada supposedly has a feminist foreign policy, so we have to move forward.

However, when the Liberals decide to take the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs hostage and thus not complete the study of the flooding in Pakistan and not complete the study of the situation in Ukraine, which would have taken barely 15 minutes, simply to box in our Conservative friends, that is the type of situation we are in. It is extremely unfortunate for everyone.

• (1150)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my honourable and very esteemed colleague for his very eloquent speech.

I would like to hear more from him on a contradiction that is quite surprising to members from Quebec arriving in the House of Commons. Indeed, we hear members from English Canada make utterly disgraceful statements about Bloc Québécois members, and yet we are the ones who must stand in the House to call members from both of the main parties to order. These members always act in their own interest, they play politics and get on like children. My hon. colleague for Montarville had to do it today, I have done it several times and all my colleagues do the same.

I would like to hear more from my colleague on this matter.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Terrebonne for her question, which allows me to elaborate.

I would simply say that, contrary to what our colleagues may think, from its very inception, the Bloc Québécois made a solemn commitment to respect institutions. We are not here to throw a

Routine Proceedings

wrench in the works. We are here to ensure that Quebec gets its share within this country as long as it is part of Canada. We are here, of course, to promote what we feel is the best solution for Quebecers, namely independence.

We should not be seen as a threat. We may be seen as a threat but, in reality, we are conscientious members who do not do things just to make others look bad. It is very surprising for us as sovereigntists to see the Conservatives and Liberals literally behave like boors in the House of Commons and in committees when we should be working together in the fundamental interest of Canadians and Quebecers.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's sincerity. I do not always agree with the particulars he notes, but I think highly of his motivations and intentions.

I want to ask a question about this particular concurrence debate. This concurrence debate came up at this time as a result of conversation and negotiation among House leaders. It seems that some members were not fully briefed on those discussions, but there were discussions among House leaders. This was not brought forward as a surprise.

This report could have been adopted by unanimous consent. In fact, it was a member of the Bloc who sought unanimous consent to adopt this same motion in the previous Parliament. At the time, it was a member of the Liberal Party who refused unanimous consent, so clearly we have seen some progress given the consensus here. However, this could have been adopted by unanimous consent. An attempt by his colleague was made to do that and it was not done. That is part of the context for the debate we are having today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I think there is not much to say in response to what my hon. colleague just said.

I felt that the record needed to be set straight to remind everyone that it was the Bloc Québécois who previously proposed unanimous adoption, which we were unable to obtain.

I find it an odd coincidence that we are having to spend two hours debating a motion that should have been adopted unanimously a long time ago and that the work at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development is completely paralyzed.

It may be uncharitable of me, but I cannot help but see this coincidence.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

• (1155)

[Translation]

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

[English]

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded vote and seek the unanimous consent of the House to defer the vote to tomorrow following question period.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, by unanimous consent, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 14, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

COMMITTEE TRAVEL

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

1. That, in relation to its study of the situation at the Russia-Ukraine border and implications for peace and security, seven members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development be authorized to travel to Brussels, Belgium; Helsinki, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden, and Warsaw, Poland, in the Winter of 2023, during an adjournment period, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

2. That, in relation to its study of Arctic sovereignty, security and emergency preparedness of Indigenous Peoples, seven members of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs be authorized to travel to Yellowknife, Northwest Territories; Kugluktuk, Nunavut, and Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, in the Winter of 2023, during an adjournment period, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

3. That, in relation to its study of large port infrastructure expansion projects in Canada, seven members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities be authorized to travel to St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Montréal, Québec; Toronto, Ontario; Hamilton-Niagara region, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia, and Prince Rupert, British Columbia, in the Winter of 2023, during an adjournment period, and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary moving the motion will please say nay.

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)

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

REFUGEES

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to table a petition from members of the Dublin Street United Church in Guelph. The petitioners call on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to intervene immediately to ensure that the backlog of refugee applications is greatly reduced and that Canadian sponsors can welcome many more refugees. There are 148 signatures from this group, which is really focused on helping refugees come to Canada.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is in support of Bill S-223, which is a bill to prohibit forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The bill would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without consent. It would also create a mechanism by which a person could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if they are involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

This bill has been before the House in various forms for the last 15 years, and it will be proceeding to a final vote tomorrow. The petitioners no doubt hope that it will finally pass into law.

• (1200)

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition I am tabling raises concerns about calls by Louis Roy of the Collège des médecins du Québec to legalize infanticide in certain cases. People who signed this petition were horrified that someone from that college would openly, before a parliamentary committee, call for legal changes that would allow the killing of children, the killing of innocents.

The petitioners say that infanticide is always wrong. They call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to legalize the killing of children in Canada.

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is such an honour to rise today to present a petition in the House.

Petition e-4095 calls on the government to address the need for an additional attachment leave benefit for families formed by adoption, kinship and customary care.

This petition, brought by Julie Despaties and the Time to Attach campaign, gathered 3,093 signatures. It calls on the government to bring equal treatment for adoptive parents, kinship and customary caregivers, and implement an additional 15-week attachment leave benefit under the employment insurance program.

Families formed by adoption, kinship and customary care need to have the critical opportunity during their first year of placement to form bonds and connections and improve long-term outcomes for children and youth and their families. This call for an additional attachment leave benefit addresses that need.

I am proud to table this petition in the House.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 926, 927, 929, 930, 935 and 940.

[Text]

Question No. 926—**Mr. Brian Masse:**

With regard to the Connecting Families initiative announced in budget 2017 and the Connecting Families 2.0 program announced on April 4, 2022, broken down by fiscal year and province or territory: (a) on what dates were letters sent to households informing them of their eligibility; (b) how many households were notified that their eligibility was being re-assessed due to (i) changes to their Canada Child Benefit payments, (ii) changes to their Guaranteed Income Supplement payments, (iii) the receipt of Canada Emergency Response Benefits payments?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for part (a) of the question, letters were sent to households on the following dates to inform them of their eligibility: October 25, 2022, to families; September 29, 2022, to families; March 31, 2022, to families; March 25, 2022, to seniors; February 15, 2021, to families; February 1, 2021, to families; January 18, 2021, to families; December 19, 2019, to families; November 14, 2019, to families; September 11, 2019, to families; February 19, 2019, to families; and November 12, 2018, to families.

For part (b), no households were notified that their eligibility was being reassessed due to changes in their Canada child benefit payments, changes in their guaranteed income supplement payments or receipt of Canada emergency response benefits payments.

Question No. 927—**Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to Destination Canada, since January 1, 2021: has Destination Canada paid or provided any financial incentives to the MICHELIN Guide or any individual or entity associated with the MICHELIN Guide, and, if so, what are the details, including the (i) amount of the payment or summary of the financial incentive, (ii) date, (iii) reason, (iv) recipient?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Destination Canada has not paid nor provided any financial incentives to the Michelin guide or any individual or entity associated with the Michelin guide. We partnered with Destination Toronto to support the marketing and promotional activities that made bringing the guide to Toronto possible.

Question No. 929—**Mr. Rob Moore:**

Routine Proceedings

With regard to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development's position on the treatment of Uyghurs by the Chinese government: what is the minister's position?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 12, 2021, in coordination with international partners, Canada announced measures in response to concerns about human rights violations in the People's Republic of China involving members of the Uighur ethnic minority and other minorities within Xinjiang. The seven trade and economic measures announced by Global Affairs Canada, in coordination with the United Kingdom and the United States, and in solidarity with the European Union can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2021/01/canada-announces-new-measures-to-address-human-rights-abuses-in-xinjiang-china.html>.

The statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs from September 1, 2022, following the release of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, or OHCHR, assessment on the human rights situation in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2022/09/statement-by-minister-joly-on-un-report-on-human-rights-situation-in-xinjiang.html>.

Question No. 930—**Mr. Alex Ruff:**

With regard to terminology in the government's response to Order Paper question Q-633: (a) what is the government's definition of the terms (i) legally obtained handgun, (ii) illegally obtained handgun; and (b) what is the government's definition of the terms (i) in legal possession, (ii) legally obtained, and what is the difference between the definitions?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following definitions and concepts are taken directly from the 2022 homicide survey user guide, which is distributed to and used by all police services in Canada to aid in the completion of the homicide survey questionnaire, for submission to the homicide survey at Statistics Canada. Further, these definitions are based directly on Criminal Code definitions.

Routine Proceedings

In response to part (a) of the question, the definitions are as follows. For (i) legally obtained handgun, primary weapon initially obtained legally, report if the primary weapon used to cause death was initially obtained legally. To be initially obtained legally, the weapon must have been purchased through legitimate means, for example, not stolen, smuggled or built illegally for personal ownership, law enforcement or military use, or by a business or service for use in sporting-related activities, for example, recreational gun clubs and ranges, archery clubs, recreational axe throwing, etc. Yes indicates, yes, the primary weapon was initially obtained legally. No indicates, no, the primary weapon was not initially obtained legally, for example, it was stolen. Unknown is to be scored when whether the primary weapon was initially obtained legally cannot be determined or confirmed. The narrative should include full details as to why this field is unknown. Should police later determine if the primary weapon was initially obtained legally, this information should be submitted to Statistics Canada for revision. For (ii) illegally obtained handgun, Statistics Canada does not have an explicit definition for an illegally obtained handgun. For the purposes of the homicide survey, if the handgun was not obtained legally it is considered to have been illegally obtained. Please see response to part (a)(i).

In response to part (b) of the question, (i) in legal possession of the handguns, for charged and/or suspect-chargeable, or CSC, that caused fatal wound in legal possession of primary weapon, report whether the CSC that caused the fatal wound was in legal possession of the primary weapon at the time of the incident. For homicides committed with a firearm, the CSC must have had in place the necessary legal documentation and required licences to be deemed to be in legal possession of the firearm at the time of the incident, i.e., the firearm is registered, if applicable, and the CSC had a valid firearms licence. Yes indicates, yes, the CSC was in legal possession of the primary weapon. All of the necessary documentation and required licences were in place at the time of the incident for the CSC to legally possess the weapon. No indicates, no, the CSC was not in legal possession of the primary weapon. The proper legal documentation or licences were not held by the CSC for the weapon at the time of the incident. Unknown is to be scored when it cannot be determined or confirmed that CSC that cause the fatal wound was in legal possession of the primary weapon. The narrative should include full details as to why this field is unknown. Should police later determine if the CSC was in legal possession of the primary weapon, this information should be submitted to Statistics Canada for revision. With regard to the difference between legal possession and legally obtained, legally obtained refers to when the weapon was first acquired. It could have been obtained by anyone at any point in time prior to the incident, for example, a rifle purchased for hunting through legitimate means. The legal possession variable refers to the status of the weapon in the hands of the accused at the time of the incident. In other words, did the accused person use a weapon for which they had the legal right to have in their possession? In that sense, an accused person could be in illegal possession of a legally obtained weapon, for example, if they stole or borrowed a weapon without having the required licences.

Question No. 935—Mr. Gary Vidal:

With regard to Indigenous Services Canada and expenditures made so that long-term drinking water advisories could be lifted, since January 1, 2016: (a) what is the total amount spent, broken down by year; (b) what has been the average and median

cost associated with lifting an advisory; (c) of the advisories lifted so far, which one had the (i) lowest cost, (ii) highest cost, and what was the cost of each; and (d) what are the details of all contracts awarded by the government for work related to long-term drinking water advisories, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) summary of goods or services provided, (v) location of the advisory related to a contract?

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, the total amount spent to resolve the long-term drinking water advisories, or LT DWAs, is as follows. It should be noted that for many LT DWA projects there are other community infrastructure projects that are also needed to support access to clean drinking water.

Since fiscal year 2016–17, and as of September 30, 2022, approximately \$491 million has been spent on 105 projects that have resulted in the resolution of LT DWAs affecting public systems on reserve in first nations communities. This includes targeted funding spent on infrastructure repairs, upgrades and new construction projects. It does not include operations and maintenance funding or funding spent on operator support and capacity building to address LT DWAs. This includes spending on all infrastructure projects to address LT DWAs, including short-term and long-term solutions.

This amount can be broken down by fiscal year, or FY, as follows: FY 2016-17, \$45,531,280; FY 2017-18, \$65,197,302; FY 2018-19, \$98,797,065; FY 2019-20, \$125,652,108; FY 2020-21, \$96,541,971; FY 2021-22, \$47,105,175; and FY2022-23, to September 30, 2022, \$12,249,853. Regional operations' regional infrastructure delivery branch information is used to calculate the amount spent on long-term drinking water advisories, which is updated quarterly by regional operations' community infrastructure branch and regional infrastructure delivery branch to track this information.

In response to part (b), the overall cost of a water or waste-water treatment project varies by community and is based on specific infrastructure needs, such as treatment plants or distribution systems. The average cost associated with lifting an advisory, to date, is approximately \$3.6 million, excluding operations and maintenance costs. Indigenous Services Canada, or ISC, is unable to provide the median cost associated with lifting an advisory because many advisories have been addressed by more than one project, including both long-term and short-term solutions, while some projects address more than one advisory. Additionally, some advisories have been reissued and may have been addressed under an ongoing or new project. Operations and maintenance costs also vary based on the complexity and variability of community water and waste-water systems.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (c), of the long-term advisories lifted so far, three projects addressing three LT DWAs in Lake Manitoba, affecting the band office system, Jordan's principle building system and the public system, have had the lowest cost to date at a total of \$238,000; and a project addressing seven LT DWAs in Shoal Lake #40 affecting the first nation's previous pumphouse systems had the highest cost to date at \$33 million.

With regard to part (d), ISC provides funding for on-reserve public water and waste-water systems to first nations communities. First nations are responsible for the planning, design, procurement, construction, and operation and maintenance of on-reserve infrastructure, and the department does not engage, influence or interfere, as a standard practice, in the design or procurement of products or services. Funding for products and services is provided directly to first nations through the department's regional offices and first nations award contracts to suppliers, contractors and service providers. ISC does not hold or share this third-party contract information.

Question No. 940—Mr. John Brassard:

With regard to cannabis cultivation licences awarded by Health Canada since the legalization of cannabis: (a) how many cultivation licenses have been awarded each year, broken down by province or territory and by type of licence; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by the amount of cannabis authorized to be cultivated; (c) how much cannabis does the government estimate is produced each year by licence holders; and (d) of the amount in (c), how much and what percentage does the government estimate ends up (i) being sold to licensed distributors, (ii) being sold on the black market, (iii) used personally by the licence holder?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are different types of cannabis production authorized under the Cannabis Act and its regulations.

A federal licence is required to cultivate, process and sell cannabis for medical or non-medical purposes. Federal licence holders can conduct related activities such as possession, transportation, storage, destruction, research and development, and sale of bulk cannabis to other federal licence holders, and they supply the commercial market in Canada. More information on these licence holders can be found online at the following heading: Licensed cultivators, processors and sellers of cannabis under the Cannabis Act.

The personal registration program allows for individuals to have authorizations to produce, or to have someone produce on their behalf, a limited quantity of cannabis for their own medical purposes. These individuals are given a medical authorization from a health care practitioner. Access to cannabis for medical purposes is a constitutionally protected right, and this program has been put in place as a result of successive court decisions.

It is important to note that all persons authorized to produce cannabis for medical purposes are only authorized to produce and possess cannabis for their own medical use, or for the individual that they are designated to produce for, and it is illegal for them to distribute or sell cannabis to anyone else. The distribution and sale of illegal cannabis is illegal under the Cannabis Act and subject to law enforcement.

Health Canada publishes data on cannabis for medical purposes online at the following location: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health->

[canada/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/research-data/medical-purpose.html](https://www.canada.ca/services/drugs-medication/cannabis/research-data/medical-purpose.html)

With regard to part (a) of the question, table 2 of the published data on cannabis for medical purposes includes the number of active personal and designated production registrations by month, beginning in October 2018, broken down by province and territory.

With regard to part (b) of the question, table 3 of the published data on cannabis for medical purposes indicates the average authorized amount of dried cannabis for medical purposes associated with active registrations, listed in grams per day. This table includes the average for clients registered with licence holders and the averages in each province and territory for the amounts associated with personal and designated production registrations.

With regard to part (c) of the question, Health Canada does not have data on the amount of cannabis that is produced under personal and designated production registrations as registrants are not required to report on how much cannabis they have grown under their registration.

With regard to part (d)(i), individuals who are authorized to produce a limited quantity of cannabis for their own medical purposes, or those who are designed to produce on their behalf, are not authorized to sell the cannabis they produce. With regard to part (d)(ii), Health Canada does not have access to information regarding how much cannabis is being sold on the black market. With regard to part (d)(iii), individuals are authorized to grow up to a maximum number of plants based on the daily dosage authorized by their health care practitioner and factoring in whether they are growing indoors, outdoors or partially indoors and partially outdoors. Some individuals may choose to grow less than their authorized amount. Registered individuals are not authorized to sell their cannabis to licence holders or any other individuals, as it is solely for the purpose of their own medical use.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 918 to 925, 928, 931 to 934, 936 to 939 and 941 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 918—Ms. Lori Idlout:

With regard to the Specific Claims Research, Development and Submission Program for fiscal years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23, broken down by fiscal year: (a) how many applications for funding were received from (i) claims research units, (ii) bands and First Nations, (iii) Indigenous representative organizations; (b) how much funding was requested by each applicant type in (a); and (c) how much funding has been delivered to each applicant type in (a)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 919—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to requests made under the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), since January 1, 2020, broken down by year: (a) how many requests were received by IRCC; (b) of the requests in (a), in how many instances was (i) the information provided to the requestor within 30 days, (ii) an extension required; and (c) of the extensions in (b) (ii), how many were for a period of over (i) 30 days, (ii) six months, (iii) one year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 920—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): (a) how many IRCC employees or full-time equivalents are currently on "Other Leave With Pay" (code 699); (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by continent and region of the world that the employee works from; (c) how many IRCC employees are currently working from home as opposed to working from an IRCC office location; and (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by continent and region of the world?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 921—Mr. Tom Kmiec:

With regard to deportation orders issued by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or the Canada Border Services Agency, since January 1, 2016, broken down by year the order was issued: (a) how many deportation orders were issued; (b) of the orders in (a), how many (i) resulted in the individual being deported, (ii) have since been rescinded, (iii) are still awaiting enforcement; and (c) what is the average and median amount time between the issuing of a deportation order and the individual being deported?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 922—Mr. Tony Baldinelli:

With regard to the Tourism Relief Fund (TRF): (a) how much of the \$500-million fund has been disbursed to the tourism sector as of October 25, 2022; (b) what are the details of all funding provided through the TRF, including the (i) recipient, (ii) location, (iii) amount provided; (c) how much funding has been distributed, broken down by province or territory and by type of tourism related business; (d) how many applications have been received, broken down by month since the TRF became available; (e) how many applications have been rejected or denied; (f) how many applications are currently being reviewed and finalized; and (g) how much money remains available in the TRF for eligible tourism applicants?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 923—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to the current backlog of applications received by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, broken down by immigration stream and type of application: (a) what is the length of the backlog; and (b) what is the number of backlogged applications?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 924—Mr. Tako Van Popta:

With regard to contracts provided by the government to McKinsey & Company since March 1, 2021, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) what is the total amount spent on contracts; and (b) what are the details of all such contracts, including (i) the amount, (ii) the vendor, (iii) the date and duration, (iv) the description of goods or services provided, (v) the topics related to the goods or services, (vi) the specific goals or objectives related to the contract, (vii) whether or not the goals or objectives were met, (viii) whether the contract was sole-sourced or awarded through a competitive bidding process?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 925—Mr. Brian Masse:

With regard to the Connecting Families initiative announced in budget 2017 and the Connecting Families 2.0 program announced on April 4, 2022, broken down by fiscal year and by province or territory: (a) what was the total number of households deemed eligible for these initiatives; (b) of the households in (a), how many are eligible because they receive (i) the maximum Canada Child Benefit, (ii) the maximum Guaranteed Income Supplement; (c) how many households were advised that they were eligible for this program; and (d) what is the total number of households enrolled in these programs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 928—Mr. René Villeneuve:

With regard to all the communications and correspondence (emails, letters, text messages, Teams messages, etc.) related to the leases and contracts awarded by the federal government in connection with the Roxham Road crisis, since December 1, 2021, broken down by date: (a) what communications and correspondence were exchanged between Pierre Guay, the company Importations Guay Ltée and the company Groupe I.G.L. Inc. and (i) the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, (ii) the Canada Border Services Agency, (iii) the Department of Public Safety, (iv) the RCMP, (v) Public Services and Procurement Canada, (vi) the Office of the Prime Minister; (b) what communications and correspondence were exchanged between Public Services and Procurement Canada and the (i) Department of Public Safety, (ii) Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, (iii) Canada Border Services Agency; and (c) what communications and correspondence were exchanged between the Office of the Prime Minister and (i) Public Services and Procurement Canada, (ii) the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, (iii) the Department of Public Safety, (iv) the Canada Border Services Agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 931—Ms. Leah Gazan:

With regard to the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan, broken down by province and territory, since their respective agreements were announced: (a) how many new childcare spaces have been created; (b) how many early childhood educator jobs have been created; (c) how much of the federal investment has been delivered; (d) to date, what is the average savings per child (i) with a 50 percent average fee reduction, (ii) at \$10 per day; and (e) which jurisdictions have submitted annual progress reports and have made these reports available to the public?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 932—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to the sales of surplus Crown assets (Treasury Board code 4843, or similar), since January 1, 2019: (a) what are the details of all assets sold, including, for each sale, the (i) price or amount sold for, (ii) description of goods, including the volume, (iii) date of the sale; and (b) for each asset in (a), (i) on what date, (ii) at what price, was it originally purchased by the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 933—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to purchases of vehicles by the government since January 1, 2020, excluding vehicles used by either the RCMP or the Canadian Armed Forces: (a) what was the total number and value of vehicles purchased; and (b) what are the details of each purchase, including (i) the make, (ii) the model, (iii) the price, (iv) the number of vehicles, (v) whether the vehicle was a traditional, hybrid, or electric?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 934—Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:

With regard to collective agreements of the public service signed by the government since January 1, 2019, broken down by each collective agreement and by year between 2020 and 2023: what is the (i) detailed cost breakdown, (ii) overall cost increase for the government, of each added benefit or pay increase included in the agreement?

(Return tabled)

*Speaker's Ruling***Question No. 936—Mr. Gary Vidal:**

With regard to Indigenous Services Canada and long-term drinking water advisories: (a) of the 136 advisories lifted between November 2015 and October 2022, how many have been re-issued, and what are the locations of the advisories that were re-issued; (b) have any advisories been lifted and later re-issued multiple times, and, if so, what are the details of each, including the (i) location, (ii) dates lifted, (iii) dates issued or re-issued; (c) on what date was each advisory in (a) (i) lifted, (ii) re-issued; (d) of the 67 drinking water advisories issued between November 2015 and October 2022, what are the details of each, including the (i) location, (ii) date added, (iii) reason for the advisory, (iv) date the advisory was lifted, if applicable; and (e) of the 31 advisories still in effect, what are the locations of each and on what date is each advisory expected to be lifted?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 937—Mrs. Laila Goodridge:

With regard to government interactions with and expenditures related to Canada 2020, since January 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity: (a) what are the details of all expenditures, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) description of goods or services, including the volume, (iv) details of related events, if applicable, including the dates, locations, and the title of events; (b) what are the details of all sponsorships the government has provided to Canada 2020, including the event (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) sponsorship amount, (iv) title, and the purpose of sponsoring the event; and (c) what are the details of all gifts, including free event tickets, received by ministers, ministerial staff or other government officials from Canada 2020, including the (i) date, (ii) recipient, (iii) value, (iv) description of the gift, including the volume and the event date, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 938—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the government's approach to the transferring of prospective technology from Canada to the People's Republic of China: (a) what assessments has the government made of the possibility that technologies developed in Canada in partnership with Huawei could be used to aid human rights violations in China or anywhere else, and what were the results of such assessments; (b) what plans does the government have to ensure that technologies being developed in Canada will not be used by the People's Republic of China for surveillance purposes that would hinder the fundamental freedoms of the citizens of Hong Kong; (c) what assessments has the government made of Huawei's ability to gain access to Canada's technology through joint ventures and labs located in Canada; (d) what assessments has the government made of the possibility of unwarranted cross-border data transfer to the People's Republic of China through products and services provided by firms like Hikvision, Huawei and other Chinese companies, and what were the results of such assessments; (e) what assessments has the government made of the possibility of the People's Republic of China arbitrarily cutting off access to technology required to maintain systems in Canada, and what was the result of that assessment; (f) what assessments has the government made of the possibility of Chinese companies changing routing conditions or using network shaping tactics to increase the likelihood that traffic will move across connections where China has the ability to monitor it, and what were the results of such assessments; (g) what assessments has the government made of the risk to national security associated with hosting one of the stations of the Beidou satellite, and what were the results of such assessments; and (h) what policies and plans does the government have in place for the protection of data transferred via the subsea systems connecting Canada, the east coast of the United States, and England that was updated by Huawei in 2007?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 939—Mr. Blaine Calkins:

With regard to the details of certain contracts being withheld from disclosure, since January 1, 2016: (a) what was the total (i) number, (ii) value, of contracts which had their details withheld due a national security exemption, broken down by year; (b) what is the total (i) number, (ii) value, of contracts which had their details withheld for a reason other than national security, broken down by year and reason for withholding the details; and (c) what is the total (i) number, (ii) value, of contracts related to the government's response to COVID-19 which had their details withheld, broken down by year and reason for withholding the details?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 941—Mr. Tony Baldinelli:

With regard to the Tourism Relief Fund (TRF): (a) how much of the minimum \$50 million of the TRF's regional priorities funding has been disbursed to the indigenous tourism sector as of October 26 and 27, 2022; (b) what are the details of all funding provided through the TRF for indigenous tourism initiatives, including, for each instance, the (i) indigenous ownership status of each recipient, (ii) recipient, (iii) location, (iv) amount provided; (c) how did the federal government verify applicants who claimed indigenous ownership; (d) how much indigenous funding has been distributed in each province or territory, in total, and broken down by type of indigenous tourism related business; (e) how many total indigenous applications have been received by the federal government; (f) how many indigenous applications did the federal government receive for each month since the TRF became available; (g) how many indigenous applications have been rejected or denied by the federal government; (h) how many indigenous applications are still being reviewed; and (i) how much money remains available in the TRF for eligible indigenous tourism applicants?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**SITUATION IN CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS**

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a request for an emergency debate.

I invite the hon. member for Burnaby South to rise and make a brief intervention.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am requesting an emergency debate concerning the state of children's hospitals and health care as it relates to children in our country.

We have heard the serious news that in Ottawa, the nation's capital, the Red Cross had to be called in to assist at the children's hospital. The Red Cross is called when there is a disaster.

In Alberta, trailers have been set up in front of children's hospitals because of the demand and over-crowding in children's hospitals. Children are dying because of respiratory illnesses. We have heard heartbreaking stories from health care professionals about how bad the system is.

We need a debate to lay out how serious the crisis is, to hear the stories and the experiences of health care workers and patients, and to chart a course to protect our health care system. We need to keep it publicly administered and ensure that everyone gets the care they need, particularly children, as they are being impacted hard right now.

That is why I am requesting an emergency debate in the House today.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Burnaby South for his intervention. However, the Chair is not satisfied that his request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders at this time.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE****ALLEGED MISLEADING STATEMENT BY THE MEMBER FOR BURLINGTON**

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege pursuant to Standing Order 48. I would like to speak on that matter at this time.

In order for a question of privilege to be accorded precedence over the orders of the day, two conditions must be met. First, the matter must be brought at the earliest opportunity. Second, the Speaker must be convinced that a *prima facie* breach of privilege has occurred.

With respect to the first condition, the matter arises out of a point of order by the member for Burlington on Thursday, December 8, 2022. In her statement, the member for Burlington said that she heard the member for Haldimand—Norfolk call another member, a Liberal member, an anti-Semite. As the Speaker was not aware of this, the matter was left with the promise that the Hansard would be consulted and the matter would return to the House if necessary. Today, Tuesday, December 13, 2022, is the earliest opportunity for me to bring forth this matter of privilege.

The second condition is that there must be a *prima facie* breach of privilege. The House found that the unjust damaging of a member's good name may constitute a form of breach if it affects the performance of parliamentary duties. In 1987, Speaker Fraser found that the privileges of a member "are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions". That is found at page 112 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

In April 2005, Speaker Milliken ruled that the reputation of a member was unjustly damaged by misleading bulk mail that was mailed into the member's riding.

Also in 2005, a *prima facie* breach of privilege was found with respect to comments made by the Ethics Commissioner to a journalist about the member for Calgary East.

Most profoundly, the misleading statements of the members and ministers are taken very seriously by this House. On December 6, 1978, Speaker Jerome found that a *prima facie* contempt of the House existed when a government official deliberately misled the minister, which impeded the member in his performance of his duties.

Last week, on December 8, after Oral Questions, the member for Burlington raised an issue that impugns my reputation and hinders my credibility in this House and as a member of Parliament. The member for Burlington actually waited until I had left the chamber after Oral Questions, and I was unable to hear the point of order to defend myself against this very serious accusation made against me.

I was preparing to leave the building when I heard my constituency name and the misinformation that this member raised against me. The member accused me of calling the member for Fredericton, whom I do not know personally and have never met, an anti-Semite while she was asking a question to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

This incident shocked me greatly and has shattered my perception of the House as a place of parliamentary decorum and respect. It brings me great concern about how such a divided House can have the capacity to act in the best interests of Canadians. This is the gravity of the situation that compels me to interrupt this House's very important business to raise this question of privilege today.

After the member for Burlington brought the false accusation against me, I returned to my seat and was able to rise to state unequivocally that it did not happen. I believe I was unfairly targeted and harmed by this baseless accusation. Let me explain.

• (1205)

On Wednesday, December 7, 2022, the night before this incident happened, I relaunched the Canadian Parliamentary Israel Allies Caucus, a caucus that was formed 15 years ago with the Hon. Stockwell Day, then leader of the Canadian Alliance party, as its founding chairman. I have been honoured to take the helm as chair of this important caucus that is focused on fighting anti-Semitism.

As chair of the Canadian Parliamentary Israel Allies Caucus, I take this allegation very seriously, because it is my duty to foster respectful dialogue. Indeed, I have had very respectful and productive conversations about Israel and anti-Semitism with members of the House, such as the Green Party member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. We do not always agree, but we have always been respectful and had productive conversations.

Curiously, the next day, after the launch of this caucus, I was falsely accused of calling a Liberal member of the House an anti-Semite. I had no idea why anybody would spew that phrase against another member of the House. In fact, I was not aware of any reason until after this incident occurred. I later learned that the member for Fredericton had left the Green Party, which was led by a Black Jewish woman, and had joined the Liberal caucus. That is my current understanding. I was not aware of this context, who she was, or her history before this incident happened. It therefore would have been impossible for me to have called the member for Fredericton an anti-Semite.

Rather, it has been my personal conviction and value to honour and show respect to all my colleagues in the House at all times. I believe it is vital for constructive debate, for the integrity of the House and for the broader unity of this country. However, what I fear is that this incident highlights the toxic environment the Liberals have brought to this Parliament. It also highlights the level of compositeness that is inherent in their style of government.

It is a tone set from the very top. The government has made the politics of division its playbook. I remind members of the House that it was the Prime Minister who laid the foundation for this kind of unacceptable behaviour by implying that the member for Thornhill, a proud Jewish woman, was standing with Nazis during the trucker convoy protest earlier this year.

The toxic environment fuelled by the Prime Minister is in danger of bringing the House into contempt. We are all required to treat our colleagues in the House with respect, because we are all hon. members. There is nothing honourable about misleading the House and hurling false accusations against its members, and I fear that the member for Burlington deliberately misled this House and knowingly brought forward false information against me.

She chose her words very carefully. She said she specifically heard me say something that it was impossible to have heard, because I did not say it. In fact, I did not utter one word when the member for Fredericton asked her question. I was silent, yet the member for Burlington misled the House by stating that I called the member for Fredericton an anti-Semite, and that she heard me say it.

Therefore, I find it very difficult to come to any other conclusion than that the member for Burlington misled the House deliberately, and if this action goes unpunished, any member of the House could falsely hurl an accusation at another member and say they said something they did not say. This is very serious and poses the risk of bringing the entire House into disrepute.

• (1210)

Consequently, I am going to ask that the member for Burlington be found in contempt of the House. I also ask for, and expect, an apology from the member for falsely accusing me.

If you review the statement made by the member, Mr. Speaker, you will clearly hear her say that if she was mistaken, she would apologize. The question is this. If she heard me say what she said I said, how could she have been mistaken?

It was during that same day that my colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, was penalized and asked to leave the House just minutes before I was accused. I expect equal treatment in the House toward the member for Burlington.

The House is in danger of losing the confidence of the Canadian people, one-third of whom chose not to vote in the last election. Many Canadians are choosing not to even be involved in politics because of the pettiness they see in the House. Its behaviour, as was displayed by the member for Burlington, has fostered the decline of confidence in our democratic institutions.

We must be accountable to the public for the falsehoods that we spread in the House as elected officials and the powerful and negative impact that our statements have not only on the reputations of our members and colleagues in the House, but with respect to the integrity of the entire House of Commons.

That is why this incident rises to the level of justifying a *prima facie* case of a breach of privilege. I am asking that you allow the House, Mr. Speaker, to consider further making determinations as to whether that member, the member for Burlington, should be held in contempt of the House.

Should you find that there is a *prima facie* case, Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion. As a member of the House, I view as my primary duty the duty to safeguard the integrity of the House by challenging acts that compromise its reputa-

Privilege

tion. Misleading the House is a serious act and if it is left unpunished, it will bring the entire House and its members into disrepute.

• (1215)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for her intervention.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry if words were said that offended people on either side. I agree with my colleague that people have lost confidence because of the kind of bickering that goes on. However, I do not know if what has been raised meets the test. I say that because it is not clear what was said. We know that a lot of dumb comments were being made that day on both sides, and that is certainly a question of the confidence that people have, but I do not know if that means we are losing confidence with respect to the ability to govern. This does not meet the test that we are now a divided House that is unable to govern; rather, this is a partisan House.

I am not questioning whether this was or was not said. The member certainly feels that her reputation has been impinged. However, she raised three examples of why this meets the test, and I do not think they do meet it.

The first example was about using bulk mailings to attack someone else. That is using parliamentary resources to deliberately target someone in a riding. That would be an abuse of parliamentary rights, because the resources of the House are being used to attack.

Second, if someone makes comments on the record to a journalist, that is an official statement, which is different than someone heckling. A heckle is something that is ethereal; it may or may not have happened. However, if someone puts something on the record to a journalist, that can be brought back to the House if it is false.

The third example she gave was of a minister deliberately misleading the House when answering a question, because what has been asked in question period is on the record. When it is on the record, a minister must speak truthfully. We have had a number of examples over the years where ministers have misled the House, but we have also had examples where ministers were clearly not telling the truth and the Speaker deferred based on the issue that it may or may not have been a deliberate attempt to mislead.

Therefore, the standard we have for meeting the test for contempt, I think you will find, Mr. Speaker, is very high. However, I remember the other day when this unfortunate incident came to light that the Speaker said he would go back and check the record to clarify if this was said. If it was, then my colleague has a right to go forward. If it was not said or was not picked up, then it is a matter of opinion of what happened back and forth with respect to the heckling. I leave that to the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member. Normally with a question of privilege, there is not necessarily a debate; however, I will allow the hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk to speak.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I believe that my friend is misapprehending the nature of the test. It is clearly set out in the rules. The test is to the reputation.

Everything that I highlighted fundamentally dealt with the member's reputation, and the statements were made officially on the record. The statements are unequivocal, that she said she specifically heard me say that, which is impossible because it was not said. I did not utter any words, and therefore my reputation is impugned.

• (1220)

The Deputy Speaker: I want to thank everyone for their attention to this matter. Notice was given correctly on this issue. The Speaker will come back as early as is practical to rule on this matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.) moved that Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

[English]

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

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to share my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I am truly pleased to be here today to talk about the online news act.

[English]

I want to take a moment to express my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of my friend and colleague, Jim Carr. Jim served Canadians with pride and dedication. He will be profoundly missed.

[Translation]

As I have been saying from the beginning, with Bill C-11, the online streaming act, and with Bill C-18, the current bill, Canada is leading the way. The whole world is watching. On the surface, the bill we are debating now is simply about ensuring fair compensation for Canadian media, but the issue is actually much bigger than that.

It is about protecting the future of a free and independent press. It is about ensuring that Canadians have access to fact-based information. It is about protecting the strength of our democracy, one of the most important legacies that we can leave to future generations, who will see the Internet and new technology play an increasingly larger role in their lives.

[English]

When the Internet first came along, we thought it was amazing. It was, and it still is. We were suddenly able to access information from around the world in a few simple clicks. Suddenly, we had an infinite number of possibilities at our fingertips, and we still do. We all love that.

That being said, it also brought incredible challenges.

The Internet has fundamentally changed the way we create, search and consume content, especially when it comes to news. Right now, our news sector is in crisis: 468 media outlets, newspapers, television, radio stations and news websites, closed between 2008 and last August, 84 of them since the beginning of the pandemic.

Why is this happening? More and more Canadians are turning to digital platforms like search engines and social media networks as gateways to find news. At the same time, the number of Canadians who read their news in print or watch it on TV is rapidly declining.

[Translation]

Right now, the news is largely disseminated by these platforms, but the companies creating that news are not benefiting from it as they should. The impact on our press has been devastating.

The numbers speak for themselves. Since 2010, about one-third of journalism jobs in Canada have disappeared. In the last 12 years, Canadian television stations, radio stations, newspapers and magazines, which depend on advertising revenue, have lost \$4.9 billion, even though online advertising revenue in Canada surpassed \$10 billion in 2021. The lion's share of that \$10 billion went to the tech giants, which pocketed 80% of the revenue. The digital platforms dominate the advertising markets, so they can set their own terms, which are often unfair. In the midst of all this, the media has lost its economic influence. Right now, the digital platforms have absolutely no incentive to fairly compensate the media for its content.

• (1225)

[English]

The status quo is not an option and it never will be. There is absolutely no doubt that a free press, an independent and thriving press, is absolutely essential to our democracy.

We all rely on timely and accurate news to make rational decisions, to counter disinformation and to fully participate in our democracy. In these challenging times, we need it more than ever.

The pandemic gave us a strong reminder that access to quality information could literally save lives.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the global protests inspired by Mahsa Amini are also devastating reminders that we must never ever take our freedom, our democracy, for granted. We must fight for it every day.

Dominant platforms have a responsibility to support news and journalism in our democracies. Tech giants have a choice to make, and I want to work with them. We want to work with them, but we must act now.

[Translation]

What will the online news act do? It will help build a fairer news ecosystem, one that supports a free and independent press, one that will hold the tech giants accountable to Canadians.

How will it work? The act proposes a simple, practical and market-based approach. It is not complicated. Digital platforms will have two options. Either they enter into fair agreements with news media, or they will be forced to negotiate based on specific criteria.

The agreements will have to satisfy seven criteria. First, the digital platform must pay fair compensation to the news media. Second, an appropriate portion of the compensation must be used to support the production of local, regional and national news content. Third, the agreements must show that they defend freedom of expression and journalistic independence. Fourth, the agreements must contribute to the vitality of the news sector. Fifth, the agreements must reflect the diversity of the Canadian news sector, including with respect to language, racialized groups, communities and local characteristics. Sixth, the agreements must support independent local news businesses in Canada. Lastly, the agreements must contribute to the vitality of indigenous news outlets.

[English]

News businesses would also be able to negotiate collectively, giving smaller news outlets more bargaining power. This is extremely important. If platforms and news outlets are unable to reach voluntary agreements, then, and only then, would the act mandate negotiation, with final offer arbitration as a last resort.

Members may say that this model is very similar to the one introduced in Australia, and they are right. However, we have learned from its experience, considered the feedback from stakeholders and adjusted it to fit our Canadian context. As I have said before, Canada is paving the way.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Canadians expect us to act to protect their local journalism and to do so transparently.

This is a complex task. We are hearing concerns and criticisms, and that is normal. Unfortunately, we have also seen misinformation in connection with the bill.

• (1230)

[English]

Our job as a government is not to stand up for the web giants or repeat their talking points like the Conservatives are doing. Our job is to be there for Canadians. It is the right thing to do. We will face challenges, because we are breaking new ground and that is never easy.

[Translation]

The online news act is one piece of a large and complex puzzle that aims to build a safer, more inclusive and more competitive Internet for all Canadians.

I have spoken with my G7 colleagues about all of this and I can say one thing: The whole world is watching Canada right now.

[English]

I hope that together we will rise to the occasion. We must never take our democracy for granted. We must do whatever it takes to preserve it. This is why I am asking all colleagues in the House to support this legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-18 has been introduced at last. I would be remiss if I did not mention from the outset that we have been waiting a long time for a bill to help local journalism and our media. This is a good thing.

One could say it is a shame it took so long. Here it is 2022, and it is not as though web giants showed up just last week. They have been around for years. It took the government a very long time to take action. Now, I can only hope that we will manage to get Bill C-18 passed so it can come into force.

That said, Bill C-18 has some issues, such as the requirement to have two journalists to be eligible for these agreements. Many news media organizations have just one journalist. More and more of our cities and towns, including some in my riding, are becoming media deserts.

Does my colleague really think that Bill C-18 will be enough to resurrect them and bring media back to places that do not currently have any, or are there any further measures his government should take? I think more measures should be taken, but at least the Bloc Québécois will vote for this one.

Government Orders

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I also want to thank the Bloc Québécois for all the rigorous work they did on Bill C-18 and for their support of the bill.

As I have said many times, this bill is not a panacea or a goal in itself, but it is an extremely important tool that essentially calls on the dominant platforms, the ones that control a substantial portion of the market and advertising revenues, to contribute to the production of local content. Many news media outlets, including radio stations, newspapers and television networks, have shut down. The bill needs to ensure that platforms also contribute to the growth of local journalism, especially smaller media outlets in the various provinces and regions, including of course in my colleague's riding. That is why Bill C-18 is so important.

It is not the only one, since the government has brought forward several other measures to support a free and independent press, including the payroll tax credit and other programs.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a number of factors. The massive power of the tech giants is unprecedented. The use of algorithms is really distorting public conversation and there are algorithms that drive people to extremist content.

One of my concerns is that there was a pre-existing problem, where we saw a few of the media giants in Canada buy up many of the small newspapers and fire staff. If we look at any of what used to be great local papers, often the website pages are the same, page after page and newspaper after newspaper. We are not getting local content from those sources. I am concerned, if we are talking about supporting local, that we not just be paying into some of the large media platforms that have literally stripped our local voices out of our local media.

How do we ensure the money is going to create a balanced ecosystem of local and regional identities that are part of the fabric of Canadian conversation?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the seriousness of the work of the NDP on this very important bill. I also want to thank him for the support. What he just said is extremely important. It is why we put that in the conditions. I will repeat what I read in my speech.

[Translation]

The agreements must support local independent news businesses in Canada.

[English]

To get an exemption, a platform, like Google or Facebook for example, needs to also have agreements with local media outlets that are independent. Yes, they will have deals with the big players, smaller players and regional players, but also with the independent players. We put this as a condition because it is fundamental to making sure those small news outlets thrive. We need them in our regions. They are disappearing. We need to put a stop to that. It is why this bill is so important.

• (1235)

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past August we heard that Sing Tao Daily, which is a very well-known Chinese daily newspaper, permanently stopped its printing service. We heard recently that the last remaining one, Ming Pao, has been undergoing some challenges as well.

These Chinese-language Canadian newspapers are very important to the Chinese Canadian community here and for them to receive proper information. For a lot of them, that is the only source of credible information.

I want the minister to talk about how this bill is going to help these ethnic media newspapers, those that are treasured so much by the newcomers and ethnic communities in Canada.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his support, from day one, on this bill. We have had many conversations about this. As I said, there are many criteria the platforms have to respect, and one of them is having deals with a variety of media. That includes ethnic media and media in different languages.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, if I may, I would like to speak about the passing of Jim Carr, a dear friend and someone I have known for a number of years. I would like to extend my condolences, prayers, love and best wishes to his family and friends.

I had the opportunity in 1988 to be elected at the same time as Jim Carr. He was appointed as the deputy leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba. I was the deputy party whip. From virtually day one to what we witnessed just a few days ago in the House, he served as an inspiration to me personally. I genuinely believe that, no matter where Jim went or what he went through in his life, he left a large footprint. He has deep respect in all corners.

I do want to make quick reference to what he said in his last speech in the House, because I think it embodies many of the wonderful attributes Jim brought not only to the chamber but beyond. He stated:

Madam Speaker, I want to start by expressing some deeply held emotion. I love this country, every square metre of it, in English, in French, in indigenous languages and in the languages of the newly arrived.

He went on to say:

In wrapping up this debate, I want to thank the people of Winnipeg South Centre, without whose confidence this would never have been possible.

He concluded his remarks by saying:

It is with gratitude, thanks and a deep respect for this institution that I humbly present this bill to my colleagues in Parliament.

I am very grateful for the fact that the building a green prairie economy act passed. It was something I know Jim spoke at great length about both inside and outside the chamber. It was one of a number of visions he carried, one of a number of ideas that he shared with so many Canadians in many different ways.

I appreciate the opportunity to share those few thoughts.

With respect to Bill C-18, the online news act, this legislation is an absolute must. The minister made reference to Bill C-11 to amend the Broadcasting Act and now Bill C-18, the online news act. These would assist us in modernizing our systems. So much has changed in regard to Internet accessibility, from what it was to what it is today. The Internet is an absolutely essential service today. It continues to grow as an essential service, and we need to overcome some challenges that are there.

As we look to the weeks, months and years ahead, in terms of conquering some of those challenges, one of the biggest ones is getting that fast, reliable Internet service into our rural communities. We have made significant progress over the last number of years, ensuring that it is taking place. I believe we are on the right track and are aggressively pursuing better interconnectivity for all Canadians. It is absolutely essential.

The act itself is something absolutely essential. I am pleased to see it is at the third reading stage. I was listening to what the minister was talking about. One can sense the passion and urgency just by listening to the minister. When we think about Canada and our democracy, one of the fundamental pillars of democracy is to have a free, independent media.

● (1240)

I recall sitting in the Manitoba legislature and seeing at least 10 or 12 members of the media in the gallery. There were representatives from all the major networks and local community newspapers. There might even have been a few others. When I left the Manitoba legislature back in 2010, I might have seen one or two reporters in the media gallery.

When we look at what has happened to our media and our news sources over the last 10 years or so, we have seen a mass reduction in the number of professional journalists. We have seen literally hundreds of news outlets in one form or another close. I do not believe for a moment, and I do not think anyone would even attempt to suggest, that it is nothing more than what we have been witnessing taking place on the Internet. We have seen a tremendous rise in things such as fake news.

The minister made reference to the war in Ukraine, and we talk about what happened during the pandemic. Canadians and people around the world, but particularly here in Canada, are very dependent on that essential service and ensuring what we see and read is factual. One of the ways we can ensure that is by going to the mainstream media.

One of my colleagues made reference to that fact that we have a wonderful ethnic media. I often look at the Pilipino Express, CKJS and numerous Indo-Canadian newspapers. There is the Portuguese community, the francophone community, the indigenous community and all of those different independent news outlets. For our community newspapers, whether rural or urban, there are things we can do to ensure they continue to be independent and continue to be supported, rightfully so, because of the Internet.

These are some tangible examples. Google and its search engines have benefited from mainstream media and from our media outlets. All the work has been done at one level, which is the creativity and reporting, and Google has directly benefited from that. There is ad-

vertising on YouTube, and in social media there are things like Facebook. The amount of advertising done through Facebook has been estimated to be, in terms of the advertising dollars going into media, as high as 80% in those giant companies.

This legislation would ensure, by utilizing the CRTC, that we can level the playing field. We could ensure that, for the information being conveyed by these giants like Google, Facebook and YouTube, they are paying their fair share. There would be an obligation in the legislation. By doing that, there would be better, more appropriate and more fair compensation for those media outlets. It would ultimately ensure that we have a healthier and stronger independent media. That is good for Canada and good for our democracy. It is the type of legislation that is necessary to get us back on track with regard to what we have been witnessing over the last number of years with the reduction of news media.

● (1245)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the member's speech. He often speaks in the House.

He mentioned free, independent media. That is a good thing. He then talked about fake news. It made me think about dad jokes we have all heard. One person laughs at a dad joke and the next person finds nothing funny about that dad joke. It just shows that we all hear things differently.

When we come to the political world, we have different views on things. This can result in our listening to certain news, then not liking it or thinking it is fake, but another person might have the opposite opinion.

This bill would impose a board, which is appointed by the government, to arbitrate things. How is it possible for that board, which is representing the government, to properly adjudicate different points of view?

We know that people have different points of view. Is this not going to promote one point of view? Is it not going to begin to discriminate against certain organizations and potentially force the government's view on people and on the news media?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what is taking place in the legislation is a form of potential arbitration that will ensure a more level playing field, with the social media giants and the large search engines, which benefit from the local news outlets, sharing advertising dollars, as an example.

On the issue of fake news, Canadians want a high level of comfort regarding certain traditional news outlets that have a history of reporting and have built that confidence. If we look at the pandemic, there was fairly clear evidence that getting the vaccine was safe. However, there were some within the industry who were propagating or promoting that it was a terrible thing.

At the end of the day, I see the legislation as ensuring that those agencies, like CTV or radio stations, have fair compensation that they are not getting today, yet their material is being utilized.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to enlighten us a little.

It is our understanding that with Bill C-18, major content providers, major news outlets, will have the power to negotiate with major platforms. That might work.

However, there are also the small media outlets to consider. In my riding, one newspaper has lost all of its journalists over the past few years, mainly during the pandemic, because advertisers shifted to the major platforms. One small radio station is also struggling to survive because advertisers have left. These people are worried because they belong to small groups, not major groups. I am talking about a small newspaper and a small radio station.

How does Bill C-18 ensure that our small regional advertisers, our small regional newspapers, will be able to hold their own in the kind of high-stakes bargaining that will take place under Bill C-18?

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, something that the legislation would actually do is require that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, to publish a list of digital news intermediaries and news businesses that are eligible under the online news act.

Throughout the legislation, it talks about the CRTC's role with the overall principle and objective of ensuring that we have a higher sense of fairness in regard to revenue and how that revenue could be distributed. Hopefully, the industry is able to do it in a consensual manner. If not, there are ways we can ensure it does.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that 450 news outlets in Canada have closed since 2008. At least one-third of Canadian journalism jobs have disappeared. The member spoke a bit about this. We know it is vital that Bill C-18 includes small-sized media outlets. However, we are hearing from unions, like CUPE national, for example, raising concerns of layoffs. When the NDP proposed the amendment in clause 29 to require news organizations to publish a list of the number of journalists employed, the member's party voted against it.

Can the member explain to the chamber today why that is?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would recognize that we have seen a dramatic decrease. Some have estimated it as being as high as the mid-40% of journalists losing their jobs in a relatively short period of time. The government is very much aware of it and it is one of the reasons we brought forward the legislation. I do believe that, if not directly then indirectly, it would continue to support a critically important industry in Canada.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to request unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Saskatoon West.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to represent my community of Kelowna—Lake Country and speak to Bill C-18,

which proposes a regime to regulate digital platforms and act as an intermediary in Canada's new media ecosystem.

In order to understand what this really means, it is like coming across a newspaper left in a coffee shop, waiting room or staff lunchroom. Dozens or hundreds of people might read that paper throughout the day, even though it was only purchased one time. Should the readers be required to send money to the newspaper each time it is read? Of course they should not. That would be ridiculous. However, the outline of what I just said forms the basis of this Liberal bill, Bill C-18.

The Liberals claim that Bill C-18 would uphold the survival of small community publications and newspapers. The government and the largest organizations say they are looking out for the little guys, but in most scenarios it always seems to be the little guy who ends up losing.

Bill C-18 would allow the news industry to collectively bargain for revenue from social media platforms that the government says are “stealing” journalistic content through users sharing links with friends, family and followers. However, like much of the current government's supposed small business policies, it would be the most prominent companies that would benefit the greatest. The more content they put online, the more money they would make with no effort.

The notion that linking articles is the equivalent of theft has already been ruled out by the Supreme Court of Canada. Justice Abella wrote in *Crookes v. Newton*, a decision ruling that says links do not carry commercial value. She said:

Hyperlinks are, in essence, references, which are fundamentally different from other [aspects] of “publication”....

A hyperlink, by itself, should never be seen as “publication” of the content to which it refers.

Conservatives believe in a robust local media ecosystem in this country. Should a Canadian newsmaker or collective group of small publications seek to negotiate with Facebook or Google for revenue, they could do so. Smaller organizations are always more nimble. We see this whether it is a municipality versus the federal government or a local credit union versus a bank.

The news industry is in transition with publishing methods and business models. Like its sister regulation in Bill C-11, this bill seeks to reject that kind of innovation in favour of a one-size-fits-all approach and enrich old, outdated and predominantly large organizations currently being outrun by technological change. Also, just like in Bill C-11, the Liberal government has called upon what it appears to view as its most agile, efficient and modern government agency, in their minds, to do this: the CRTC.

The government's prescription of new and continuing roles to the CRTC has stretched its mandate beyond all recognition and ability, and there are many questions on definitions in this legislation and how it would be implemented.

The CRTC is an agency that took over a year to produce a three-digit mental health number. The CRTC had no proactive oversight or risk assessing of telecoms that potentially could have mitigated the massive Rogers outage.

Its 500-plus employees are already charged with the management of large portfolios, including cellular networks, data plans, advertising standards, television services, radio broadcasting, closed captioning, described video, satellite content and now, with Bill C-18, the entire Canadian online news and digital industries. If Bill C-11 is passed, the CRTC will also be asked to measure the Canadian-ness of 500 hours of uploaded videos posted to YouTube alone every minute.

The government originally tried to shy away from the CRTC's role in this legislation. Now, we hear that the heritage minister is openly promising to “modernize” CRTC so it can regulate Big Tech” with an unexplained \$8.5-million price tag. Bill C-18 would massively stretch the already massive mandate of the CRTC, which one could argue it is already not fulfilling. Peter Menzies, the former CRTC vice-chair, states, “It seems like they [Canadian Heritage] want to have the most expansive, most intrusive, most state-involved legislation in the world in everything they do.”

The CRTC would have a central role in the government's prescribed arbitration process, starting with selecting the pool of arbitrators and ending with the ability to impose settlements outright. The large digital platform negotiations with every Canadian media outlet needs to be completed within six months or then forced into arbitration.

• (1255)

Can the government credibly claim that such an arbitration process would favour small regional publications over giants such as Torstar, Postmedia, Bell, Rogers or the CBC? No, it cannot, which is why, in a technical briefing with reporters, the Minister of Canadian Heritage's staff acknowledged that the largest beneficiary of this legislation would be the CBC, a news organization the government publicly funds.

Here is how it would work: In this legislation, news outlets would be paid based on content shared or streamed. All the state-owned CBC would have to do would be to livestream 24 hours a day on the likes of Facebook or other platforms, and it would be raking in the cash. Small producers do not necessarily have the content or capacity to do this. This, in fact, would rank up these large organizations even higher due to the amount of content they would put on social media, and it would be funded by the structure of the legislation. The CBC's advertising revenue is low compared to its massive budget, so this would be an easy way to bring in the cash with literally no effort.

We have heard the government cite Australia as the model to follow. However, our research shows complaints have been made by small media publications in Australia about its news media bargain-

ing laws, the same laws the Canadian government is seeking to copy here.

Government Orders

In a submission to the Australian senate economics committee, the Country Press Australia association, a bargaining group of small regional publications, precisely the kind of group the large media organizations and government say would likely emerge to represent smaller publications in Canada, said of Australia's own Bill C-18, “The Bill is weighted to large media organisations and does not take into account the ongoing need for a diversified media across Australia.” It also said it “could in fact lead to an outcome that is opposite to the intention of the bill, i.e. a reduction in media diversity”.

I am very concerned with the unintended consequences that would be created by this bill, especially with the largest of organizations and the Canadian state-owned media being the biggest benefactors. Sports media companies such as The Athletic have found innovative ways to uphold local sports coverage under the umbrella of an international publication.

Copying Australia's homework would not help us very much if it has already gotten a failing grade. Former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd testified that Australia's legislation would be “enhancing the power of the existing monopoly”. Joshua Benton, the founder of Harvard University's Nieman Journalism Lab, called it “bad media policy”. The inventor of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, said laws like Australia's could make the internet as we know it “unworkable”. Vint Cerf, another founding father of the Internet, once attributed its astonishing economic success to two words: “permissionless innovation”.

Regulations such as Bill C-18 are a permission, and they are the swiftest killer of innovation and the greatest tool of existing media powers to kill competition. We can forget Internet searching as we know it. Calling upon the threadbare CRTC to enforce a dysfunctional Australian-like media policy would do nothing to help the small media markets in places such as my community of Kelowna-Lake Country. It would make permanent the actions of the government to bail out legacy media giants from their own business model mistakes and lack of nimbleness.

If the government was so interested in ensuring that small, regional and rural media have their share of ad revenue, it should stop pumping millions into mainstream media, which gives them the ability to reduce advertising rates and remove \$1.3 billion a year from state-owned media. If it is so valued by the Canadian public, it should be able to attract advertisers and fundraise, just as other public broadcast organizations do around the world.

The biggest winners in this legislation would be the biggest media outlets, which is why we see them advocating so strongly for this. In my life experience, anytime I hear the largest of organizations say they are looking out for the little guys and they have their best interest, it is always the little guy who ends up losing.

Government Orders

● (1300)

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I salute my colleague and commend her on her speech.

Bill C-18, which was introduced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, sets out which major platforms will have to negotiate with local and regional news businesses so that they get their fair share. It is important to understand that the web giants are taking content from regional and local media outlets and sharing it on their platforms without paying royalties.

The Bloc Québécois fully supports this bill. Of course, we expected it to be introduced sooner, but it is never too late.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. We noticed that the digital companies targeted by this bill are the large, dominant platforms in Canada. This bill mainly targets Facebook and Google. However, we know that other platforms are using the content of local media outlets. Why then does this bill target only Facebook and Google?

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the possibility of continuing these negotiations in order to broaden the scope of the bill to include platforms other than Facebook and Google.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the premise of this. In fact, it will perpetuate even greater success for the large media companies.

For the small media independent organizations in communities across this country to even be at the table, they will need to form some type of a collective to negotiate some type of arrangement moving forward, so therein lies the issue. As I mentioned, for a lot of the bigger players, the way this is perpetuating would actually help them considerably more than it would the small independent media organizations.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not going to suggest the CRTC is the best avenue to deal with the digital giants. I listen to my hon. colleague and, when she talks about these big media companies, she is missing the fundamental fact that the biggest media company in the world is Facebook, with \$82.4 billion in ad revenue.

The other fact of this ad revenue is that Facebook falsified its metrics, which anywhere else would be fraud, but when one has monopolistic control, people had no choice. Facebook is actually deciding what people see through the algorithms. We can get an extreme right-wing marginal publication such as Breitbart be one of the highest read on Facebook because of the algorithms. It is the editor. It is deciding what is being seen. It has falsified its metrics. Its profits are unprecedented.

I do not see why the Conservative Party is bending itself backward to defend a company such as Facebook, which has shown such dismal commitments to human rights, democracy and working for innovation, other than making Mark Zuckerberg, one of the richest people on the planet.

● (1305)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about here has to do with online media, and this has to do especially with small independent media in communities all across this country. That is what this legislation is a lot about. Also, it is about giving the CRTC sweeping powers.

I was happy to hear the member say that he was not a huge fan of maybe some of how the CRTC operates. A big part of my speech was that we would be giving an organization sweeping powers. Already, it is questionable whether it is meeting some of its mandate, and it would have these sweeping powers to make all kinds of new regulations and have a huge arbitration process without really knowing what it is going to mean. That is extremely concerning, especially for the small independent news media organizations.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague would quickly answer a question about the arbitration process she just referenced. Is it possible for nine members appointed by the minister of the government to be truly free and fair in their decision-making? I ask her opinion on that.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, that is extremely concerning. We have seen, even in other appointments and many different ways with the government, how it is questionable how non-partisan and how independent some of those appointments are. It is extremely concerning to have taken it out of a completely non-partisan separate organization and put it right into the minister's office to make appointments. That is extremely concerning, and it is what this legislation would do.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to wish everyone in this chamber and all of the people of Saskatoon a merry Christmas and a very happy new year.

This is the time of the year that many of us get to spend with family, friends and other loved ones. For some of us, it is truly a joyous season full of wonderment. For others, the holiday season reminds us of people lost and of relations lost. It is a hard time for those individuals.

As we all reflect on the past year and look forward to the next year, I want to offer these words of hope to all of the good folks throughout Saskatoon. May 2023 bring new beginnings, peace, good health and prosperity to members and their families.

As the member of Parliament representing the west side of Saskatoon, I will continue to work hard to raise up our city, our neighbourhoods and each of us to the best that we can be in 2023.

As we get into these last days of 2022, Bill C-18 has landed back in the House of Commons for its final round of debate before being shipped off to the other place. This legislation is one of three Internet censorship laws that the NDP-Liberal government has brought in since the last election.

Its goal is to ensure that voices other than its own, and news stories it does not like, are silenced in our democracy. I had the chance to speak to Bill C-11, which would have given almost dictator-like powers to a branch of the federal government to decide what people post on Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and other Internet platforms.

If the content is not in line with the NDP-Liberal messaging of the day, algorithms would be manipulated to remove that content from one's feeds and searches. Members do not have to take my word for it. The head of that very government agency admitted as much to the Senate committee when it took up that legislation. What is worse, the NDP-Liberals just shrug their shoulders because that was the very point of the legislation.

This legislation, Bill C-18, is the second Internet censorship law that the NDP-Liberals are forcing down the throats of Canadians. Simply put, this law would force Facebook, Google and other Internet companies to prioritize CBC and other government-approved news outlets on our feed over the smaller alternative news media platforms that may be more critical of the NDP-Liberal view of the world.

The third piece of legislation currently before this Parliament is Bill C-27, which I hope to address in the new year. That legislation is the so-called digital privacy legislation, which is a laughable topic from an NDP-Liberal government that tracked millions of Canadian's cell phones during the pandemic without their consent and has been responsible for the personal data of hundreds of thousands of Canadians ending up on the dark web.

The truth is that the Internet and social media are an integrated part of our lives today. Until now, they have been an unfettered part of our lives. Canadians use social media platforms to access and share a variety of different news articles and information among colleagues, family and friends. Canadians I talk to are very worried that these three laws will limit their ability to have open conversations online.

For legislation that is supposedly about promoting online news, the NDP-Liberals and their allies in the CBC and traditional media have been spreading a lot of misinformation about it. The current government wants to have Bill C-18 so it can use algorithms to keep information it does not like away from our feeds and Internet searches.

Bill C-18 essentially grants the government the ability to force online platforms, such as Facebook and Google, to sign deals under the duress of government penalty to promote government-approved content. These commercial agreements do not just have to be acceptable to the platform and the news organization but to the government as well.

The government agency in charge of implementing Bill C-18's censorship provisions is called the CRTC, and it would oversee every step of this process to ensure they are satisfactory to the NDP-Liberals. Surprise, surprise, all nine members of the CRTC are appointed by the Liberal Minister of Heritage.

I am not the only one seeing past the government's spin on this. Outside experts such as Michael Geist, who is the research chair in Internet and e-commerce law at the University of Ottawa, said this at the heritage committee in relation to Bill C-18, "Bill C-18's dan-

gerous approach...regulates which platforms must pay in order to permit expression from their users and dictates which sources are entitled to compensation."

The former vice-chair of the CRTC, Peter Menzies, told the committee how the government can influence news companies:

You could end up with companies wishing to please the CRTC or the CRTC feeling pressure to make sure money in newsrooms is spent on certain topics, and they might be good topics, but it's frankly none of their business to have.... An independent press spends its money on whatever it wants.

Who are we to believe, the independent experts or the CBC, which is already in the pockets of the NDP-Liberal government?

A question that comes to mind is who benefits the most from this Internet censorship? It certainly is not the average everyday user of the Internet who is logging into their feed to keep up with the news. It is definitely not the independent journalists trying to make a living and provide accurate news. It could be no other than the legacy media, more specifically the folks at the CBC.

● (1310)

The CBC and other legacy news organizations have been complaining for years about their inability to keep up with the modern online news media. Then they proceeded to lobby the government for \$600 million in bailouts. CBC, for example, rakes in \$1.2 billion in federal funding and receives \$250 million in combined TV and online advertising revenue, yet it still struggles to survive in the Canadian market, as it cannot keep up with the modern tech era.

This is where Bill C-18 comes to play. The government is looking to tip the scales further in CBC's favour. The government has decided that it is a bad look to continue giving more billion-dollar bailouts to the CBC, so now the government is forcing tech companies like Facebook and Google to make NDP-Liberal approved commercial deals to fund the legacy media.

Instead, the legacy media should be competing on the open market, as many independent journalists are doing as we speak. At the end of the day, online platforms and Canadian taxpayers should not be footing the bill if the legacy media is unable to keep up with the times.

Let us talk about how this legislation would affect the news Canadians access.

Government Orders

Government Orders

Bill C-18 would prohibit digital intermediary operators from giving what the CRTC determines as “preference” in news ranking. That sounds relatively fine, does it not? No, it is not. With this unclear language added into the bill, just about anyone could call up the CRTC to contest their ranking and be brought up to the top of any search engine or platform.

I think this gets to the heart of the matter. Trying to regulate content on the Internet will always introduce bias into the conversation. At best, it is an innocent hassle. At worst, it can be used by the government to suppress real information and control people. In my view, the risk of the worst case is not worth it. As they say, the juice is not worth the squeeze.

Let us talk about Google, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter and the Internet in general.

First let me say that Elon Musk's recent purchase of Twitter has shaken up Silicon Valley and the status quo in big tech quite a bit and has perhaps breathed some fresh air into what was becoming a stale industry. His commitment to free speech and his willingness to stand up to the powers that be show how big tech can directly influence elections or stay neutral, as they should.

Of course, in Canada, this legislation has the potential to tip the scales toward the NDP-Liberals during elections. Big tech recognizes that and they do not want to be tools of censorship in Canada or anywhere else.

Last spring, I met the executives of Google and it was an eye-opening experience. They are concerned. They worry that Bill C-18 does not have the tools to provide relief to smaller news outlets. After all, it was not the small independent news outlets that wanted this in the first place. It was the large media networks that lobbied for this to get done and that are now foaming at the mouth to get this legislation rammed through Parliament.

Members should not kid themselves. Google is not just afraid for its bottom line. It is a multi-billion dollar business and will absorb the costs associated with this legislation. Its real fear is about freedom of speech on the Internet. They may run worldwide organizations, but the Silicon Valley boys are still hackers at heart, living out of their mothers' basements playing Halo, sharing on Twitch and posting on Reddit. Google is concerned that the government is making it more difficult for Canadians to access quality information.

I also met with Amazon World Services in the summer, and we talked about a variety of issues related to this legislation. I can tell members that Google and Amazon do not just meet random opposition members from Saskatoon unless they have real concerns about where this country is going. It is Canadians who are the best judge of what content they want to consume, not some government bureaucrats.

We have seen Canadian content creators thrive in an open and competitive market, one being Hitesh Sharma, a Punjabi hip-hop artist from Saskatchewan who built up a large following on TikTok and later made it to the Junos. He did not need the CRTC to give him a path to fame.

It is very important that we allow our creators, whether they are influencers or media, to flourish against the top creators in the world. That is not to say we should not support our local media when we can, but we should recognize the talent we already have, all of whom have succeeded without the involvement of big government interference.

With Bill C-18, local Canadian content creators could be squeezed out of our newsfeeds and replaced with the CBC. I guess that is fine for the few people who tune into CBC on a regular basis, but for most people, especially younger people, the desire is for a free and open Internet where we can search for whatever we want, free of interference by government or anyone else. That is what Canadians want.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suspect there is widespread support in recognizing that tech giants, whether it is Google, YouTube or Facebook, which really dominates the social media industry, get billions of dollars in revenue every year, and a lot of their sourcing comes from news agencies that are finding things difficult. There is a sense of unfairness there. This legislation would ensure there is a higher sense of fairness. The creators and news agencies are reporting on the news, and their content is being utilized by these giants, which are not paying anything for it.

Do the member and the Conservative Party believe that Google, Facebook and other giant conglomerates have a responsibility to pay for some of the creative journalism we are seeing in our communities?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, providing funding to all organizations big or small is a laudable goal, and it is something we need to work on, but that is not what I see here. What I see in this legislation is too much risk. The government would insert itself into this process at the risk of being able to essentially contaminate the well, as they say. There is too much ability here for the government, and frankly any future government, to manipulate things and coerce through very subtle means or very direct means. That is the concern I have. I do not think this is the right approach.

• (1320)

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I can agree with my colleague on the fact that the CRTC is a stale, last-century institution that is not equipped to deal with today's reality. However, I do not share his obsession with CBC/Radio-Canada.

That being said, there is currently an imbalance in the market between David and a few Goliaths. This imbalance contributes to cultural flattening by allowing one type of news to dominate. I would like to know whether my colleague recognizes the imbalance of power. Could he explain to me what he will do to mitigate the consequences of this imbalance, which is having an adverse effect on culture?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, we have a wonderful thing in the free market, and we need to allow companies to flourish. I mentioned one example from Saskatoon, and there are many more.

We have a radio station in Saskatoon, 650 CKOM. John Gormley runs a show there, and he does a great job. He has managed to figure out how to use social media to his advantage. I am quite certain they make a great deal of money from their programs, and it is possible for this to be done.

Sure, there needs to be a way to share revenue, but as I said, the concerns here come back to control and the way the government has allowed its fingers to be in this process with an ability to promote or unpromote certain things based on the whims of the Government of Canada.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly found what was said very entertaining. I do not like to go down the dark wells of conspiracy minds very often, but it was nice to see how the Conservatives look when they look internally.

The member talked about Elon Musk and what a great breath of fresh air he is. The guy has almost crashed one of the biggest platforms in the world in the space of two weeks.

What is so fresh about Elon Musk? Well, there is the rise of anti-Semitism. Jeez, that is a breath of fresh air. There is Vladimir Putin's troll armies against the people of Ukraine. What a breath of fresh air that is for backbench Conservatives. Then, of course, Elon Musk wants to jail the United States' most illustrious doctor for the work he did in preventing the pandemic. I bet the Conservatives just love that. What a breath of fresh air that is. If only we could go after medical science.

Then, on the other hand, we have the big, bad CBC running everything. I thought it was George Soros doing this. I thought it was Klaus Schwab. When the leader of the Conservative Party said he was going to go after cryptocurrency, replace the Bank of Canada and shut down the CBC, I did not know it was because of the conspiracy that the CBC controls everything.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of a very simple thing: dad jokes. If we hear a dad joke, one person likes it, but the next person does not even find it funny, which is my point here. We cannot allow one person or one group of people to control what we see on the Internet. We have to allow a broad cross-section. Some people will like one thing; some people will like another. Some things might be true; some things might not be. However, as soon as we try to arbitrate those things, we get ourselves into trouble.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will begin my speech by saying that on entering the House of Commons earlier, I felt a twinge of sadness at seeing the bouquet of flowers placed on the desk of our departed colleague, the member for Winnipeg South Centre. Last week, I was lucky enough to have the privilege of shaking his hand after his very moving speech on the bill that he was sponsoring.

The bouquet of flowers placed on his desk today is a lovely tribute to him. I think that the thoughts of all members of the House, especially my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, are with Mr. Carr's family, to whom we offer our deepest condolences.

We are now at third reading of Bill C-18. Earlier, I was listening to my Conservative colleague answer questions after his speech, and I noted that the Conservatives, in good or bad faith, are lumping Bills C-11 and C-18 together. Perhaps it is a matter of opinion or belief, I am not sure. They are lumping them together using the same unfounded, fallacious and somewhat warped arguments. One claim in particular is that, through these bills, the government is going to be able to control the news, entertainment content, music content, and so on that Quebecers and Canadians consume on the Internet.

Perhaps it is time people heard the truth. I am not saying that there is no need to discuss these issues, because they are concerning, but it should be done using facts, not just the spin coming from those who oppose regulating the companies that have been running the show online for too long already.

Let me summarize briefly. Since day one, Facebook, Twitter and Google, but especially Facebook and Google, of course, have been appropriating news articles and reports without compensating the authors, media outlets or journalists. For too many years, these digital giants have been instrumental in methodically dismantling our traditional media. They may have done so involuntarily, but because they are corporations whose sole purpose is to generate revenue, they can hardly be blamed for doing so by any means at their disposal.

That is why the time has come to set up a framework to govern these sectors, which can no longer develop in a healthy way for everyone involved. A legislative framework is a must. We need rules. Contrary to what some of our colleagues would like, it cannot be a wild west. Some advocate for a free market, free access, and no rules governing these web giants, but the impact on some people is major and, in some cases, devastating.

Web giants like Facebook and Google have appropriated advertising revenue from local advertisers. This revenue is often the bread and butter of regional media and small weekly papers in small rural communities. In fact, it may even be their only means of keeping the lights on, paying their staff and journalists and providing high-quality news. In short, it may be their only means of survival.

It is estimated that web giants appropriate, or essentially swipe, 80% of advertising revenue, to the detriment of our regional media. Those web giants have never been asked to pay anything. Their revenue has never been taxed. They are not held to account. Even though it took some time, I think that we need to commend the government for taking the initiative, even at this late stage, to legislate and put its foot down. Oddly enough, there is only one party in the House that opposed this initiative and stood by its point of view throughout the study of Bill C-10, which became C-11, and of Bill C-18, which is currently before us.

Government Orders

There are dozens of media outlets, dozens of small newspapers that closed their doors over the past few years because of this crisis. Since I took office as the member for Drummond and as the communications critic for my party, not a week has gone by that news media stakeholders have not expressed their concerns to me.

● (1325)

One weekly newspaper in a region represented by a colleague wanted to be reassured. I was asked where we in the Bloc Québécois stood and what we were doing. I was asked if they would get what was rightfully theirs and if we would create a more balanced market. That is what Bill C-18 does. This is not at all about controlling what people see on the Internet. We will refute those lies. I will do that a little later.

Let me digress for a moment to talk about newspapers. Everyone has noticed this. My children are puzzled by the thing that lands on our doorstep every Saturday. I renewed my subscription to a newspaper that is delivered every Saturday, and my kids ask me what it is. The media world has changed. Printed newspapers are rarely seen anymore. Until very recently, the *Journal de Montréal* was the only newspaper that still distributed a paper version seven days a week. Quebecor announced last week that it could no longer continue publishing print editions seven days a week beginning in 2023. It is going to stop delivering the paper version on Sundays. The entire industry is changing. News organizations keep us informed and up to date, but in order to keep doing that, they will need to have the best possible resources and take advantage of the technology that is becoming the primary means of transmitting information, whether we like it or not.

Quebec and Canadian news media moved very quickly in 2020 to ask the government and elected officials for regulations. At the time, the government had commissioned the report "Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act". No one remembers the real name. It has been referred to so often by its other name that it is now known as the Yale report.

It was an excellent working document that suggested that part or all royalties should contribute to the production of news. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, exacerbating the difficulties facing news media, and that increased the urgency for and the pressure put on the government by these businesses to follow Australia's lead and put in place a code or legislation similar to what was enacted there. Paul Deegan, president and CEO of News Media Canada, said at the time that the negotiating framework with arbitration, inspired by the Australian approach, is the best solution to the news media crisis.

Initially, the Bloc Québécois proposed an idea that I still think is excellent. It was not what the industry wanted. It was not in keeping with the existing consensus within news media groups. We proposed taking a percentage of the web giants' revenues. The exact amount had not been determined, but around 2%, 3% or 4% of their revenues earned on Canadian soil would have been used to create a fund from which we could have generated royalties based on needs that we consider essential, such as protecting regional news companies, which are often the most affected by the arrival of web giants.

The industry preferred something inspired by the Australian model. I think that I speak for my 31 colleagues in the Bloc when I

say that we are committed to representing the people who elected us. We will not go against the will of those we want to represent, so we went with what was proposed, namely legislation inspired by what was done in Australia.

Bill C-18, the online news act, requires digital platform businesses, that is, digital news intermediaries, to negotiate agreements with news businesses. That is a pretty broad summary. From there, we had to determine which news businesses are eligible to negotiate, which created an interesting challenge. In clause 27 of the bill, eligibility for news businesses relies mostly on fiscal criteria, the same criteria used to determine eligibility for various journalism assistance programs.

● (1330)

All of this is reasonable, but there are some gaps.

News businesses eligible for compensation were originally required, and still are, to be designated as qualified Canadian journalism organizations, or QCJOs, under subsection 248(1) of the Income Tax Act. A non-Canadian company could also qualify if it meets certain criteria of a QCJO, namely, if it regularly employs two or more journalists in Canada, operates in Canada, actively produces news content, and is not significantly engaged in producing content that promotes the interests or reports on the activities of an organization.

That said, the bill also excludes magazines, companies that make specialized news content. For example, companies that publish automotive or sports magazines are not considered eligible under Bill C-18.

The Bloc Québécois succeeded in getting what I felt was an essential amendment made to Bill C-18. We want to protect news, but news evolves. The definitions of news and journalism have been watered down in recent years. There seems to be a lack of understanding, some difficulty distinguishing journalism from opinion pieces, columns and editorials. I felt it was very important to make that distinction.

In essence, what we want to protect is journalism, journalistic coverage, news, especially regional news, and weekly papers and small media outlets, which are vulnerable. These tend to be in the regions we represent that are more rural and located outside of major centres. Their reality is very different from that of big media outlets.

We felt it was important to have criteria relating to the quality of journalism, so we proposed an amendment after consulting with media organizations, such as the Quebec Press Council. We suggested adding the requirement that a news organization be a member of a recognized journalistic association or that it follow the code of ethics of a recognized journalistic association or that it have its own code of ethics that adheres to basic journalistic principles.

This is where the basic criteria and the principles of journalism need to be defined. We must not be too precise in doing so, because trying to be too precise can sometimes leave the door open to interpretation, which we do not want to see in this kind of legislation.

The three basic principles of journalism are as follows. The first is independence, which means avoiding conflicts of interest, ideological influences and commercial policies. The second is rigour, which refers to the accuracy of information, impartiality and the presentation of balanced and complete information. The third is fairness, which refers to respect for privacy and dignity, the absence of discrimination, openness to the right of reply and prompt correction of errors. These are the three basic criteria for journalism.

In the discussions on our amendment, some people raised certain fears. People wondered what would happen if, for example, a particular media outlet expressed an opinion that was not in line with what the government wanted to hear.

Once again, I want to come back to the difference between journalism produced in a newsroom that applies these fundamental criteria from the outset and opinion journalism, such as columns and editorials, that are based on opinion, a bias or a biased or different point of view. They certainly do not constitute impartial news coverage or information.

● (1335)

That gave rise to some interesting discussions both in society and in the journalism community, which is an ever-evolving environment.

It was very important for us that this amendment be included in Bill C-18. It was important that these rigorous criteria, namely the basic principles of journalism, be included in the eligibility criteria for companies that can benefit from the bill's legislative framework.

Bill C-18 does not solve all the problems. I think everyone knows that. There are still major challenges facing news organizations, as is also the case for the cultural industry and any business working in an industry affected by web giants like GAFAM. That basically means every business because these days pretty much everyone is affected by the web giants.

What will have to be done to again protect regional news media? The government will have to continue supporting them and maintaining its programs.

Clearly, this is not an easy task, and this bill will not suddenly and magically address all the problems the industry has been grappling with over the past 25 years. The sector still needs to be given a huge amount of financial support through existing programs, which will have to be enhanced, tweaked and made permanent. That remains to be done.

Government Orders

What also remains to be done is to see what will happen to specialty magazines, such as consumer, automotive or sports publications. We will have to see how these magazines, which publish content shared by digital intermediaries, will fare in the digital world. We will have to watch them and possibly support them.

We will have to ensure that we stop believing all the lies and disinformation and that at some point we use common sense. We will have to stop believing everything we hear.

This is not a dictatorship or a banana republic, despite what we may think from time to time when we see some of the programs managed by the government. I do not have an example. If I gave examples, I would be here all night.

No one is going to start controlling what people can and cannot watch online. When we talk about giving our media, our companies, a place, that simply means rebalancing a market that clearly disadvantages our local businesses. Hundreds of our news businesses and media outlets have shut down. Billions of dollars in advertising revenue for those companies have been lost.

That is what this legislation seeks to correct. In that sense, it is very good. This is not going to penalize Google and Facebook. Believe me, they are not short on money.

The other lie or disinformation—whatever we call it—is that the lion's share will go back to the major industry players, while the little guy will be left behind. There is no set amount. Nowhere does it say that \$500 million will be shared and that the bigger companies will take the largest share, with nothing being left for the smaller companies. It does not work like that.

Should this not work, there will be a negotiation process with arbitration. That model seems equitable for both smaller and major players. What is more, if the small players wish, they can come together and stand united to have more weight in the negotiation. I think everything is quite clear, that everything is in place to give the smaller players as much of a chance to get ahead as the major players.

I will conclude on the issue of CBC/Radio-Canada. I heard my Conservative colleague mention it earlier. It is a good question. Do we allow CBC/Radio-Canada to have the same negotiation rights and earn revenue from sharing their content on digital intermediaries or not, given that CBC/Radio-Canada is publicly funded? The principle here is not how the CBC is funded. The issue is whether those who produce content shared through digital intermediaries should be paid for it. The answer is yes.

● (1340)

I am open to the idea of having another debate on funding for CBC. I am sure there will be some good suggestions.

Government Orders

However, for now, this is how Bill C-18 is structured. It is not a perfect bill, but it is a good one. It is a good starting point, and we will support it.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the member's speech, he made reference to Jim Carr. It did mean a great deal to Jim when the member and one of his colleagues walked over to shake his hand afterward, which I thought was a classy thing to do.

I wonder if the member could provide some additional thoughts on this. Many different other types of media outlets do not get the same sort of reference to which the member mentioned, magazines and so forth. They could be automotive industry or sport magazines. There are a number of them.

The CRTC would be given a fairly significant responsibility. The ultimate goal is to ensure that we have an independent and free media that is far-reaching. Could the member provide further thoughts on that?

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his comments.

I reminisce about the handshake my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and I shared with the member for Winnipeg South Centre. It was a poignant moment. I did not realize things would happen so fast after that, and I thank my colleague for his kind words.

In answer to his question about publications left stranded by Bill C-18, I think we will have to come back to that and consider publications and magazines with specialized content that have also been taken over by digital intermediaries, by web giants. We need to have a thoughtful conversation about those types of media too.

At this point in time, I think it was urgent to deal with news media. We really had to take action to protect news content creators. I think this is the first step, but it paves the way for us to keep working on this, which is what I think we need to do.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Drummond for his great work. The committee members worked really well together.

We made a number of changes to Bill C-18. Which of the amendments that were made to improve Bill C-18 does my colleague think is the most important?

I think that the original bill was good and that the bill now before the House is much better. I know that the member also helped a lot with that.

In his view, which of the amendments that were adopted is the most important?

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for his comments and also for being such a pleasure to work with. We enjoy ourselves, but we also work efficiently. I think he too has a strong desire to improve the

ills that are brought before us. That was certainly true of Bill C-18.

Several very important amendments were made to this bill, which is much better today than it was in April, when it was introduced in the House. Obviously, I have a soft spot for the amendment I proposed to demand a certain quality of journalism by imposing, as part of the eligibility criteria, a code of ethics that must be followed, with the basic principles of journalism.

My colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby also proposed some very significant amendments on which we were in complete agreement, particularly on the recognition of community media and the importance of indigenous media in Bill C-18. Some very important progress has been made.

Now, how will this work out in practice? I look forward to seeing how the businesses in question will benefit. However, one thing is certain. The amendments have considerably improved the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the committee sat for months on this bill. There is one discrepancy that I want answered before this comes out, and nobody knows the answer.

The Canadian Heritage department officials say that \$150 million will go to media in Canada through Meta, Google and so on. The PBO says that it is \$329 million. Which is the right? Is it the Canadian Heritage estimate or the PBO estimate that has it at \$329 million, 75% going to the big conglomerates like the CBC, Rogers and Bell? Which is the right number, the Department of Canadian Heritage or the PBO?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood for his comment, which was more of a comment ending with a question.

I will not fall into the trap. I am not going to do what the Minister of National Revenue did last week and take a swipe at the Parliamentary Budget Officer. I think that, for numbers, I would place more trust in the Parliamentary Budget Officer, despite the great respect that I have for the officials of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

I thank my colleague for his question.

• (1350)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his excellent intervention.

I would like to say that, this weekend, I was pro-gas. My Conservative colleagues are shocked, but I am referring to Pro-Gaz R-N Abitibi—Témiscamingue and the Studio rythme et danse team. The Pro-Gaz team won the pee-wee hockey tournament hosted by the Conquérants de La Sarre.

Government Orders

I wish our local media had been there to report on this event. I would have loved to hear a report about our goalie, Alexy, made a spectacular save in the semi-finals; how the leadership of players like Jules and Eliot carried the team all week long; how players like Alex and Samuel followed the game plan to the letter and excelled on defence; how the puck clung to Skyler's stick like a magnet; how Nathan is an all-around player; how our forwards put the pressure on and contributed to the win; Frederique and all this—

The Deputy Speaker: I hope the member has a good question.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: —that should appear in our local media, and more importantly, how we can ensure that we hear about the achievements of our players, like Anthony, who was recognized as the top forward of the tournament.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, you can see how hard it is to rein in our young colleagues' enthusiasm.

I thank him for his impromptu member's statement and I agree wholeheartedly. That is precisely the purpose of Bill C-18, specifically, to ensure that these news stories, which make local residents proud of what is happening in their communities, can continue to receive the prominence they deserve and have space to evolve in our increasingly digital world.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), I would like to inform the House that the remaining Conservative caucus speaking times are hereby divided in two.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand I will be having to split my time before and after question period.

I wanted to start off with a tribute to Jim Carr. We have this tradition in place that we refer to members of Parliament by their riding names, like the member of Parliament for Winnipeg South Centre. When they pass away, as Jim did, and we received the sad notice of that yesterday, we can use their real names as opposed to their riding names. It is a sad moment, and we have been through this over the last few years with a number of members of Parliament.

With Jim, it was particularly saddening, because tomorrow we would have been paying tribute to him in the House of Commons with a round of speeches. We were aware that we needed to do that, and I think all 337 of us would have loved to have had Jim hear those words of praise for him. We will now be doing that in his absence and in his memory.

It is important to note that his popularity was such that within the NDP caucus a number of members of Parliament wanted to rise to speak. The tradition is one speaker from each party. We had difficulty determining that in our caucus, because people respected Jim so much. He was a gentleman. He was very eloquent. He was passionate about Canada. He will be sorely missed, and I want to pass on my condolences to his family. As we pay tribute to him informally through the course of our work today, having had to suspend the House yesterday, I know that through the course of the week

and tomorrow, we will be paying more formal tributes to him. He will be missed.

The object of the debate for the next few minutes is Bill C-18.

My first letter as Canadian heritage critic to the Canadian heritage minister right after the election in 2021 was to push the government to bring immediately to bear a bill that would force big tech to start making its contributions to Canadian society.

As members know, over the past few years we have seen a hoovering up of ad revenues, which have decimated our community news, whether we are talking about radio stations or newspapers, right across the country. My community of New Westminster Burnaby has lost two publications: the New Westminster News Leader and the Burnaby News Leader. We continue to have Burnaby Now and the Royal City Record. We also have new online publishers and two community online publications that do a terrific job: the Burnaby Beacon and the New West Anchor.

The reality is that the impact has been felt right across the country. It has decimated local news and it has meant fewer journalists. What has been worrisome about this is that at the same time we have seen a parallel rise, because big tech has not taken any sort of responsibility for the rise in hate, misogyny, racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia. These two trends are connected.

On the one hand, there is pressure on local community media that brings us together in the community and ensures that people understand that even if their neighbours are different, they all share the same values and goals in the community. Second, there is what I would not even say is big tech's reluctance to curb hate. What it has actually done is promoted it, because extremism, hate and disinformation help to fuel revenues for it. It has been proven many times that the algorithms big tech uses help to foster hate and conflict in the community. Big tech profits from that. The increase in so-called "engagement" leads to more revenues for them.

The importance of bringing forward a bill like Bill C-18 to force big tech to start to provide that support for local community journalism is absolutely fundamental.

Statements by Members

• (1355)

That is why the NDP, right after the election, told the government it had to bring forward this legislation on the Australian model. Although it has many weaknesses, which I will perhaps address in the second half of my speech, the Australian model is also a good one, because it stared down big tech. The Australians decided that even though big tech was threatening to withdraw, they were going to push companies like Google, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to take responsibility and provide funding for journalism. It paid off.

Therefore, we pushed the government, and it introduced Bill C-18, which represents a significant step forward in forcing big tech to provide supports for local journalism and journalism right across this country.

The reality is that when Bill C-18 was tabled, it was a bill that we supported being brought to committee, but at committee we wanted to improve the bill. There was much that was missing in the bill regarding transparency, supporting local community press and journalism, supporting non-profit journalism, and allowing indigenous news outlets to have a role. There was radio silence regarding indigenous news outlets.

We had to fight to get all those things into the bill. We brought it to committee, and I am pleased to announce today that 16 NDP amendments were adopted by the committee working together to ensure just that, a better Bill C-18, one that we can be proud of. It includes, in a comprehensive way, indigenous journalism and indigenous news outlets. It ensures community supports. It ensures that the community radio and non-profit outlets can benefit, and it ensures transparency. Therefore, I am pleased to say that because of the NDP's work, and working with committee members from all parties, Bill C-18 is better than ever, and I am proud to support it in the House of Commons.

I look forward to the second half of my speech after QP.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

THE AGA KHAN

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Ismaili Muslims in Vancouver Granville and around the world celebrate the 86th birthday of His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan, the 49th Imam of Shia Ismaili Muslims. An honorary Canadian citizen and an honorary Companion of the Order of Canada, the Aga Khan has dedicated his life to reducing global poverty, advancing gender equality, combatting climate change, and improving health care and education across the globe. Known as Mawlana Hazar Imam to my fellow Ismailis, he continues to inspire us to serve our fellow citizens and to improve the quality of life of those around us every day.

As we mark the 86th birthday of His Highness the Aga Khan, we express our gratitude for his leadership, guidance and care. Just as he has dedicated his life to the spiritual and material well-being of

Ismailis everywhere. Mawlana Hazar Imam and the institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network continue to partner with Canada to advance our shared values of pluralism, human rights and the dignity of all.

Today, we wish Mawlana Hazar Imam good health, happiness and a long life. *Salgirah Khushiali Mubarak.*

* * *

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Christmas often brings out the best in us, as we reflect on the values of generosity, hospitality and charity. I am proud to represent a region that constantly lives out these values. We see them on display in so many simple acts of kindness.

I think of the volunteers of the various organizations throughout west Brandon, doing their best to ensure everyone has food on their tables for the holidays. I also think of the many Ukrainians celebrating Christmas here in Manitoba rather than at home in Ukraine this year. Many west Brandon residents have opened their hearts and homes to make their season a little brighter. Of course, I think of the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, who are away from friends and family at Christmas.

May we each do our part to bring love, joy, peace and goodwill to others this holiday season. I wish everyone a merry Christmas and best wishes for the new year.

* * *

EDEN FOOD FOR CHANGE

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month, Eden Food for Change, a local food bank in Mississauga—Streetsville, hosted its fifth annual breakfast with Santa. The event is an indoor dining and outdoor drive-through experience at which everyone can meet their local first responders and Santa. The purpose of the event was to raise money for the food bank, and it was attended by celebrity chef Massimo Capra and hockey legend Paul Henderson.

The event started as a small fundraiser in 2018, and continued to grow despite dealing with the challenges of the pandemic. Last year over 1,000 meals were served and more than \$48,000 was raised. The success of this initiative is due to continued support from first responders, small businesses, service organizations, volunteers and the public.

I encourage everyone to volunteer and give back to our local food banks. This initiative is a perfect example of the spirit of giving during the holiday season, and I would like to thank the people at Eden Food for Change for their tremendous efforts. I wish everyone a wonderful holiday season.

[Translation]

MASCOUCHE COMMUNITY GROUP

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Terrebonne and I would like to draw the House's attention to the amazing work of an organization operating in my riding and in the RCM of Les Moulins, the Société de développement et d'animation de Mascouche, or SODAM.

Founded in 2000, this not-for-profit organization is driven by a profound desire to enliven the community's cultural offerings and facilitate access to the area's rich local history, agriculture and arts scene. SODAM, the dynamic, creative organization behind the Festival Grande Tribu, farmers' markets, guided historical tours of Mascouche and the Cirkana circus school, was awarded not one but two prizes this fall. On October 25, SODAM won the Conseil québécois des événements écoresponsables's Vivats award for best new entrant for its Festival Grande Tribu. On November 4, it won the heritage interpretation award of excellence for *Le patrimoine vivant en cinémascope*.

Congratulations to everyone on the team, and long live SODAM.

* * *

● (1405)

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry has been hit hard over the past two years. I am happy to see that some sectors are recovering, including food service, hospitality, travel, and markets and small shops. Tourism industry workers deliver the warm welcome Canadians are known for. They keep up our legendary reputation for politeness. Their welcoming smiles are a comforting expression of our joie de vivre.

During this holiday season, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the people in the tourism industry.

[English]

Moreover, I would like to wish a wonderful holiday season to the employees of the hotels in the national capital area, particularly at the Delta Hotels Ottawa City Centre. They make our stay a real home away from home with a warm welcome every time; smiley, helpful service; and customized special attention. I thank Stephen, John, Jean, Rosa, José, Adrian, Ross, Annu and the list goes on. Happy holidays to them all.

* * *

[Translation]

WINTER TOURISM IN CHICOUTIMI—LE FJORD

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in for a particularly spectacular winter. Record-setting temperatures and impressive snowfalls are expected, which make for perfect conditions for winter sports and attractions. One thing is certain, Chicoutimi—Le Fjord will be ready.

On December 1, along with mayors from various municipalities, I had the opportunity to participate in the launch of the winter tourist season in the Lower Saguenay.

Statements by Members

Thrill seekers can get their adrenaline fix skiing down Mont Édouard, with its 450-metre vertical drop.

Those looking to take in the sights can enjoy hundreds of kilometres of snowshoeing and cross-country skiing trails, complete with breathtaking scenery.

People searching for a unique experience should try their hand at ice fishing on the Saguenay. It will never disappoint.

I have no doubt that everyone will find the perfect way to enjoy our beautiful Canadian winter while practising a sport they love.

I invite everyone to visit our magnificent region.

I wish everyone a wonderful winter, and I hope to see my colleagues in my neck of the woods.

* * *

[English]

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I want to congratulate our new Peel region colleague, who was elected last night in Mississauga—Lakeshore. This is a strong sign of support from Peel residents for our plan focused on affordability and growing our economy.

Soon it will be a very special time of year. This parliamentary session is about to come to a close, and we have passed some very important legislation. On behalf of my family and my team, I would like to wish everyone in Brampton and across Canada a very merry Christmas, happy holidays and a happy new year.

Whether skating through the beautiful Gage Park in downtown Brampton or gathering with family or friends, this is the holiday spirit. Everywhere we go, our city is lit up with joy and excitement. This is also the season of compassion, a time for giving and for giving back.

I wish everyone the best as we head into 2023.

* * *

[Translation]

ORLÉANS SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): On November 26, my team and I participated in the 25th Santa Claus parade in Orléans along St. Joseph Boulevard.

[English]

A huge crowd of over 100,000 people attended this year.

[Translation]

I want to thank the organizing committee, Bob Rainboth and our Ottawa firefighters for their outstanding work. They collected toy and cash donations all along the parade route to help families in need. This year, over \$25,000 was collected to buy toys.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

On Friday, December 9, I hosted my annual free movie night at Ciné Starz Orléans. More than 350 people joined me to watch DC League of Super-Pets.

[Translation]

In closing, I want to wish the community of Orléans a merry Christmas and a happy 2023.

* * *

*[English]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we live in a free country, and that freedom has been paid for by those who have served in uniform.

Veterans know that their lives rely on their brothers and sisters in arms. They live by a code, a code built on trust. That trust has been broken between veterans and the government. Why? It is because wait times for veterans are obscene.

The Auditor General, the PBO and the ombudsman have all given the Minister of Veterans Affairs a failing grade in caring for our vets. Veterans dealing with PTSD who are seeking help are instead being offered medical assistance in dying by the government.

The minister has failed to investigate this scandal and is letting the media do the hard work for him. Further, he has yet to personally apologize to the victims. The minister has abandoned his post. Our heroes deserve better.

* * *

● (1410)

CHARLOTTETOWN CHRISTMAS MARKET

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Charlottetown is on the map once again. Last week, the Charlottetown Victorian Christmas Market was ranked with the best of the best by Big 7 Travel, in the top 50 best Christmas markets in the world and the top 25 best Christmas markets in North America. The market included a Whoville-inspired Christmas town, yuletide horse-and-wagon rides, indigenous artisans and the jolly old elf himself.

The Christmas market is part of Charlottetown's evergrowing shoulder season. Charlottetown is the place to be, not only in the summer but all year round.

While the Charlottetown Victorian Christmas Market had a big impact, it was all made possible by a small but mighty team. I offer warm congratulations to the team at Discover Charlottetown, including Heidi Zinn, Chris MacDonald, Stephanie Butt and Ellen Egan. Their hard work has put Charlottetown on the map again.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week we saw in the House how divisive Bill C-21 is. I believe that everyone in the House wants to ensure that Canadians are safe. In 2021, 173 women and girls were killed in Canada. We

must always stand up against violence against women, but I cannot stand and watch a government mislead survivors and victims' families.

We must work towards a violence-free Canada. Bill C-21 is targeting the wrong people. We must have stronger, safer communities, free of illegal guns, free of violence against women. Members of the LGBTQ+ community and indigenous women and girls must be violence free, as must every Canadian. Femicide in Canada has increased and violence against women has increased, but crime in Canada has also increased.

Rather than making bad policies and dividing communities across Canada, I ask the government to do better. Its policies are failing. It should scrap Bill C-21 and actually consult. Make a real difference and make Canadians safe.

* * *

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal inflation is making everything Canadians need more expensive. Food, fuel, rent and mortgages are all more expensive thanks to Liberal excessive borrowing and spending. The average rent in Canada is now a whopping \$2,000 a month. In Toronto and Vancouver, the rent for a one-bedroom apartment is now double what it was in 2015. A mortgage getting renewed this year will cost \$7,000 more than it did five years ago.

Never has a government abused the national credit card as much as the current Liberals. Because of this, Canadians are struggling more than ever before. Talking points, spin doctors, photo ops and more spending will not repair the damage the Liberals are causing.

Canadians need a government that delivers paycheques, less debt, more homes and more results. After the next election, a new Conservative government will deliver the relief Canadians so desperately need. It will replace rhetoric with real action and restore the opportunity that Canada has always promised.

* * *

*[Translation]***HOLIDAY WISHES**

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to mark the return of the holiday season.

The first snowflakes have already fallen, our homes are decorated, and our communities are all lit up with festive lights. For the first time in far too long, we can say that nothing is more enjoyable than celebrating with those we love.

[English]

I want to also recognize that there are families who are mourning the loss of loved ones this Christmas and I want them to know we cherish and hold them in our hearts.

[Translation]

Now more than ever, we understand how precious the magic of Christmas really is. I therefore want to wish all of my colleagues, all of my constituents and all Canadians a very merry Christmas.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND TITLE

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): [*Member spoke in Gitksan as follows:*]

Simgiget, Sigid'm hanals, k'uba wilxwxs.

[*Gitksan text translated as follows:*]

Chiefs, matriarchs and community members.

[*Member spoke in Witsuwit'en as follows:*]

Dinize, tsakoze, skyze.

[*Witsuwit'en text translated as follows:*]

Chiefs, matriarchs and community members.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the landmark Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa court ruling, and to pay tribute to the strength and tenacity of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en.

With Delgamuukw, these two nations changed the legal landscape in Canada forever and blazed a trail that so many have since followed. For the first time, our highest court said that oral histories can be evidence and that aboriginal title in Canada has never been extinguished by colonization.

Mishandling of the original trial left Chief Justice Lamer unable to affirm title on appeal, so he implored Canada to do the hard work of negotiating in good faith. Twenty-five years later, so much of this work remains to be done.

For their part, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en remain determined to realize the full potential of their rights and title. As the late Earl Muldoe, who held the name Delgamuukw, stated in 1997, "If you take a bucket of water out of the Skeena River, the Skeena keeps on flowing. Our rights still flow and they will flow forever."

Statements by Members

[Translation]

MIRABEL FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 18, a man died in a burning vehicle on Mirabel airport property. His name was Sylvain Richard, and I want to offer my sincere condolences to his family.

This is a tragic event that calls for reflection, because at the time of the tragedy, Aéroports de Montréal chose to prohibit its firefighters from intervening. Despite this, as a matter of principle, firefighter Francis Labrie attempted to rescue the victim. For this, Mr. Labrie, a man of integrity who embodies the highest standards of human dignity and professionalism, was suspended by Aéroports de Montréal. This is outrageous. If Aéroports de Montréal had allowed its firefighters to intervene seven minutes earlier, a human life could have been saved.

There are only five firefighters on duty at Dorval, and often fewer than that, and there are two on duty at Mirabel. That is nowhere near enough. These firefighters are concerned about public safety. This was the canary in the coal mine, warning us of the danger of doing nothing. We must not wait for the next tragedy; we must act.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another Iranian protester, named Majidreza Rahnava, was murdered yesterday morning by the barbaric Iranian regime. He had a bright future. They all do.

He was imprisoned 23 days ago, charged with waging war against God. He was publicly executed in yet another escalation. Now we watch with horror the ruthlessness of the mullahs and the bravery of the revolution. We cannot be silent. We must show them we will not give up until all Iranians have been given a voice.

We must ban the IRGC, seize its assets and give them to the families of the victims of flight 752. It killed 55 Canadians.

We must impose the harshest and broadest, most sweeping, sanctions to cripple the regime and bring it down.

For the safety and security of Iranians, the region and the world, what will it take? How many murders? How many threats against Canadians? What needs to happen in order for the government to do the right thing?

* * *

HON. JIM CARR

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to the Hon. Jim Carr, my long-time friend and a respected colleague on all sides of the House.

Oral Questions

Jim was truly a Renaissance man. He had an extraordinary career as a professional musician, a journalist, a leader in the business community and a politician who served in the Manitoba legislature and here in the House as the MP for Winnipeg South Centre.

Jim served with distinction around the cabinet table as the minister of natural resources, minister of international trade and diversification, and minister for the Prairies.

Above all, Jim was a passionate and articulate voice for the Prairies as a special part of Canada with its own unique culture and economy. He believed that our evolving energy sector will help power our country forward, that our innovative agriculture can feed the world and that we can do all of this sustainably.

That is how he found the strength to see his private member's bill, the building a green prairie economy act, pass third reading last week.

In these last few years, Jim spoke of his children and grandchildren often. He worked every day for a better Canada and a better world for them and for all of us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[Translation]

FIREARMS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I wish to join all those expressing their condolences to the family of the Hon. Jim Carr, the Liberal caucus and all his friends. Our thoughts and prayers are with them in their grief.

The Prime Minister says he does not want to ban hunting weapons, but now there are Liberal members, government officials and indigenous groups who say that the 300-page list includes a large number of hunting weapons that are entirely appropriate for civilian use.

When will the government target real criminals by adding resources at our borders and going after the real criminals instead of hunters who are doing their work legally?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking my colleague and all members who have been so empathetic in expressing their grief over the death of our friend, the Hon. Jim Carr.

I know we will have an opportunity to talk about him more tomorrow. I really want everyone to remember that he was an exceptional man and an extraordinary parliamentarian.

[English]

His devotion to community, to region, to country; his devotion to the idea of a Canada that was even better, where everyone came together to build a strong future; his passion, his thoughtfulness, his commitment to the Prairies and to Canada will be long remembered and need to inspire us all every single day, as we notice the empty seat among us.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has the wrong target when it comes to public safety. It is banning hundreds, and in fact we do not know exactly how many because its officials cannot tell us, of previously legal hunting rifles and shotguns that are used by first nations, by farmers and by rural people right across the country.

Meanwhile, last week, a man who was convicted of second degree murder had been released early and is now rearrested for 51 counts of trafficking firearms.

Why will the Liberals not go after this criminal and others like him instead of targeting Grandpa Joe's hunting rifle in Cape Breton?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are united around the need to see communities safer. Most Canadians understand that this means eliminating the guns that are most dangerous, those guns that are designed to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time. That is why two years ago we moved forward with a ban on assault-style weapons, but we also know we need to ensure that ban stays in place. That is why we are moving forward with a definition to define assault-style weapons.

We will continue to consult with Canadians and all parliamentarians to ensure we are capturing the right weapons, but we will keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only he is not capturing the right weapons, according to his very own Liberal MP for Yukon, who said, "This is really upsetting. Many, many Yukoners...regularly hunt, either as a food source or for the recreational aspects of hunting." He said, "I'm not happy with this [bill]." Other Liberal MPs have said likewise, and the Prime Minister's own public servants have testified that hunting rifles will be banned under his proposed amendment.

Now that he has been caught with his real agenda, which is to go after hunters and farmers rather than gun smugglers and gangsters, will he reverse himself and promise never again to go after our hunters in our country?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while Conservative politicians continue to fearmonger and share disinformation, we are doing the work necessary to keep Canadians safe. We will continue to consult on the list, because, yes, we are not interested in going after guns that are typically used for hunting and protecting farms.

We are going to continue to make sure we are banning the most dangerous weapons that were designed to kill people in the shortest amount of time. This is something that unfortunately the Conservatives want to make legal, assault-style weapons, again. That is why they are in the pockets of the gun lobby and that is why we are standing strong.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all wondered how it was possible for the government to build up a 2.2 million person backlog in the immigration system, and now we have found a clue. There are 60,000 people whose cases have been handed over to employees who no longer work for the government. Just imagine someone calling up and saying, "I'd like to speak to Jack. He's my case officer. I've been waiting for my immigration." and he is told that Jack has not been there in 10 years. No wonder things are delayed for so long.

These are people who are separated from their families, refugees who need to get here quickly for their safety. How could the government have been so careless?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to grow our immigration system. We continue to transform it and modernize it so it is able to respond to the needs of people who want to become Canadians and contribute to our society.

That is why we are investing in our system to provide a modern client experience and a more efficient immigration system. Modernizing our immigration system is about putting people at the heart of everything we do. We will continue to be there and resolve any technical issues.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from incompetence to bad ethics, we have another Liberal minister found guilty of violating the Ethics Act, this time for giving a \$23,000 contract to one of her best friends at a company called Pomp & Circumstance. It reminds us of the Prime Minister giving half a billion dollars to an organization called WE Charity that gave his family \$500,000.

Will the minister be held accountable? Will she be required to pay back the \$23,000 in improper contracting that she gave out?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the House, there is a lot of debate and back and forth, but every now and then there is an opportunity for Canadians to weigh in directly on what is going on in federal politics.

Yesterday, the residents of Mississauga—Lakeshore had a choice. They could choose between the Conservative Party politics of division and reckless proposals that included recommending that they opt out of inflation by investing in crypto, or our government's approach of being there for Canadians every step of the way and putting more money back in their pockets.

The people of Mississauga—Lakeshore have spoken and elected a Liberal member of Parliament to come to Ottawa.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I may, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would also

Oral Questions

like to offer our condolences to the family and friends of the former minister and member Jim Carr.

The Prime Minister has skilfully calculated that Quebec should take in 112,000 immigrants based on Ottawa's goal of welcoming 500,000. In doing so, he ignored the fact that there are about eight million francophones in the country and about 300 million anglophones on the North American continent. Oops. It was basic math. He himself is having such a hard time managing immigration that his government assigned 60,000 files to people who are no longer on the job.

Should he not double-check his math and let Quebec manage its own affairs on immigration and the French language?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I merely pointed out that Quebec is entirely capable of increasing its immigration levels, if it wants to.

This decision is up to Quebec, and we respect Quebec's jurisdiction with regard to immigration, as we do across our system of government.

We will always work with the Quebec government and other governments across the country to protect the French language and to welcome francophone immigrants. We have a lot more work to do, but we will continue to do it.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the past 24 hours, the Prime Minister said that Quebec must take in 112,000 immigrants.

He says that he is not imposing that number. However, all the other times, he said that he would like to impose it. He sent a former minister and now sitting member to say that Bill 96 should be blocked, because the federal government obviously must not recognize Quebec's jurisdictions.

He is forgetting about Roxham Road and the thousands of irregular claimants, who would have a hard time integrating into French-speaking society, and he is forgetting about the thousands of francophone African students who he himself is preventing from entering Quebec.

Could he do the smart thing when it comes to the issue of language and recognize that the French language and immigration are Quebec's jurisdictions?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I am doing. I did not propose any numbers for Quebec. I acknowledged that Quebec was capable of increasing its immigration levels, if it wanted to do so, because it has those powers. We recognize the important role that Quebec plays in protecting the French language and the Quebec nation. That is why we will continue to work respectfully with the Government of Quebec.

However, we do want to point out that the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause is something that the federal government should never support.

*Oral Questions**[English]***HEALTH**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all New Democrats, I want to extend our condolences to the friends and family of Jim Carr on his passing.

[Translation]

We are in a pediatric health crisis. At the Sainte-Justine hospital in Montreal, workers have said this is unprecedented: the wait times, children getting sick, exasperated parents, desperate workers.

We have a Prime Minister who lacks leadership.

When will the Prime Minister show some leadership, meet with the premiers and find solutions to fix this crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had regular meetings with the provincial premiers for several months. Our ministers are getting involved because we recognize that Canadians need better health care systems. They need family doctors. They need fewer wait lists. They need help for mental health.

Instead of doing what the NDP leader is proposing, in other words, simply sending a blank cheque to the provinces to have them deal with their health care systems, we are demanding results for Canadians. We need to have results for families, for seniors and for young people. We will insist on that.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Red Cross had to be called in to the Ottawa Children's Hospital. There is a trailer set up at the Children's Hospital in Calgary. Parents and children have such high demand for services that they have to wait out in the cold, so it has a trailer. Children are dying from respiratory illness, and this is just the beginning of the season. In Montreal, workers are saying that this is the worst they have ever seen.

We have a Prime Minister who is not showing up to provide solutions. When will the Prime Minister work with the premiers, meet with them and find solutions instead of excuses to deal with this crisis?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only have I been speaking regularly with premiers, not only have our health ministers and other ministers been engaging directly with their counterparts across the country, but I have been sitting down with doctors, nurses and other frontline workers who have said very clearly, "Do not just send more blank cheques to the provinces for health care. Make sure that the provinces are delivering outcomes, delivering results for families, for seniors, for young people."

The opposition parties may call for just more cash to be flushed to the provinces. We are going to need to get results from the provinces for Canadians, not for us but for Canadians who need better health care.

FINANCE

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this holiday season will have a lot less cheer as everything seems like it is broken in Canada. Half of Canadians are worried about putting food on their table, because of Liberals' reckless inflationary spending; One-third of Canadians cannot afford homes, because of out-of-control Liberal spending has forced the Bank of Canada to increase its interest rates for the seventh consecutive time this year. One-quarter of Canadians will need to access charity services. The Liberals' solution to that is to pile even more taxes onto Canadians.

Why will these Liberals not stop forcing their failed tax-and-spend agenda on Canadians so they can afford to eat and heat their homes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before answering the member's question, I would just like to state the deep sadness that we are all feeling at the passing of our friend and colleague, the Hon. Jim Carr. Jim was a tireless representative, a true defender of his constituency, his city, the prairie west and all of Canada. He was my mentor and my friend. He will be dearly missed.

All members of this government share his deep and abiding passion for providing for Canadians in their time of need, for sticking up for them during the pandemic and for facing these economic headwinds together.

• (1435)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our hearts and prayers are also with Jim Carr's family and friends.

Liberal insiders are the only ones benefiting from reckless Liberal spending. The Liberal trade minister's friend is the perfect example. She just got caught breaking ethics laws for giving her friend a lucrative contract.

This kind of wasteful spending is driving more and more Canadians into food banks. For every hard-earned dollar Canadians make, they owe \$1.83. Failed Liberal policies have driven up the cost of home heating and made them double.

Why will this Liberal government not do the right thing, stop its reckless spending, rein in its spending and cancel the carbon tax so Canadians can keep the heat on this winter?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. colleague is talking about is the Canada child benefit that is helping nine out of 10 Canadian families. It is helping that single mom pay for groceries. It is helping that family make sure its kids have access to winter clothing.

*Oral Questions***CARBON PRICING**

On this side of the House, we will continue to support Canadians as they go through difficult economic times. The Conservatives keep talking about how things are more expensive, but when they have an opportunity to actually vote on items that help Canadians, they vote against them every time.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian households now owe \$1.83 for every dollar of disposable income they have. That is what Statistics Canada says. The amount that Canadians owe got higher while the value of their assets declined, with the bank's seven consecutive rate hike this year. Even the bank governor said that deficits were increasing inflation. That, in turn, leads to those higher interest rates. Now Canadians are stuck with the biggest bills they have ever seen.

The more the government spends, the more things cost. When will the Liberals stop making Canadians pay for their wasteful spending?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout the fall, we have put in place various measures to help Canadians with the cost of living, and each step of the way we invited Conservative members of the House to vote with us and to vote with Canadians. Let us take a look at the record.

We will eliminate interest on federal student and apprentice loans, speed up the Canada workers benefit, provide a \$500 top-up, provide dental care to kids and make housing more affordable. On each of those measures how did the Conservatives vote? They voted against.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to vote against the hundreds of thousands of dollars the Liberals gave to anti-Semites, the \$58 million they wasted on an app that did not work, the \$1.6 billion for people who quit their jobs during the pandemic, the more than \$6 million for people who were in jail and the more than \$1 million sent to dead people.

The only people who are doing well are the friends of the Liberals. We will oppose the incompetence, but the better question is why he does not.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can observe a fundamental ideological divide between His Majesty's loyal opposition and the governing side of this chamber.

On this side of the House, we believe that to support people in need, we can advance programs that provide direct help to them. The Conservatives' solution to an affordability crisis is to do less to help families in need. This should come as no surprise. That has been their approach since 2015.

When we cut taxes on the middle class and raised them on the 1%, the Conservatives voted against. When we stopped sending child care cheques to millionaires to put more money into the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families, the Conservatives voted against. When we had programs that kept food on the table and roofs over the heads of families in my community, they held a press conference and said they would never support those programs.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we will not support is the waste of the current Liberal government.

We know that Atlantic Canadians are suffering. They are going to pay \$7,000 more this year to heat their homes, and the Liberal carbon tax plan is only going to make it worse.

The Government of Nova Scotia released its own plan this week, which will reduce emissions by 53% over the next several years. This goes well beyond the plan of the Liberal government, which we know continues to fail to meet emissions targets.

Will the Liberal government stop forcing its failed carbon tax plan on Atlantic Canadians?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I love to get up and talk about Atlantic Canadians, where I am from, because I was so proud when my hon. colleague behind me was in Halifax. In his riding, we announced the \$5,000 grant for Canadians, and Atlantic Canadians especially, to get off oil heat. That is going to help many people in Atlantic Canada and in my riding of Long Range Mountains. It is a grant to get off oil, which is what we all need to do.

● (1440)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Government of Nova Scotia does not agree. The PC Party there has put out a no carbon tax for Nova Scotians petition for people to sign, because of the Liberal government's plan. It clearly realizes that the plan continues to fail over and again.

With the punishing carbon tax, Nova Scotians are going to pay \$2,200 more in 2025 and \$3,100 more by 2030. When will the failing Liberal government stop punishing and crushing Atlantic Canadians with the carbon tax?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with due respect to my hon. colleague, his mathematics are simply off. He ignores the fact that the program has been designed to put more money into the pockets of eight out of 10 families than any fuel charges would cost them. In addition, we have created a new \$5,000 grant program, which is going to help people in my community transition from oil for home heating to heat pumps and that is going to potentially save them thousands of dollars a year. Every step of the way we have been focused on developing programs to put more money into the pockets of families in need.

Oral Questions

Whether it is seniors, students, workers or households, we are going to continue to be there for people in their time of need. I would beg the Conservatives, for once, to join us in supporting ordinary families.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): It is groundhog day, Mr. Speaker. Once again, on Friday, all of the premiers of Quebec and the provinces called for a meeting with the Prime Minister on increasing health transfers. They costed their needs 27 months ago and are calling for a meeting. For 27 months, the Prime Minister has been ignoring them. For 27 months, their ability to provide health care to the public in our hospitals has been declining.

The Prime Minister is leaving everyone at an impasse to the detriment of patients and health care workers. Will he call this essential meeting on health care funding with his counterparts in January?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising that issue.

The situation has indeed been very difficult for sick people, patients and workers across the country, including Quebec, for many months now. The situation was exacerbated by COVID-19, and the demographic pressures are such that, for the past few years, we have been seeing increased pressure on our health care workers and patients across the country. That is also what will happen in the long term. That is why we need to do things differently. Sending unconditional transfers to the provincial finance ministers is not a health care plan.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, enough with the analysis. What we want is results. However, as long as Ottawa is withholding money, there will be no results.

The real reason for the impasse is that Ottawa does not want to pay 35% of health costs. Ottawa wants to shatter the provinces' consensus in order to negotiate individual agreements on the cheap and invest as little as possible.

While our hospitals are stacking people on stretchers because of a lack of beds, while children are being sent 500 kilometres away for treatment, does my colleague really believe that this is the time to be concocting ways to invest less in health?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reinvesting in health is exactly what we have been doing for several years now with COVID-19.

An additional \$72 billion was invested in the Canada health transfer. In the last few weeks, there has been an additional \$2 billion allocated to reduce delays in treatment, surgery and diagnosis and an additional \$9 billion for mental health, home care and long-term care.

On top of that, we promised there would be more. That is already a lot of money. We need to do things differently because that is what Canadians and Quebecers need.

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, ongoing transfers are what is needed. Everyone knows that.

As the Prime Minister digs in his heels and refuses to engage with his counterparts on the subject of health care funding, 784,000 people are on waiting lists to see a medical specialist and 160,000 people are awaiting surgery. Nearly a million Quebecers need care but cannot get it because there are not enough resources.

Can the Prime Minister explain to those one million Quebecers why just meeting with his counterparts to talk about health transfers is too much to ask of him?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague heard the Minister of Health's answer about the major investments our government has made in the health care system. That is good news.

As everyone knows, we are prepared to make more investments across Canada. We know Canadians are worried about the public health care system. We are in talks at several levels with the provinces and territories. We will find our way to an agreement and higher funding levels that will produce the kind of results Canadians expect from their investment.

* * *

• (1445)

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-created immigration application backlog is at over two million applications. People are waiting to reunite with family, spouses, children or parents. They are waiting for work permits and waiting for health care, and now we find out that tens of thousands of these applications were sent to immigration officers who do not even exist. These are people who have not worked for Immigration Canada in years, so these applications are just sitting there. Nobody has been working on them.

Who is going to explain this incompetence, apologize and fix this mess?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer clarity to families seeking to be reunited and workers seeking economic opportunity in Canada. We are going to process every case in our inventory.

With respect to the hon. member's allegation, I can reassure people that the issue of codes for inactive employees is simply a reflection of the way we manage the inventory. Every single case is attached to a code that has been sent to a relevant processing facility.

While I am on my feet, I am pleased to share that earlier this month, we set a record for the largest number of newcomers ever settled in Canada. This is good news for Canada, good news for our economy and great news for our communities.

Oral Questions

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is another example of how Canadians are paying for the Liberals' incompetence, mistakes and mismanagement. To them it is just codes, but there are real families behind these applications. People are waiting to reunite with loved ones and waiting for health care, yet the Liberals are making more announcements.

I am asking now how they are going to fix the mess of all these applications, which have just been sitting there while people are waiting for their lives to continue. Who is going to apologize for these applications?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's allegation that files are resting with officers who do not exist is unequivocally false. We will process every one of those applications.

I am pleased to share that as a result of the investments we have made to hire more than 1,250 people, to embrace technological solutions and to relax administrative procedures, we have, in the last few months alone, reduced the number of cases in our inventory by more than 300,000. That is more than 300,000 people in the last few months who are now reunited with family and are here making a difference in our communities and helping support our local economy.

We are the party that is going to continue to support newcomers because we believe it serves the national interest and is the right thing to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration has assigned more than 59,000 immigration applications to 779 inactive employees. Some of those officers have not even been employees of the department since 2006. What is most disturbing about this whole affair is that the Liberal government does not seem to care. Even the minister does not seem to think this is all that serious.

Will the minister apologize to the thousands of families who were waiting in vain for their turn to come to Canada?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. colleague suggests the minister does not think this is serious; the minister does not think it is true. The allegation they are making on the floor of the House of Commons simply belies the facts of the situation.

When officers leave the IRCC, we maintain their codes so we can trace who touched employees' files. It is the responsible thing to do, and we convert those codes to make sure that files actually go to where they are going to be processed.

We are going to continue to do what we can to reduce the number of cases in our inventory. We have seen immense progress, reducing it by more than 300,000 in the last few months alone. Just this month, we set a record for the largest number of newcomers ever to be settled in this country, and that is a positive thing.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, the minister is saying that CBC News is reporting fake news. That is what it sounds like to me. It is being reported in the news this week that 59,000 cases were transferred to 779 employees who no longer work there. On top of that, we are also learning that CBC News warned of problems at the beginning of the year. However, the minister never said anything about it. There was never a word from him about anything.

Meanwhile, we get so many requests in our offices. People have no idea what is going on. Our immigration system is deeply flawed. Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship at least apologize to the people who have been waiting, in many cases, for years?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure every person who has an application in the system that they can expect their case to be processed in accordance with the laws of Canada. I thank the hon. colleagues of this House who have supported some of the measures that boosted the funding available to process cases more quickly, because it is having a serious and positive impact.

This month, we set a record for the largest number of newcomers ever settled in this country. Over the past few months, we have reduced the number of cases in our backlogs by more than 300,000. We are back to the service standard we enjoyed before the pandemic for study permits already. Early in the year, we will achieve the same for work permits.

We are on the right track. We are going to continue to make the necessary investments to get people into our communities because it is good for our communities and good for Canada.

* * *

● (1450)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Minister of National Defence tabled her response to the Arbour report. Women in the armed forces who have faced years of misogyny and sexual misconduct have heard before that there is a plan and that change is coming.

Justice Arbour did the work. She reviewed thousands of documents and did hundreds of interviews to come up with her 48 recommendations, but she now fears the government response today missed the mark. Today's response has more reviews, more studies and more delays.

After ignoring so many reports and recommendations, why should service members believe that this time will be different?

Oral Questions

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this time is different. It is my intention and the Department of National Defence's intention to implement all 48 recommendations of the Arbour report. In fact, we have begun doing that and we will continue until it gets done.

We are putting our shoulders to the wheel. This is important for moral reasons and operational reasons as we continued to grow a Canadian Armed Forces where every member feels protected and respected when they put on a uniform for this country.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister says assigning immigration applications to agents who are no longer working at IRCC is ordinary process and part of inventory management. That means the Liberals are deliberately assigning applications to officers knowing that they do not work there anymore. Close to 60,000 applicants have been in a state of limbo, some for as long as 15 years, unable to move forward with their lives.

What does the minister have to say to the families whose lives are being destroyed when their files are deliberately sent to oblivion for processing?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, I thank my hon. colleague for her concern for the well-being of newcomers and people seeking to access the Canadian immigration system. It is very important that we provide clarity to families seeking to be reunited, as well as the workers seeking to improve their economic outlook by coming to Canada for opportunities.

There are applications that were tied to officers who no longer work for our department. We maintain the codes of those officers in order to trace the cases, but when those workers leave IRCC, we convert the codes in a manner that allows us to send those cases to the location where they can be most effectively processed. This is a strategy we use to make sure we can process files quickly, and I want to reassure people that every file will be processed.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, in partnership with the Province of Ontario and the City of Toronto, the federal government announced a combined investment of \$1.5 billion for the TTC's Bloor-Yonge station expansion and rehabilitation project. Can the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities please update this House on the improvements we will see at the station and the importance of making transit more accessible and reliable for all Canadians?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all members recognize the extraordinary work done by our colleague in Toronto.

When transit is accessible, easy to use and on time, more Canadians will use it. The investments our government is making in transit

are making it more reliable, safer to use and more able to keep up with the increased ridership and population over time.

That is why I was happy to announce the \$1.5-billion Bloor-Yonge subway improvement project, which will provide Toronto residents with access to safe, fully accessible and modern stations that are equipped to handle increased ridership. I know how excited members are about this great project.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREARMS

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a young man who was caught with a prohibited weapon loaded with 72 rounds of ammunition managed to avoid prison thanks to a Liberal law, which of course was supported by the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. There is no longer a minimum sentence for this type of crime in Canada. On the one hand, the government lets criminals roam free and, on the other hand, it wants to penalize honest gun owners by passing Bill C-21. Talk about a double standard.

Will the Liberals go after the real criminals and leave hunters alone?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our community's safety is obviously a priority. We have always said that serious crimes will have serious consequences, but we can also recognize that our justice system required reform. With Bill C-5, we abandoned policies that were unnecessarily harsh, especially towards indigenous people and Black or marginalized people. These policies clearly were not working. We are proud that Bill C-5 passed and that it will have a positive impact on Canadians.

• (1455)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, a man who was convicted of drug trafficking and possession of illegal guns avoided prison thanks to the Liberals' new legislation that eliminates minimum sentences for certain crimes committed with firearms. On one side, we have the Liberals who allow dangerous armed criminals to go free, and on the other, we have the Prime Minister who is going after hunters and farmers.

When will the Prime Minister stop attacking hunters and farmers and when will he start dealing with the real problems with criminals who are trafficking in firearms and drugs?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all want a safer society where serious crimes should be met with serious consequences. However, we also have a duty to follow the evidence and set aside failed policies that did not work. That is exactly what we did with Bill C-5. We are putting resources where they are needed to ensure that our society is safer.

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where a serious criminal was heavily armed, trafficking drugs and doing it all illegally. It is because of the Liberals and their soft-on-crime policies that this man, instead of going to prison, can now serve his sentence from the comfort of his home. That is a serious crime but no serious time under the Liberal government.

Why are the Liberals going soft on criminals on one side and letting this guy serve house arrest in the comfort of his home, but attacking honest, trained, tested and law-abiding hunters and farmers? Why are the Liberals doing that? Why are their priorities so misplaced?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member, hon. members and Canadians across Canada that conditional sentence orders are only available where there is no threat to public security. The person who is best placed to make that determination, according to the evidence, is the sentencing judge, who has all of the information in front of the bench and makes that determination. We are proud to follow policies that work and abandon policies that do not.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, criminals are thanking the Liberal government for its soft-on-crime agenda. This week, a Montreal criminal was convicted of drug trafficking and possession of loaded illegal weapons. Instead of a mandatory minimum sentence in prison, he is serving his sentence in the comfort of his own home.

The government is failing Canadians. Crime is skyrocketing, and instead of dealing with the problem, it wants to ban hunting rifles. When will this government stop targeting law-abiding hunters and finally go after the dangerous criminals?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure my colleague that we are doing precisely that, including with Bill C-21, which would raise maximum sentences against hardened gun traffickers and give police additional powers to bust up those networks that terrorize our communities.

We also introduced \$450 million over the last two years for the CBSA to stop illegal gun smuggling at the border. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it.

They have got to walk the talk on this. The Conservatives have reversed their position, and they should support Bill C-21 and all of the support we are offering law enforcement on the front lines.

[Translation]

COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 10,000 companies in Quebec and 50,000 companies in Canada are losing their funding after receiving support from the emergency business account during the pandemic. Ottawa has deemed them ineligible for forgivable loans of \$10,000 to \$20,000 after the fact and is now requiring them to pay that money back. That means bankruptcy for some businesses. However, they do not know why

Oral Questions

Ottawa thinks they no longer qualify for the loans. They cannot appeal the decision or even talk to the government, because it is leaving the responsibility of announcing the bad news to financial institutions.

Will the government at least implement a transparent arbitration process?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, the government's job was to help businesses keep their employees on the payroll. Now that the programs have ended, the Canada Revenue Agency has an auditing job to do. We are going to do that, as promised. The work is going well. The goal is also to recover the amounts owed to our workers who also worked and paid their taxes during the pandemic.

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● (1500)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, only 57% of the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendations were implemented this year. That is only half. The worst offender with respect to the French language is not Air Canada, it is the federal government itself. How many recommendations has Transport Canada followed? Zero. How many recommendations has Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada followed? Zero. How many recommendations has the Prime Minister's Office followed? The answer is still zero.

How can Quebeckers trust this government to protect French when it boycotts the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendations?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we are the first government to recognize the decline of French, and that is why we are moving forward with Bill C-13. It is an ambitious bill that will make changes in federally regulated private businesses throughout Quebec and in regions with a strong francophone presence outside Quebec.

I think that when we look at the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendations, it is important to give him more tools to do his job. He must do his job, and that is why we have really improved his work tools. We look forward to seeing the bill passed.

*Oral Questions**[English]***ETHICS**

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during a Liberal-made inflationary crisis, Canadians are having a hard time choosing between heating their homes and feeding their families. We found out today that, instead of having the backs of Canadians, they are helping Liberal insiders get rich.

The Liberal international trade minister was caught red-handed and found guilty of breaking ethics laws by giving a sweetheart contract to her friend, the CBC pundit Amanda Alvaro. Will the minister resign?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the commissioner for his important role in ensuring transparency and accountability in our institutions. As the report indicates, I take full responsibility for my actions. I should have recused myself, and I apologize for not doing so.

At no time was there any intention for anyone to benefit inappropriately. My efforts fell short of my own high personal standard for transparency and accountability, which Canadians have a right to expect from their elected officials. I am sorry, and it will not happen again.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the trade minister were truly sorry, she would pay the money back. In fact, she is the fourth Liberal cabinet minister to be found guilty of breaking the law by the Ethics Commissioner.

The trade minister got caught giving two sweetheart deals to her friend, who also worked on her campaign. The minister said there is simply no excuse for contracting with a friend's company. After Bill Morneau got caught, he did the honourable thing and resigned.

Will the trade minister follow suit and resign immediately, or does the Prime Minister have to fire this corrupt minister?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have taken and am taking full responsibility for my actions. I should have recused myself. I am sincerely sorry for not having done so. What I want Canadians to know is that this will not happen again.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade says she takes full responsibility for her actions.

What does it mean to take full responsibility for one's actions in the House? It means doing something, not just apologizing, but assuming responsibility.

She used her authority to award 20,000 dollars' worth of contracts to a Liberal friend. She is the fourth Liberal minister to be caught by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He said, "There is simply no excuse for contracting with a friend's company".

Yes, she has apologized, but will she do the right thing and step down?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has already apologized, and it is clear that it was not for personal gain.

The minister has certainly accepted all the recommendations and has already answered questions from the other side of the House.

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● (1505)

JUSTICE

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to know that our justice system is fair, accessible and efficient, and that includes the judiciary.

Can the Minister of Justice explain to us why Bill C-9, which recently received the unanimous approval of the House, is a crucial step toward achieving that objective?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle.

I am very proud that Bill C-9 received the unanimous approval of the House. That sends a very clear signal. We take our responsibility toward our justice system very seriously.

The changes our government proposed to the Judges Act will strengthen the process for handling complaints against federally appointed judges. The changes will ensure that the judicial misconduct complaints process will reach final decisions in a fair and timely way and at a reasonable cost to the public purse.

We will work with the other place to get this bill passed—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

* * *

*[English]***CARBON PRICING**

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, startling Environment Canada reports show that Canadian greenhouse gas emissions have dramatically increased under the Liberals. That is because they have failed to build public transit projects that would pull cars off the road. They have failed to provide non-emitting sources of electricity to places that really need it. They have crushed Canadian energy producers who are world leaders in decarbonizing energy production.

The carbon tax is not reducing emissions, but it sure is making Canadians poorer and less energy secure. When will the Liberals cancel it?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual, the Conservatives are spreading misinformation. We are on track to meet our targets, which are in 2030.

What did Conservatives do when they were in power? They did absolutely nothing for 10 years. They blew up our emissions quotas in the Kyoto accord. They cut \$350 million from the environment and climate change budget. They gutted our environmental laws. Now the Conservatives are blaming us for their inaction.

They have no plan for climate change. They have no plan for the economy. They certainly have no plan for affordability.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals use the term “misinformation” to try to gaslight anyone who uses facts to counter their narrative, and that is wrong.

There is one inconvenient truth that the Liberals want Canadians to forget when it comes to the fight against climate change, and that is that the only government under which Canadian greenhouse gas emissions decreased was the last Conservative government. We had a decrease. We had a balanced budget. The economy was growing.

The Liberals have doubled the debt, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. When will they cancel the carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2004, the Liberal government in Ontario moved to shut down coal-fired power, and the federal Conservative Party claimed that was its climate plan. In 2008, the global economy crashed, bringing emissions down with it for a time, and the Conservatives called that a climate plan. This year, the value of Bitcoin failed significantly, and this was an economic—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt. We were kind of doing well, and now it is getting out of hand. I understand everyone is excited about Christmas coming, but they should try to contain their excitement.

We will let the hon. minister continue from where he left off, please.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the value of Bitcoin increased significantly and then crashed spectacularly, and for the Conservatives, that was an economic plan.

Canadians deserve thoughtful plans to address their very real concern about climate and about the economy, not reckless rhetoric from Conservative politicians.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government loves to tax Canadians. It implements schemes such as its ineffective carbon tax, a plan that has done absolutely nothing to lower emissions while it attacks the economic lifeblood of western Canada, yet it expects the good people of Saskatchewan to pay more in ever-rising taxes.

Oral Questions

This Christmas, will the Liberals finally stop forcing their failed carbon tax on Canadians?

● (1510)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the great question of this Christmas season is, “When will the Conservatives actually stick up for Canadians by making sure that those who are suffering right now and need help in the face of global inflation can actually get it?”

Time and time again, the Conservatives have voted against our measures. Of the two visions in this country right now for how to govern, the voters of Mississauga—Lakeshore spoke last night, and who did they vote for? They voted for a Liberal. We will have the backs of Canadians through this Christmas and into the new year.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States and Canada have a strong relationship built on working together to achieve shared goals. Just last week, the Canadian Coast Guard and the United States Coast Guard signed the renewed joint marine pollution contingency plan.

Can the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard inform the House what this important agreement means for protecting water and coasts?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity for his strong advocacy for his constituents.

Canada and the United States do indeed have a strong tradition of co-operating in protecting our waters and minimizing oil spills. This agreement gives our countries better and stronger mechanisms and tools to respond to marine spills by working even more closely together. Alongside the U.S., we will continue to protect the oceans and keep our coasts clean and safe, and this agreement will help do exactly that.

*Oral Questions***FIREARMS**

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people deserve to know they are safe from gun violence in our communities. Bill C-21 was an opportunity to limit handguns and protect victims of domestic violence, but instead of protecting people, the Liberals made a last-second change that would unfairly impact hunters, farmers and indigenous people and the tools they use for food security and protection.

Concerned constituents in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith want to know when the government will listen and clean up this mess.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure my colleague that we are indeed listening to indigenous peoples. Last week, I spent the better part of a morning consulting and engaging with indigenous leaders right across the country to make sure we protect indigenous traditions, including as it relates to food security.

We are creating space for indigenous-led initiatives when it comes to public safety, and we are going to make sure the language of Bill C-21 aligns with our government's priority, which is to take those guns that were designed for the battlefield off our streets and protect indigenous traditions at the same time.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals could not be more out of touch with northern and indigenous communities. Indigenous leaders at the AFN unanimously oppose the Liberals' amendment to Bill C-21. This amendment is a threat to indigenous and northern ways of life. It is a slap in the face for communities that depend on hunting and trapping to live, people who are facing some of the highest costs of living right now. Bill C-21 was meant to be important legislation to deal with handgun violence, but the Liberals have chosen to play cheap political games.

Will the Liberals withdraw the amendment, stick to the main bill and stand up for northern and indigenous peoples, who are struggling right now?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always respect hunters, sport shooters, and indigenous peoples and their traditions.

Our government has been extremely clear. We are not targeting hunting rifles. We are not targeting shotguns. This is about guns that were used at Polytechnique and the mosque attacks in Quebec City and South Simcoe. This is to create safer communities for all Canadians.

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Siobhan Coady, our former colleague and current Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also would like to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Elvis Loveless, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière on a point of order.

● (1515)

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House call on the Prime Minister to meet with the premiers of Quebec, the provinces and the territories as soon as possible regarding long-term sustainable funding for health care through the Canada health transfer.

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

An hon. member: Nay.

CHARLES ROBERT

The Speaker: Colleagues, next month, Charles Robert, Clerk of the House of Commons, will retire after 42 years of service to the Parliament of Canada.

[English]

Charles was appointed Clerk of the House of Commons in July 2017. The accomplishments over those five years under his leadership were many and they were significant. Let me underline the historic move from the House of Commons in Centre Block to our interim chamber in this place. Of course, equally historic, was the nimble and efficient move to hybrid proceedings and e-voting in response to COVID-19 pandemic.

[Translation]

Everyone here has benefited from his experience and excellent understanding of parliamentary procedure. He also has a knack for distilling and explaining complex procedural and administrative questions. These qualities have made him a trusted source of advice for parliamentarians.

[English]

As a Speaker, I can attest to his briefings. They are always thorough and grounded in his encyclopaedic knowledge of history, Parliament and procedure. As a colleague and friend, I find even casual conversations with Charles leave me better informed and very often laughing, thanks to his dry wit.

Charles started his career on Parliament Hill in the Library of Parliament. Over the years, he served in this House and eventually the Senate where he was appointed Clerk in 2015.

Among his many achievements in the other place are the development of the manual, *Senate Procedure in Practice*, and a complete revision of the rules of the Senate. In addition, Charles has written numerous articles and reviews exploring procedural aspects of our parliamentary history.

Charles, you leave a legacy of scholarship, wisdom and collegiality. Your presence and sage advice have been invaluable to all parliamentarians.

[Translation]

On behalf of myself and all those who have had the honour of serving the House in the chair, MPs and employees of the House of Commons administration, I would like to thank you for your rich, long-standing contribution to our institution. You have always served with dignity, humility, a strong sense of duty and a great sense of humour.

I wish you health and happiness as you begin this new chapter of your life.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[English]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to conclude my remarks by thanking members of the committee. The 16 amendments from the NDP that were adopted have improved Bill C-18 immeasurably, and we have a much better bill coming into the House.

I look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the comments prior to question period that were made by the New Democratic House leader. With respect to the Facebook, YouTube and Google search engines, they have been a major benefactor of journalism here in Canada, yet the creators, the journalists and so forth of a lot of the things that appear in social media do not get the credit and, in particular, the compensation. What this bill would do, in good part, is ensure through the CRTC that there would be an appropriate compensation of sorts. I am a bit surprised that the Conservative Party would not support that and I do not quite understand why.

I wonder if the member has some thoughts in regard to the importance of passing this particular piece of legislation and if he wants to provide commentary as to why the Conservatives would not support this.

Government Orders

• (1525)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is asking me to imagine what it is like to be in the mind of a Conservative and I have great difficulty in doing that.

I found a bit of a muddle from the Conservative side, and we have seen this before in other legislation. On the one hand, Alberta community newspapers and Saskatchewan community newspapers stepped up. These are newspapers that basically represent nearly half of the Conservative caucus. Their representatives came to committee and said that Bill C-18 has to be adopted, but to improve the aspects from journalism so that more journalists and more Canadian newspapers can benefit from this.

Conservatives should have taken their marching orders from their constituents, including the local community newspapers across Alberta and Saskatchewan who said that Bill C-18 was needed but improvement needed to be brought. The NDP brought forward that improvement. The NDP brought forward an amendment that would allow for a two-person operation, even if they are owners and operators of that business, to access the money that would come from big tech and those negotiations. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against the NDP amendment.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, later today, I certainly will have the opportunity to, in great detail, let the members of this House and all Canadians understand why the Conservatives voted against the measures in this bill.

One of the more controversial discussions was about the fact that we wanted this to benefit local news media outlets, many of whom have one person who is the owner-operator and the journalist. Although we brought amendments to include them at committee, the NDP and the Liberal members voted against that. Why did they want to exclude ethnic media and those smaller media outlets in rural communities that only have one journalist?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, that is exactly my point. Conservatives voted against the NDP amendment that opened it up for owner-operators. That is what the community newspapers in Alberta and Saskatchewan and across the country asked for: owner-operators and part-time journalists who are working.

The NDP amendment opens it up so that if a couple owns and operates a community newspaper, they would now qualify. If two part-time journalists are employed by that newspaper or that community publication, they would now qualify, even at a part-time level. Even if we are talking about one and a half journalists in terms of full-time equivalents or even one journalist in a full-time equivalent, the publications would now qualify.

That is why I find it passing strange the NDP amendment that was so successful and has been praised by a wide variety of groups was opposed by only one party, the Conservative Party.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, again, I thank my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby. As I said earlier, it is a pleasure to work with him at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Government Orders

It is true that the NDP proposed many amendments and spoke for labour representatives, such as representatives from Unifor, who proposed many amendments that were championed by my colleague from the NDP. Several of these amendments were good ones, and some were adopted.

I would like to ask my colleague if there are any amendments he was disappointed did not get adopted. Would any of the amendments that did not get adopted have greatly improved the bill, in his opinion?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his work. The amendments that were adopted expanded the scope so it would apply to all indigenous communities and to indigenous journalists. Bill C-18 now allows indigenous publications and indigenous journalists to receive funding. That is a big improvement. Transparency and accountability are in the bill now, thanks to the NDP's amendments. The member for Drummond also proposed some very valuable amendments.

As far as transparency is concerned, the most important amendment is the one that ensures that owners who operate a small publication somewhere in Saskatchewan or in Alberta are now eligible even if those operators are also journalists. Even if they work part time, they are eligible. Every party around the table voted in favour of that amendment. The only party that voted against it was the Conservative Party.

• (1530)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, has the member ever shared a link to a news story on Facebook or Twitter? If he has, why should Facebook have to pay the Toronto Star, or wherever the link was from, because the member shared it?

Has he ever shared a link on Twitter or Facebook? Should Facebook or Twitter have to pay a fee to the newspaper whose link he shared?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I invite Conservative members to read the bill. It is always very important to read the bill before coming into the House.

What Bill C-18 does is provide an obligatory process of negotiation. Big tech has been vacuuming up money from communities right across the country, including Pembroke, Burnaby, New Westminster and communities across the length and breadth of this land. Big tech is now obliged, as it is in Australia, to fund local journalists and local publications. Big tech has benefited enormously from the journalism that has been done in communities across this country. It is now obliged to pay its fair share, because there is an obligatory negotiation process.

I am particularly proud of the NDP amendment that puts in a strict timeline, so big tech cannot play around. It cannot skate around in circles. It is obliged to negotiate fairly and fund local journalism. I am proud of the NDP amendments that were adopted. I am proud of the committee members for working together.

Bill C-18 is a bill that will benefit all Canadians, including indigenous people.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-18, in part because there has been so much misinformation and disinformation being spread by the government, including the minister and the NDP, about the bill.

First, let us talk about the situation that brought us the need for the bill.

Across Canada, local small media organizations have been disappearing. Many of them have gone out of business, in the hundreds. Even before the pandemic they were in disarray. The idea behind the bill was to try to help these local small media organizations.

When we look at clause 4 of Bill C-18, which I will read because it is important and it is the only clause I voted for, it states:

The purpose of this Act is to regulate digital news intermediaries with a view to enhancing fairness in the Canadian digital news marketplace and contributing to its sustainability, including the sustainability of independent local news businesses.

That is the intent of the bill, and I am very much in favour of that. A lot of the local media outlets, like the ones in Sarnia—Lambton, are going out of business. Where else are we going to get the local news content that we all want to have?

The idea was to somehow create a fund that would then be shared among local media outlets. The problem started there, because then the idea was to make tech giants, the digital network intermediaries like Facebook, also known as Meta, and Google pay every time somebody shared a news link.

The Supreme Court in 2011 ruled that there was no value in sharing a link. In fact, the whole purpose of the Internet is the freedom to share information that is of interest to us and others and there should not be a value put on it. As soon as we start to put a value on it, for example, that we will only charge a value and give to the news intermediaries, it is a very short step to say that everybody who shares that is sharing something of value and why should it not happen with all of them. That was the problematic premise of the bill, which just got worse. The definitions with respect to who is included or excluded are being made by the government.

Freedom of the media is a fundamental principle in Canada. That means we cannot have the government determine who is in and who is out, who can participate in this and who cannot, yet that is exactly what has happened in Bill C-18.

To make it worse, there are so many vague definitions in the bill, which have been criticized by critics, people who are copyright experts and many others. They have said that a lot of these things will need to be clarified. The government's response was not to worry, that they should trust it because it would define them in regulations, with no parliamentary oversight. That is a very dangerous situation.

The reality is that Canadians do not trust the government. Polls of late show that only 22% of Canadians have trust in government or politicians. That is four out of five who do not trust the government to do what is right, and I am in the four out of five. There was no willingness to take amendments that would have clarified the definitions and put some of these things down, with the oversight of the different parties at committee. That was the first thing.

Then the Parliamentary Budget Officer did a study that said that with the money that Facebook and Google would be giving and the approximate volume of the different links that would be shared, there would be a certain pot of money to be shared. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said it was \$350 million and the department officials said it was more like \$150 million. Therefore, it is somewhere between \$150 million and \$350 million.

However, the most interesting finding was that the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that 75% of the money would go to Bell Media, Telus and the CBC. The whole point of this bill is to try to help the local small media outlets. If Bell, Telus and the CBC walk off with the lion's share, that leaves very little money left to share among the little ones.

● (1535)

Why should we be giving any more money to the CBC? The government already gives billions of dollars to the CBC. In fact, it just figured out that the CBC should not have to go looking for advertising money and, really, should be publicly funded for another \$400 million.

There is CBC, which is likely to get the lion's share, already being funded and now taking away from the very individuals we want to benefit in this bill. It makes absolutely no sense.

In terms of trying to keep the government from excluding the voices it does not want to hear, we tried to bring some clarity to the definitions. At the beginning, it said there needed to be at least two journalists. Other than being recognized in the Income Tax Act, there was not a lot of clarity brought. Some of the amendments were brought to keep out foreign interference, but there were many ethnic and smaller outlets that were mom-and-pop shops, where maybe the owner was the blogger.

We were very happy to support that concept, but unfortunately it was tangled in with a bunch of things we could not support.

The government has the ability to fix that. It has since excluded any organization that does not have more than two journalists, and I think that is a problem.

The other thing is that the Governor in Council will get to decide everything, and then the CRTC, once it has decided who is eligible to play in the game, is going to provide the oversight for this process. When the CRTC officials came to committee, I asked if they had a lot of experience with regulating oversight of digital news intermediaries. They fully confessed that no, they have no experience in that area. It is ridiculous for the government to want to decide who can win and lose and play in the game and then put the CRTC, which already said it does not know anything about managing this, in charge. This is just a recipe for disaster.

Government Orders

Facebook, Meta and Google have been very clear that they want to help small media outlets in this country and would be very happy to donate that \$350-million pot and let a consortium of small news media outlets decide among themselves how best to split it up so that there is sustainability. There needs to be fairness.

We introduced amendments at committee to include indigenous voices. I think there are other ethnic voices in our country that have been excluded by the definitions, but if we took the money and had a panel that was looking at the local small media outlets, it could be fair in making sure there was an equitable dispersion.

Instead, Bell Media, which already shut down a whole bunch of small media outlets, is going to get part of that, 75% of it. What do we think giving it more money is going to do? It is going to continue to shut down small media outlets, and it is not going to achieve the purpose of the bill.

There were concerns expressed after Australia implemented a similar legislative model. Facebook at that time threatened to shut down content. It said it did not want to participate in this. It did not want the government regulating the Internet and regulating free speech. There was a shutdown, and then there was a renegotiation and changes were made.

When we recommended that those changes be brought to the bill and that we could learn from what was problematic in the Australian experience, we learned that it was about this phrase “undue preference”, which meant it was going to be illegal in Bill C-18 for those platforms to do what they do, which is using algorithms to upvote and downvote content. They try to keep hate speech down and things that are misinformation down, and they try to upvote things that people are interested in, things that are popular, so they need to be allowed to do that.

That was another problem we saw with this bill.

Then there are the privacy concerns of sharing information. The CRTC has a broad ability to ask people for any information it needs in order to verify that they are eligible, and then there are going to be arbitrators involved, who are not necessarily bound by the same codes of confidentiality. I have a privacy concern about that.

When it comes right down to it, we did everything we could to recommend that the government abandon this bill and instead work with the big tech giants to get a fund, get it together and divide it up among the local media outlets, so that the people who really need it will get that help.

However, here we are, in the middle of the Christmas season. Love did come down at Christmas, and not just for everyone in general but for me specifically. I am very happy to announce that I got married and so, with that, I wish everybody a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Government Orders

• (1540)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I congratulate the hon. member on her wedding.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to add to your comment, I congratulate the member on her marriage. I wish her many years of wonderfulness.

The issue before us today is about the reality that the Conservatives do not believe, as they are showing in their actions, that the tech giants, from Google and search engines to social media giants like Facebook, should have to pay into any sort of pool that would enable fairer compensation for creators here in Canada. This issue is having a devastating impact on journalism, and the member even made reference to it closing down.

Does the Conservative Party not recognize that the message it is sending to these giants is that they do not need to make changes? The Conservatives might say there is a need for changes, but when it comes down to voting, they are going to be voting against this legislation. They might have some issues with it, but at least it would enable a fairer playing field for our journalists.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, no, I do not believe the bill would do what its purpose intends.

Let us be clear: Facebook, Meta and Google have publicly said they are willing to donate funds that could be split up among smaller local news media. That would involve no government bureaucracy. It would mean the government is not picking who can be in and out. There would be nobody saying something is a violation of freedom of the press or freedom of the Internet. That could still happen, and my recommendation to the government is that it ought to happen.

That being said, I certainly do not think Bill C-18 in its current form would do anything more than give the nests of CBC, Bell and Rogers more money.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I, in turn, congratulate our colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for Saturday's happy occasion. I wish her many years of wedded bliss.

I heard my colleague express some concerns about the eligibility of news businesses. I just want to distinguish between Bill C-21, which we have also been hearing a lot about, and Bill C-18. Unlike the first bill, in Bill C-18, the government did not include a list of businesses that are excluded or included.

On the contrary, the bill has a list of criteria that businesses must meet to be eligible. This clause was improved by an amendment that requires eligible businesses to also follow a code of ethics based on fundamental principles of the journalism profession.

I want to know if my colleague, who voted against this amendment with her Conservative colleagues, believes that this amendment actually guarantees that eligible businesses will be serious,

rigorous news businesses. I would like to hear what she has to say about that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with the idea that organizations must have a code of conduct. However, I think with this amendment, the problem was with students and other individuals who do not follow the same rules. I moved a sub-amendment, but it was defeated. I think there is a bit of a problem there.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hope members will humour me so I can take this opportunity to wish my daughter Ella a very happy 18th birthday.

In addition to that, I would like to congratulate my friend from Sarnia—Lambton on her recent marriage.

On the topic before us, my local newspaper reached out to me very early on in this process and expressed its support for this concept, because it believes, as many Canadians do, that the enterprises that create content should be compensated when that content is syndicated.

Is this not a worthy goal? I would ask my friend from Sarnia—Lambton why so many of the amendments the Conservatives brought forward seemed to side with the web giants like Meta and Facebook.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, what is clear is that we want to keep the Internet free and we do not want the government choosing what needs to be done there. To do that, the best thing to do is get rid of Bill C-18 and allow the tech giants to fund something that small media outlets could themselves divide.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, right off the top, I want to state the Conservatives agree that Meta, Facebook and Google should pay. I keep hearing the Liberals, NDP and Bloc say that the Conservatives do not believe that. We do. I will talk about it in my speech, because we do believe that Meta and Google should pay. As for what they are going to pay, let us find out, because there is a big difference between what the government thinks publishers are going to get and what the PBO thinks is going to be available.

Bill C-18 came out of committee just last Friday, and this week I think we are going to see its quick passage. I really enjoyed the intent of the bill when it came out. When it was first introduced over a year ago, I loved it. It was all about helping local media. I was part of that media back in Saskatoon for years on the television side. However, Bill C-18 was about local newspapers then. That was the objective of Bill C-18 when it was first introduced over a year ago.

Our Conservative team then invited Saskatchewan and Alberta newspaper associations to testify at committee. We need Meta, Facebook and Google to pay for news. I have stated that. However, what we heard from Steve Nixon, executive director of the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association, was that the bill needed to include one-person operations to really make an impact on saving the news industry in Saskatchewan. Steve Nixon mentioned in committee that only four or five operations are going to be eligible in Saskatchewan. Through amendments, those with one and a half people and over will get money from Meta and Google. We wanted it at one, but we did not get that in committee.

Dennis Merrell of the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association said that only 50% of Alberta weeklies would qualify for money under Bill C-18. There are one-person newsrooms in Alberta, but they do not count. They would get no money out of this bill. Two people are needed to qualify.

The bill had all the right intent to preserve rural reporting of news, yet we did not get there. Unfortunately, the bill was hijacked early with the lobbying of the CBC, Bell Media and Rogers. They found a way to convince the Liberal government that they needed more money.

Many already made deals with Meta and Google before we even started in committee. This was kind of funny, because Colin McKay, representing Google, came to committee and admitted it already had 150 publishers signed up. Those with the ability to make the deals beforehand have made the deals. They saw what happened in Australia, so they made deals before the bill was even introduced, and they get the first cut of the money.

How much did these agreements go for? We do not know and probably will never know. Torstar, The Globe and Mail, National Post, Le Devoir and others have made one-off agreements with the tech giants. The little guys, whom I feel for, are left to defend for themselves. They may have to join others to negotiate. If not, they are done and will close.

We agree with Kevin Desjardins, president of Canadian Association of Broadcasters, who said there will be winners and losers with Bill C-18. It did not have to be this way, but I would say before we got started on this bill, it was all decided beforehand.

I believe, as the Conservatives believe, that the CBC should not be involved at all in Bill C-18. The CBC is already funded by the taxpayers of this country to the tune of \$1.2 billion, yet the government, in the fall economic update, gave it another \$42 million, with \$21 million to deal with this year and another free \$21 million to deal with next year.

Let us level the playing field. How do we do that when the public broadcaster already gets \$1.2 billion and an additional \$42 million? We can say we are going to level the playing field, but tell that to rural Manitoba. Tell that to rural Saskatchewan, Alberta or even Ontario, where they are trying every day to make payrolls.

• (1550)

The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated that the public and private broadcasters would get \$248 million of the \$329 million paid out annually through this bill. It is possible that the CBC will

Government Orders

be the single biggest winner. Why should that happen? As I said earlier, it gets more than enough funding through the taxpayers of this country.

An interesting note is that heritage department officials came up last week with the number that they thought Meta and Google would pay newspapers and those involved in Bill C-18. Their number was \$150 million, which kind of surprised me a bit because the Parliamentary Budget Officer, a long time ago, said there was going to be a pot of \$329 million. However, 75% of the \$329 million will go to CBC, Rogers and Bell. The little guys will fight over the rest.

Unfortunately, these local newspapers are struggling now, and the national players have already lined up and made their agreements with Meta and Google. With the one-horse show we are seeing in rural Canada, too bad for local newspapers. They thought they were going to get help in Bill C-18 because the Liberals talked about it a year ago, saying this is a bill for newspapers. However, it turned out to be anything but.

Instead of looking through the classifieds, we know that everyone goes to social media. People sell their furniture on Facebook Marketplace. Companies put jobs on LinkedIn. Service classifieds go to sites like Craigslist. It has all changed; we see it. Papers have always made their money through the classifieds, but that no longer happens.

Then there is the concern about subscriptions. They are getting cancelled because everyone wants free stuff and they are getting it for free online right now with Facebook, Google and so on.

Finally, there is advertising. The Liberal Party of Canada spent \$4 million on Facebook. It could have helped rural Canadian newspapers instead of spending that on Meta last year. The federal government spends a lot of money on Facebook, Google and so on.

Local papers used to be a primary target for government advertising and information about government programs. Years ago, they got some advertising and it helped them a lot. However, they got very little this time. When the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act was passed by the government, it gave most of the money to the big boys, such as Facebook, Google and so on. Much of the traffic does not go to the local newspapers now.

Government Orders

We have heard from industry on more than one occasion, both large and small outlets, that the government simply does not advertise as it used to. It does not make its way down to the local newspapers or outlets in any meaningful way. Instead, the government has turned more and more to online advertising on social media.

I heard about the issue when the government was advertising the COVID relief programs. Most of the money went to the big tech conglomerates, which is a bad outcome for local news. Many papers across this country have been forced to close up, leaving a void in their communities.

I am especially worried about the archives when a newspaper closes in a community. Where do the archives of that newspaper go? We should all be concerned about Canadian heritage. When a newspaper closes its doors, so does the history of a community. It is not replaced by Facebook and it is not replaced by Google. That should concern everybody in this country.

We heard testimony from department officials that funding is only afforded to the outlets with one and a half journalists or more. Many of these outlets will be left behind to perish. This is tough because we had a newspaper in Davidson, Saskatchewan, that sold for one dollar. It is still operating. Two years ago, it sold for one dollar and it is still producing local news in the Davidson area today. I feel that many of the papers in rural Canada will sell for one dollar, but the problem is that instead of selling, they are going to close their doors for good.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, listening to the member or, in particular, the Conservative member who spoke prior to him, one gets the impression that the Conservatives have an answer.

Instead of voting in favour of the legislation or instead of recognizing that the CRTC has an incredible history of serving Canadians and ensuring there is Canadian content and a much higher sense of fairness overall, the Conservative Party's approach seems to be not to worry. We should have trust and confidence in Facebook and in Google search, and they will come up with agreements with the different community media outlets. I do not have that trust and confidence that the member seems to have or the Conservative Party seems to have.

Does the member not recognize that it is only the Conservative Party inside this chamber that seems to have that trust? Could it be that its trust might be misplaced?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary should know that the CRTC has never regulated newspapers in this country. It has only dealt with television and radio. Now we are going to ask an agency to look after newspapers. The CRTC will decide who is going to win and who is going to lose. Ian Scott, the chairman, is leaving next month, so there will be a new five-year appointment coming up.

Is the CRTC capable today of regulating? We all know the answer already. It has difficulty in broadcasting. Can it afford to make the same mistakes that it made with broadcasting that I think it will make in the newspaper sector in which it has no background at all?

• (1600)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on this important issue, Bill C-18.

I sense that he is concerned about the issue of local and regional media, and I share that concern. I have had the opportunity to talk to people in the media back home who have told me to do something, but we clearly continue to have concerns about Bill C-18.

Nevertheless, should we not help our local media by moving forward with Bill C-18 and making sure that our small media outlets are really covered by this plan? The other option is to do nothing at all, slow down Bill C-18 and throw the door wide open to the libertarian model embraced by GAFAM and their ilk. Should we not make sure they are fully covered by the bill?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, I am concerned. I said that right off the top. When Bill C-18 was introduced over a year ago, the bill was designed to help local newspapers in this country. Now we find out when we peel back the onion that public broadcaster CBC, Rogers and Bell, are going to get 75% of the funding from Meta and Google. Why are they at the trough?

We dealt with Bill C-10 and Bill C-11 before, which pertained to those industries. Bill C-18 was designed for newspapers, as we have found out with the department saying only \$150 million will be raised. Is it \$150 million, or what the PBO said is a bigger pot of \$239 million?

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I worked very closely with my colleague at the heritage committee in the last Parliament.

I know the member. I know he believes strongly in Canadian media. I know he fights for Canadian media. However, I do have concerns with some of the messaging that we are seeing from the Conservative Party. During debate on Bill C-10, as an example, I heard one of his colleagues say that every single time he gets to send out an email to his constituents about Bill C-10, he makes about \$1,600.

My worry is whether the Conservative Party is taking this opportunity to fundraise or taking this opportunity to misinform Canadians for their own benefit, rather than actually trying to find productive solutions to fixing some of the problems that our media faces in this country.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Madam Speaker, a number of us in the House support local newspapers in this country. I would say 250 out of the 337 of us now, since yesterday, sponsor local newspapers with ads.

You are shaking your head, Madam Speaker. Are you are not one who puts an ad in a newspaper? I am sure the member for Edmonton Strathcona is one of them, because she knows the importance of local media, especially around Edmonton.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member is out of time, but I was actually referring to the fact that we lost a colleague yesterday.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, 50 years ago there were metal boxes on city street corners where, for 25¢, one could buy a newspaper. Each box had a window showing the top half of the front page if it was a broadsheet and the whole page if it was a tabloid. If one wanted to read anything more, one had to put a quarter in the box and remove a copy of the paper. In our cities, it was common to find three or four such boxes for competing newspapers on the same corners of the downtown of any city. Those newspaper boxes are, for the most part, long gone as the nature of the news business has changed.

Home delivery, one of the mainstays of the newspaper industry, has declined drastically. These days, most people get their news online. The news industry has changed in how news is gathered and changed in how it is delivered to consumers. Gone are the days where most people subscribe to home delivery for the morning and the afternoon.

For those in the news media, the challenge has always been to provide a public service while ensuring sufficient revenue to continue their function. Canadian journalists and publishers have always risen to that challenge.

This is not the first time technology has upended the news industry. As television became popular in the 1950s, many feared the end of print publication or journalism. Newspapers survived the challenge posed by this new medium by concentrating on in-depth reporting, which television, with its constraints, could not do. Quality journalism was still possible back then.

One could say that Google and other search engines function today as the newspapers did in the 1970s. They show the headlines but not the whole story. They provide a link for people to click on. Facebook, the other online giant the Liberals seem to be most concerned about, does the same thing. Providing a link that allows people to access and use websites could be considered by some to be a public service or an aid to the news industry. If people want to read the full article, they have to follow the rules set by the news organizations that publish it.

In the early days of the Internet, many news organizations placed their material online free for anyone who wanted to read it. Most of those now allow limited access to non-subscribers. In some ways, one could argue that the news industry should be paying the tech companies for attracting readers to their articles or their content.

Facebook and Google sell advertising on their websites and have lots of advertisements. Perhaps some of that might have gone to other media in the past. Given the way the Liberals think, it is possible and only natural that the government wants to intervene in what would be a private commercial industry.

Government Orders

Canada's Conservatives believe that the Canadian news media should be fairly compensated for the use of its content by platforms like Google and Facebook. The issue here is how that should happen and what should be the role of government, if any, in the process.

Media companies could inform Google and Facebook that linking to their news sites is no longer allowed and that breaking that rule without permission would be a copyright violation. Media companies deserve compensation for their work, and some have negotiated agreements with the tech companies for the online use of their content, which has me wondering why government feels the need to intervene.

The government, which has in the past shown its willingness to give taxpayer dollars to the news industry, does not seem to understand the difference between public and private. One would think that a billion dollars a year to the CBC would be enough to exempt it from receiving more money under the bill, but it is not.

This is flawed legislation. It seems as if this government has taken a worthy idea, which ensures that Canada has a healthy, free and vibrant press, and brought in a bill for which the ramifications have not been considered.

● (1605)

Why is the CRTC being given oversight? Despite what some Liberals may think, the Internet is not broadcasting. Print media are definitely not broadcasters. Where is the logic in asking the CRTC to oversee something when it neither has the expertise or the resources to do so? Is this all about building a new bureaucracy? Indeed it is.

The online news act is supposed to protect the struggling Canadian news industry. How could anyone disagree with such a noble purpose? Would this bill solve any problems, or would it create new ones? How would fair compensation be determined? Who would be compensated under this act and who would be excluded? Why should a government agency be making such determinations?

The tech giants have widened the reach of Canada's news organizations by bringing their materials to the attention of the people who might not otherwise know of them. I am sure this increased audience has been beneficial to all sides. Mechanisms already exist through which media can be compensated by those using their materials. We have a Copyright Act. Some companies have come to an agreement with the tech giants, so why is more government needed?

Government Orders

There is no need for this bill, except that the Liberals love to meddle in things that do not concern them at all. What other areas does the government wish to shove itself into rather than letting companies work out their own agreements?

If these technology companies feel there is value in linking to Canadian news organizations, why can they not negotiate contracts without government interference? If Canadians are turning to these tech companies for news, then the companies need to find a way to provide content. Short of starting their own news organizations, which strikes me as an unlikely possibility, they have to turn to existing news organizations. If they find value there, they will pay for it. It is very simple.

This bill defines a news outlet as “an undertaking or any distinct part of an undertaking, such as a section of a newspaper, the primary purpose of which is to produce news content”. It is a very nice definition. Those words, however, do not reflect reality. This is a dispute about money, pure and simple.

Producing news content may be the goal of those in the newsroom, those seeking to produce quality journalism for the public good. It may even be why a given publication was first founded, but is not the reason for its existence. The reality is that news outlets, like the big tech companies, exist to make money. This bill is about who gets the biggest slice of the advertising pie, pure and simple.

If news organizations perform a service by keeping the public informed about important issues, that is, in many ways, only a by-product of the business. Those running news organizations are rarely, if ever, journalists themselves. If news organizations thought they could make as much or more money by publishing only chocolate cake recipes, they would do so. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking otherwise.

Bill C-18 is flawed and probably unnecessary legislation, which puts it in line with the rest of the current government's legislative agenda.

• (1610)

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Edmonton was the place I had my start in journalism in 1998 at the Edmonton Journal, and at the time there were several newspapers in town, along with several radio stations and several TV stations, which were all producing news for the city of Edmonton. Over the past 20 years, the media landscape has really shrunk. There is not the same number of journalists out on the street reporting the news.

This is because of what the Public Policy Forum calls “vampire economics”. Facebook and Google take 85% of the funding that used to go to news for advertising. That now goes to Facebook and Google, and at the same time, they take the content produced by journalists and distribute it for free. What we have learned is that, yes, Facebook and Google are making deals with these outlets ahead of legislation similar to Bill C-18. They did it in Australia. They are doing it now in the U.S., and in Europe they are also considering similar legislation.

These are deals that are completely without government influence. They are business deals between organizations and Facebook

or Google, so there is no government interference, and what we have learned is that Facebook and Google probably would not make these deals, if the legislation were not already on the table.

I am wondering if the member opposite agrees that it is a huge threat to our democracy to see this demise of journalism in our—

• (1615)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize, but I do have to give time to the hon. member for Edmonton Manning to give an answer.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for being such a good Edmontonian and congratulate her for coming this way.

She mentioned the change in the landscape in advertising and of newspapers. The hon. member said what I said in my speech, which is that it is about the money and how big a slice of the pie is going to be. If this is a business deal that has been done in the private sector, why should the government intervene now?

The twist toward the threat to democracy is a bit rich here. The Liberals know where the threats to democracy are, and I think they have been playing to that for the last seven years. I ask them to please spare us on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, my riding has seven local media outlets: Le Clairon, Le Courrier, Boom FM, Journal Mobiles, Radio-Acton, La Voix de l'Est, and La Pensée. They all do an outstanding job.

It is, however, abundantly clear that local and regional news are dying. Philanthropy and subscriptions are no longer enough. We need to help them.

In the current context, we need them. We need them because local and regional news outlets showcase talent, happenings and current events.

In the current context, with a free market dominated by digital giants, that is no longer enough. Digital giants must contribute a portion of their profits to help local and regional media.

Why does our colleague still disagree?

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, this is another twist. This world is full of competition, and big companies are there because they have all the tools needed to be a presence.

Most of us in the House and beyond use the services of Facebook, Google and others to advertise what we do and what we stand for, so I do not think there is anything in the bill to tell us where the money is going to go and whether the money is going to go to support those small local news outlets the hon. member mentioned. That is why the bill is about nothing. It is meaningless. It is about nothing, and it is unnecessary.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the member talks about the slice of the pie. In 2020, big online web giants gained \$9.7 billion in online advertising. That is the size of the pie we are talking about, and Google and Facebook benefited from 80% of that revenue. Because smaller online platforms such as Isuma TV and Nunavut TV do not have the same negotiability that Google and Facebook have, the bill is quite important to those smaller platforms.

Does the member not agree that those supports for those smaller platforms are needed to fight against big platforms such as Google and Facebook, which are making at least \$9.7 billion a year in advertising revenue?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, basically, this bill does nothing to help these industries. Let us make sure we understand what is going on here. This bill does nothing. It is just a symbolic bill that would really do nothing.

If the small industry needs to be a presence, it needs to work on itself and needs to increase its activities in a proper business model.

That is what we support.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-18.

The Internet is supposed to be a place where anyone, regardless of their wealth, status or background, can express themselves in a place free from excessive restrictions and regulations.

The Internet was designed to be open and free. It was supposed to be a place where one could contribute on one's terms, where a business can grow on its terms, where society can learn, share and communicate on its terms, free from government overreach.

The absence of government intervention was one of the very reasons why the Internet flourished into what we know it is today, and few other inventions can be attributed to creating such a significant economic, social, and cultural growth as the Internet, but now the Liberal government has made it its priority to regulate the Internet in an unprecedented way.

The Prime Minister has decided to target the free and open Internet, and maybe for those very reasons. First, it was Bill C-10, then it was Bill C-11 and now it is Bill C-18. I believe that the expansion of the government will harm the principles of a healthy media environment for years to come.

When people hear about governments regulating the Internet, few think of Canada, and rightfully so.

At a time when inflation is reaching record highs, when the cost of gas and groceries continues to rise and when heating a home is becoming unaffordable, the Liberal government is fixated on Internet regulations. Maybe the Liberals hoped that Canadians were distracted by real-life pressures and would ignore the Internet regulations, or maybe they do not care about the real issues that Canadians are currently facing in their everyday life.

Here we are, debating another government bill to regulate the Internet. Bill C-18 would force online platforms to give away their revenues to news organizations who choose to upload their content to their platform. Canadians are rightfully skeptical when the gov-

Government Orders

ernment talks about wealth redistribution. Canadians are even more concerned when the government talks about wealth redistribution within the news and media industry.

A free and independent media is critical and important to our nation's democracy. Whenever the government tries to intervene, elected officials should pay close attention. It is our job to thoroughly examine the consequences of any attempt to hand out money or change the rules for news and media in our country.

Canadians are still questioning the government's \$600-million media bailout, but now the government is trying to create a new revenue source for media with somebody else's money. I must ask how we can maintain a free market if we indirectly subsidize companies by extracting the profits of their competitors.

It is important to note that no one is forcing news organizations to upload hyperlinks to online platforms. They are free to make this choice. Many publishers upload their content to platforms such as Facebook and Google to benefit themselves. It is no secret that more people are likely to read an article if it is uploaded online because it suddenly becomes more accessible to the public. When an article is uploaded to the Internet for the world to read, it breaks through those geographic walls that a print newspaper is restricted to.

Many writers across Canada have experienced incredible success because of their ability to upload content online. In fact, many publishers pay Google and Facebook to boost their content through ads. Without online platforms like Facebook and Google, many writers and independent news organizations would not exist today.

The Internet has provided a lot of opportunity for media companies who were previously unable to enter the market due to high barriers of entry. Members of the House should be proud of the positive outcomes that online platforms have created for content creators.

Not only is no one forcing news outlets to upload their content online, but also nothing is preventing them from negotiating individual contracts with online platforms. As of today, many news outlets have proactively entered business agreements with online platforms to progress mutual business needs without government intervention, as I heard in a previous speech here from my colleague.

Government Orders

We must also ask who will be eligible to receive the government-mandated shared revenue if Bill C-18 were to become law. The government claims that only legitimate news organizations will be eligible for these funds, but who does the government deem as a legitimate news organization? According to one of the government-written criteria in Bill C-18, a legitimate news organization must produce news “primarily focused on matters of general interest”.

• (1620)

However, I must further ask what the matters of general interest are and who determines them. I can assure members of the House that the general interests in rural Canada are different than in urban Canada, and general interests in Atlantic Canada are different than those in northern and western Canada. These are important questions that Canadians deserve the answers to.

Instead, the Liberals have left these important decisions to the CRTC, the same CRTC that is already bogged down in a mountain of responsibility from other Internet regulations that the government has initiated.

I should note that, if Bill C-18 passes, Canada's government-funded media outlet, the CBC, will be eligible for compensation. Members heard that right. There will be more money for the CBC. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that more than 75% of the money will go to the CBC, Rogers and Bell.

The government claims that Bill C-18 is to share the wealth of online platforms to smaller media outlets, such as newspapers. As an MP who proudly represents many small-town weekly newspapers, I understand that these businesses have experienced significant market pressures in recent history.

The reality is that most of the money redistributed by Bill C-18 will only go to the media giants, such as The Toronto Star and The Globe and Mail. They are the ones that have the most content online, and therefore, they will get the most money from this legislation.

Many local newspapers I represent do not even upload their content to online platforms. That means they would not see any of the money the government claims they will get. I wholeheartedly agree with local newspapers across this nation that are frustrated. However, Bill C-18 is not the silver bullet. In fact, many are warning that Bill C-18 would be detrimental to Canadian journalism.

At the beginning of my speech, I spoke about the importance of free and open Internet. It is a principle that I, and many Canadians, strongly believe in. However, Bill C-18 breaks the concept of a free and open Internet. Bill C-18 is bad for independent media, and it is bad for competition.

At a time when many Canadians believe the freedom to express oneself is threatened, the Liberal government continues down a path of unprecedented Internet regulation. It would be nice to see the government put as much effort into reducing Internet and cell phone bills as it is putting into regulating the Internet, but I digress.

I will end with a quote from Vinton Cerf, a founding father of the Internet. He stated, “if all of us...don't pay attention to what is going on, users worldwide will be at risk of losing the open and free Inter-

net that has brought so much to so many and can bring so much more.” That is very true.

The Internet, a creation that was built on the principle of being open and free, is now threatened. We can either allow the government to expand its power over the Internet, or preserve the principles it was founded on. That is why I will be voting against Bill C-18.

• (1625)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened to a few Conservative speeches. It is interesting that they line up to be Facebook's PR team. We have not seen that in Australia, whose legislation Bill C-18 is based upon. It was brought in by a Conservative government. Republicans in the United States support similar legislation in the United States.

It is only the Conservatives in Canada who are against this type of legislation, which is especially shocking since they ran on this policy in their platform. It was on page 152 of the Conservative platform. Why was he in favour of it before he was against it?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, I am looking at Bill C-18, which is what we are reviewing today. One of the more shocking and troubling things about the bill is the government knows full well that this is not going to the people who need the money the most. In doing research for this speech, it came up over and over again that it was not going to my local news media. It was not targeted to them at all. Here we have CBC, Rogers and Bell getting most of the money. What is with that, and why did the Liberals not fix it?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, our Conservative colleague spoke about free enterprise and individual initiative. He also spoke about the need to reduce the size of government as much as possible. At one time, the proponents of conservatism wanted the market and capitalism to work properly.

However, what I am hearing today is a member who is defending a market in which two companies hold an 80% to 90% share of the advertising market. That is not competition, and there is nothing fair about it. It is not effective, and it works against our constituents, those who elected us, and against consumers in Quebec and Canada. Despite all that, the Conservatives are rising in the House to defend monopolies. How does my colleague explain that?

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, I want to bring attention to something from Michael Geist's testimony in front of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage on September 23. I would encourage the member to go back and review this testimony.

He talked about government overreach. He talked about several troubling aspects of this bill when it comes to constitutional obligations and CUSMA challenges with respect to trade. However, here is the most troubling one with respect to government overreach. He said:

With regard to constitutional concerns, the bill isn't broadcast, it isn't telecommunications, and it's not copyright. How, then, does it fit within federal powers? If the government claims powers over anything involving the Internet, there are no real limits on jurisdiction.

I would keep that in mind as we debate this bill. This is a massive amount of government overreach that we should all be concerned about.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, what I do like about this bill is it would provide a role for the CRTC to assist in the negotiation process between web giants and other providers. As I mentioned earlier, web giants are showing profits in revenue of \$9.7 billion a year, so they can take advantage any way they want. There are smaller broadcaster platforms that do not have that same revenue, that need the assistance for the negotiation process that is so important and critically needed. A great place for it to go is to the CRTC to make sure there is fairness. Does the member not agree that fairness is absolutely necessary?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, the bill really was intended for those rural papers and helping them out. However, this bill is really disingenuous. It does not reflect it at all and it would not help out rural Canada at all, so we are in real trouble if this bill passes.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to enter into debate in this place and to talk about the important issues facing Canadians.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that I be given a little latitude here, as this will likely be the last time I stand in this place before we all break for Christmas, whether that be tomorrow or in the next couple of days. I would wish you and all members of this place, as well as all Canadians watching a very merry Christmas and many blessings in the new year.

Further, I also want to acknowledge the passing of one of our colleagues, the late Hon. Jim Carr. I want to acknowledge his service to this country, his many years in this place. Although we have disagreements on many issues, it is at times like this where we see the true heart of Canadian democracy in looking back at one's legacy and one's record. Certainly on behalf of myself and the people of Battle River—Crowfoot, I would like to pass our condolences along to you and your colleagues, as well as the late Mr. Carr's constituents and family and friends, who I have no doubt are grieving his loss.

As we discuss the issue of Bill C-18, we see before us something that I would suggest is typical of the way the Liberals approach many aspects of government. We hear them making accusations about how the Conservatives are somehow supporting Facebook and other social media companies and their monopoly of the Internet. I would like to take a moment to refute that.

First, I have never heard anybody suggest that social media is overly favourable to Conservatives. I would like to unpack a little as to why the very foundation of this bill is problematic. I am going to unpack that to the very basis that assumes that a government

Government Orders

agency, and in this case specifically the CRTC, should become intimately involved and exercise a great deal of authority over something which I think all Canadians, or certainly most Canadians I speak with, truly support and that is freedom of expression, freedom of the press and free expression on forums like the Internet, including social media.

One of the concerns that I have is that the very foundational elements of what is proposed here is to increase the size, scope and authority that an agency of government has. I would suggest that at the very foundation of what this bill is doing, that is deeply problematic.

It has been mentioned that Conservatives ran on a plan to ensure that big tech pays their fair share, and absolutely. However, when we look at Bill C-18 and what is included in this bill, we see that it misses the mark.

Instead of attempting to do what I think many Canadians actually support, the government instead simply increases the size of bureaucracy. As we have seen throughout the committee study, what the Liberals have said this bill would do and how much it would cost versus what the consequences of the bill could be and the actual cost are two different worlds.

Unfortunately, I do find this is par for the course for the Liberals who are great at making announcements, great at doing press releases and even writing preambles to bills. However, in many cases, when we look past the preamble, that is where the concerns and the problems are made very clear.

I am going to cut my speech a little short to ensure that some other colleagues have a chance to speak to this important bill.

I would simply highlight something that has been missing from the conversation, and that is rural voices. Specifically, I think it should be noted, as one of my colleagues did just a few minutes ago, that rural is missing out on the conversation. The biggest beneficiary of this bill would be the CBC. I have about 14 weekly newspapers, some of which do not even have a website, and local radio stations. There are small newspapers, family-owned businesses, and in some cases multi-generational operations that will not benefit from anything to do with this sort of bill.

• (1635)

At the very foundation, I find the bill flawed in how it would grant massive authority and jurisdiction to the CRTC, which has difficulty fulfilling its current mandate let alone a greatly expanded one. I look at almost anything this government touches, and the service outcomes of any department over the last seven years certainly have not been improved. Therefore, I hope members will forgive me for not trusting a massive expansion of the scope of an agency of the government. I find that deeply problematic.

Government Orders

To conclude, more bureaucracy and administration is not the solution. We need to see that freedom of the press is preserved and freedom of expression is preserved in this country. When it comes to ensuring that the big tech players in Canada pay their fair share, I fear this would create a bloated administration that falls far short of the mark that is required to actually deliver on what the objective was when the bill was first introduced.

With that, I will conclude a whole four minutes early and look forward to answering questions from my colleagues.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before we go 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 Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Democratic Institutions; the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton, Elections Canada; the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby, Health.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member has read the latest report from Australia, which has just reviewed its similar legislation one year in and found that journalism was supported. In fact, the smaller outlets in Australia did better in comparison to the larger organizations, and it has been a success. I am wondering why the member thinks it would be different in Canada.

• (1640)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, but it comes down to the reality of what we are debating here today, which is not the Australian model but rather a Liberal proposal to give a massive increased mandate and authority to an agency of the Crown in this country that has a very poor track record in accomplishing the things the government already expects it to do.

Again, forgive me for suggesting that I have significant doubts as to whether or not the CRTC would be able to one, fulfill the mandate that is being suggested within the bill, and two, actually support journalists. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that not only the cost would be more than double what the government estimated, but also that up to 75% of the revenue would not go to small, local and independent journalists. I am proud to have 14 independent weekly newspaper in my constituency. Rather, the revenue would go to the CBC, which is already funded to the tune of \$1.2 billion.

This is not Australia. This is Canada. I think the Liberals should look very carefully before voting on their bill, which is based on something that is very different from what has been proposed, reported on and seen from the country of Australia on the other side of the planet.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to share a few statistics. Fully 98% of Facebook's total revenue comes from advertising sales; Google and Facebook take 80% of all digital ad spending; and Meta, the company that owns Facebook, generated \$193 million in revenue in 2021, thanks to journalistic content, of course.

Meanwhile, let us remember that local and regional media are scraping to get by. However, we know that, if there were a frame-

work that forced that revenue to be shared, then according to a 2020 News Media Canada report, publishers could recoup \$620 million, which could support 700 journalists.

Let us also remember that, in Canada, Facebook earns 35 to 58 times more from media outlets than it pays them.

Is that not a clear imbalance and a gross injustice?

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I would simply respond to that question by asking a question. Does the member trust the Prime Minister to actually fulfill the stated objectives that are outlined in the bill? Does the member trust the CRTC, a federal Crown agency, to actually fulfill the stated objectives in the bill?

When I look at what the bill is stated to accomplish versus what is outlined in the substance of the bill versus the testimony that we heard in committee that casts significant doubt on whether it would be able to do so, there are oceans of difference between those three things. To me, that suggests it would be deeply problematic.

It is a laudable objective; however, we see a deeply problematic follow-through on the part of the government. I would urge the member to consider carefully whether or not he would entrust the CRTC with that much authority.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I lived in a time when major cuts were made to the CBC, and I saw the impacts that had on my community in Nunavut. In Nunavut, the CBC is the only provider that consistently and reliably provides broadcasting in Inuktitut.

I wonder if the member could share with us whether he agrees that my community deserves to get some of the lion's share of revenue, so that more indigenous languages can be broadcast through the CBC in other parts of the country.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the bill does not accomplish what the member asked me if I would support. Yes, I absolutely support indigenous languages having coverage. In fact, I have found it deeply problematic that while the CBC has not faced cuts, it has cut service. I think it highlights a great discrepancy that exists here in terms of what this bill is purported to accomplish versus what will take place.

I agree with the member for Nunavut. There needs to be support for small, local stations, whether they be radio, newspaper or whatever the case may be.

When I read through the bill, the testimony and what the bill is purported to accomplish, the bill purely and simply does not do that justice.

Simply put, would the member trust the Prime Minister to accomplish those objectives, when the framework proposed in Bill C-18 simply does not exist?

• (1645)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak in the House once again.

Before I begin, I also want to take a moment to offer my sincere condolences to the family of Jim Carr, the hon. member who passed away, as well as to his colleagues in the Liberal caucus who have worked with him over the years. I want to offer my thoughts and prayers to everyone.

When I decided to run for office in southern Saskatchewan, one of the driving principles for me and generally a lot of people in Saskatchewan was to see less government interference overall in our lives. That is one of the interesting elements in this bill, that it provides an opportunity to have less government interference in people's lives. That is the opportunity that exists with the bill. That is what we are going to get to as we get through the rest of this debate. As the bill has come through committee, we see how some of the interventions at committee reflect that.

Generally, a government bureaucrat in a distant office does not know what is best for individuals in a family given that family's own unique circumstances, so responsibility for those people should be left to the individuals and not to the government.

Usually, when there is a discussion about smaller government in Canada or somewhere else, it has to do with issues of expanding state power, which directly or indirectly restricts people's lives further. This results in less freedom, either because there are fewer options and choices available to make, or because sometimes it gets to the point of trying to plan citizens' lives for them. In this case, the problem with interference is not so obvious when we compare it to something like the situation in George Orwell's *1984*, or maybe the other lurking threat that is another government bill, Bill C-11. It got a lot more negative attention in its previous iteration as Bill C-10, and later passed in this Parliament as Bill C-11.

The Liberals want to hand over way too much power to the CRTC with this bill, Bill C-18, which we are debating tonight. The Conservatives stood with the people and policy experts to make our opposition absolutely clear.

When the same Liberal government with the troubling history of Bill C-11 introduces yet another Internet bill, it is reasonable for Canadians to look at it with a healthy dose of skepticism. However, the problem with government does not always come from control or overreach; sometimes it seems friendly and tries to help out with something good, but it can still create problems despite the best intentions. Unfortunately, although what we saw with this bill when it was first drafted was an honest attempt to support small media outlets, it has turned into a large bill that needlessly grows the size of government institutions.

The CRTC already wields a great deal of power in regulating the Internet and the dissemination of information, and now the government wants to further add to it. Should it have the power to determine who is considered a journalist, or the eligibility of a news agency, which is part of the process of this bill?

Government Orders

It does not end there. The CRTC can resolve disputes and issue penalties. As part of that, the bill allows it to set mandatory terms to which both parties, news outlets and platforms, must agree.

What is perhaps most concerning of all is that the CRTC would have the authority to demand information from these platforms and news outlets whenever it pleases.

At the end of the day, Bill C-18 is inflating the size of the CRTC and giving it enormous power, with little accountability, to regulate the news all of us view. This begs the question: What are the impacts of doing this? An important part of a free society is having an independent press and free speech to hold our leaders accountable, but how much can we trust the Liberals to maintain these things? If the government and the Prime Minister want to talk as much as they do about defending democracy and promoting diversity around the world, they need to take these things seriously when it comes to our own country.

Sadly, over the last year they have damaged their national reputation with respect to these values by abusing emergency powers and allowing vulnerable Canadians, including veterans, for example, to be offered death instead of the help they need. They have undermined our freedoms and respect for human dignity.

My fellow Conservatives and I have spoken a lot about the danger of censorship. I also say that I understand the importance of small media organizations and their place in the local communities, because I represent a very large rural riding. To this day, many still rely on these small media organizations to inform them of the happenings both locally and on the global stage, and rural Canada is better off because of it.

There are many of them in my riding, and they all play an essential role. For instance, the Southwest Booster, which is located in Swift Current, has been producing a weekly paper since 1969. We also have the Prairie Post, which covers both southern Saskatchewan and southern Alberta. North of Swift Current, for example, in the small town of Kyle, we also have the Kyle Times, which has been operating for a number of years. Up in the northwest corner of the riding we have papers like Your West Central Voice and the Kindersley Social, both providing a unique perspective on what is happening in their communities.

• (1650)

Cypress Hills—Grasslands is also home to The Shaunavon Standard, which was founded back in 1913, along with the Maple Creek & Southwest Advance Times and the Maple Creek News, which provide a weekly newspaper and distribute it in the southwest corner. In the eastern half of my constituency, we also find many papers such as the Gravelbourg Tribune, The Herald and the Assiniboia Times. All these papers contribute greatly to the social fabric that we find in rural Canada. In a place where most people do not have access to reliable Internet, these papers are critical to keeping my constituents informed.

Government Orders

However, through the transition into a digital world, these organizations have had to adapt and provide their service online. Before the Internet, papers like the ones I mentioned used a physical newsstand or post office boxes to promote themselves, but today, with the Internet, search engines like Google are the updated newsstands. With Bill C-18 the government is trying to interfere with this updated newsstand, and is going too far in doing so.

In this discussion, we also need to talk about the existing government support for media and how we can fix this framework. As I said, having an independent press is fundamental. However, when our media are receiving multi-million dollar payouts from the federal government, their independence quickly comes into question. The common saying, “Never bite the hand that feeds you,” exists for a reason, and I believe it applies to this situation.

Let us be honest: The job of the media is at times to bite, to seek for answers, to find the truth and to hold those in power to account. However, they cannot fully do this when they know it may impact their subsidy. Many Canadians have seen a subtle shift in the private corporate media, with its reporting starting to resemble that of the CBC, which, as a state broadcaster, receives over \$1 billion directly from the government. Because of that relationship, the question is raised as to how much the organization can operate like a PR firm of the federal government. That is why we have previously called for reviewing its funding and mandate.

Having said all this, my concerns with Bill C-18 do not stop with media independence and the newly proposed powers of the CRTC, but extend also to the current government's attempt to interfere in a free market. Bill C-18 would require search engines like Google to pay a royalty to an organization that is putting out information, but the government claims this is only minimal market intervention.

Earlier in my speech I talked about many of the small newsprint operations that we have in southwestern Saskatchewan. Here in the House, we have many former members of the press or journalists or those who have been news anchors or different things over the years. I would submit that the majority, if not all the organizations they worked for, would not receive a penny from any of the funds that would be raised by doing this.

First, the government would allow media outlets and organizations to reach a deal on their own. However, if they failed to do this, the CRTC would force both parties into a binding arbitration process whereby the government would get to set the terms of the deal. If an outlet and the organization reached a deal on their own, but the CRTC officials felt the outlet was not using the money appropriately, they would say the deal was invalid and force the two parties through the arbitration process.

They cannot call this “minimal market intervention” when they are giving an institution the power to force two organizations into a binding arbitration process as well as the power to apply hefty fines. A thing is not market-based when the government needs to step in and force two companies to make a deal or face a large fine from the government if they fail to make a deal.

While the government should aim to support small media outlets, protecting their independence should be front of mind. The implications of Bill C-18 are too far-reaching, and with the lack of guide-

lines there is great potential for the government to abuse this process. That is why we have opposed this bill and will continue to do so.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find the Conservative Party interesting. I understand the Conservatives actually had an election platform issue on which all the Conservative candidates were saying they supported what is taking place in Australia and the Australians' approach to dealing with it. That is the approach this bill is a reflection of. Therefore, it seems to me that the members of the Conservative Party are saying, once again, that even though they would have made the commitment to do something, they obviously met with someone. Something has caused them to change their minds. Now they do not believe government should play a role in Google search engines or Facebook. They are saying we should just have trust in Google and Facebook, because they will work it out with all the other media outlets.

Why did the Conservative Party once again abandon an election platform? Is it the change in leadership? Is it the so-called new direction that the Conservatives are taking? Why did they abandon that policy commitment to Canadians?

• (1655)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, our party is not beholden to Facebook, and we are not beholden to Google. We do not take our marching orders from big corporations like that. We are not listening to special-interest lobby groups and informing our policy decisions based on that. Too often, we see that from the Liberal side of the aisle.

As I outlined in my speech, this is talking about our small-town news and print media. Quite often they are the best at providing the most up-to-date local, relevant information that people want to see and hear. They do appropriate and proper journalism.

What we are seeing from many of these large organizations is basically government-subsidized opinions. That is not what Canadian taxpayers want. What they want is to see better respect for the taxpayer dollar, but also to have media outlets that are going to provide them with true, accurate and reliable journalism. That is what our small-town papers do. They are the ones that are going to be left out, and the bill would do nothing to help those people.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

As this is very likely the last time I will rise to speak in 2022, I want to offer my condolences to the friends and family of the Hon. Jim Carr. I also want to wish everyone happy holidays, including you, Madam Speaker.

That being said, my colleague spoke a lot about the importance of local media. As I said before, representatives from the local newspapers *La Voix de l'Est*, *La Pensée de Bagot* and the *Journal de Chambly*, and even Radio M105, a great community radio station that is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, all came to see me to say that legislation was required and action absolutely needed to be taken.

The Liberals have invested a lot in ads on GAFAM and other platforms, and the Conservatives are pushing for a form of libertarianism on social media and with GAFAM. This goes against the importance of news reporting that respects a code and aligns with what journalism should be. Journalism is about providing information on local current events and reporting real news, not disinformation.

What does my colleague think about the importance of local media for democracy and for a healthy news ecosystem?

[English]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. We talk about our local news media or our local papers, and maybe someone is fortunate enough to have a local TV station. The local news media that is present in Quebec is obviously going to provide the local news and perspective for Quebec, and the local news media in Saskatchewan is going to provide our perspective, but when we see a bill like this, it is not going to boost and enrich the ability of the organizations to do what they are going to do. We are hearing the government say it is absolutely going to do that, but the reality is we always see that it is our small towns and our rural and remote communities that have people who have a diminished voice in this country. They are the ones who are always the first to lose out. They are the first ones to be eliminated because of decisions like this that are made.

We need to support and promote our small-town papers and our small-town TV and radio stations. The bill would not do that.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands made an impassioned defence of this idea of unbridled deregulation. I find it somewhat questionable, because when giant corporations form monopolies we see that many of the impacts on Canadian society are negative ones.

Does he not agree that the federal government, and governments of all sizes, have a role in limiting the negative impacts of monopolies in our country and in our economy?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, we definitely do not want to see monopolies. Right now one of the biggest monopolies in the country is the amount of tax dollars that the CBC receives. I think the money the CBC receives could be better utilized and allocated to other means, and we have a good platform of what to do with the over billion dollars that heads in that direction.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you

seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practices of the House:

(a) Bill C-278, An Act to prevent the imposition by the federal government of vaccination mandates for employment and travel, standing on the Order Paper in the name of the member for Carleton, shall now stand in the name of the member for Niagara West and be placed in the order of precedence at the same place and stage as Bill C-285, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act, and be deemed to have been reported to the house pursuant to Standing Order 91.1 recommending it not be designated non-votable, and the order for the second reading of Bill C-285 shall be discharged and the bill withdrawn;

(b) Bill S-202, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Parliamentary Visual Artist Laureate), standing in the name of the member for Bow River, shall now stand in the name of the member for Cloverdale—Langley City; and

(c) Bill S-4, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act and to make related amendments to other Acts (COVID-19 response and other measures), be deemed adopted at report stage on division and be deemed adopted at the third reading stage on division.

● (1700)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

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)

MEDICAL FREEDOM ACT

(Bill C-285. On the Order: Private Members' Business)

June 15, 2022—Member for Niagara West—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Health of Bill C-285, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Canada Labour Code and the Employment Insurance Act.

(Order discharged and bill withdrawn)

CRIMINAL CODE

(Bill S-4. On the Order: Government Orders:)

June 21, 2022—Minister of Justice—Consideration at report stage of Bill S-4, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Identification of Criminals Act and to make related amendments to other Acts (COVID-19 response and other measures), as reported by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights without amendment.

(Bill concurred in at report stage, read the third time and passed)

*Government Orders**[English]***ONLINE NEWS ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, several of my colleagues have spoken in the last day and a half about a member who is no longer with us. Over the number of years I have been here, we have lost a number of members in different ways. It is not just a member from one group or one caucus. It is a member of the House. We are 338 members and it is one of us. We all know the role that we have here. We know the commitment people make to be in this position. It is an honour and a privilege to do it, but we all understand the loss when we lose one of our 338 members. It is always a hardship. I recognize the challenges we have as members and losing one of us is a tragedy for us all.

Moving onto Bill C-18, I had been on the heritage committee before but I came back onto the committee when it was just getting to the bill itself, the amendments and going through the legislation.

There probably is not a heritage minister who I have not seen in committee at one time or another. They all know I speak about weekly newspapers. I talk about how important they are in Canada. There is probably not a heritage minister who does not know that I would be up here talking about weekly newspapers and supporting how critical they are to our communities.

The bill's purpose refers to including the sustainability of news businesses and independent local ones. In my riding I have a minimum of 15 papers, and some other ones that people would say are not weekly papers, in communities in my riding.

These are phenomenal pieces of communication that are important to the riding and important to the communities. We saw what was initially set out in this piece of legislation, as I came to be back on the heritage committee, and there were many amendments that could have made this piece of legislation much better, but it was not improved.

That is the challenge in being on the committee. We are trying to work through it. Our job is to improve legislation. This bill could have been improved, but it was not improved enough.

I have many community newspapers in my riding. We have had Brooks Bulletin since 1910 from one family of three generations. The Strathmore Times goes back to 1909. The Bassano Times is more recent, from 1960. The Three Capital Hills paper is 107 years old. The Vulcan Advocate is from 1913. The Drumheller Mail is from 1911.

These are long-standing weekly papers in the community. They are very important for those communities. They really were hopeful that this legislation would be something that could help them. I have talked to a lot of the papers individually and in groups. They said that we should work for them and make this a piece of legislation that will support them. They are weekly newspapers.

I know my colleague to the west of me has worked for a weekly newspaper. It is an interesting challenge. My father had a weekly

newspaper that I had the opportunity to spend time working at, especially during the summers when I was not in university.

It is often a one-person or two-person operation. People are working those deadlines to get those news stories out. They are getting out in the community and taking pictures. They are rushing to make a midnight deadline so the paper can be produced and they can go home before the sun comes up. They can get that local story out and get the local activities out that need to be promoted in the community. This occurs all across the country.

My riding happens to be home to the Brooks Bandits. The Brooks Bandits are a junior hockey team. There are 132 teams in this country in many of the smaller communities. Who covers those 132 communities? It is the hardest hockey championship to win in this country. The teams are in the smaller communities, like Okotoks, Drumheller and Brooks. The Brooks Bandits have won that championship three times in the past. Who is covering that? It is not the CBC. It is not Bell Media. It is the local newspapers.

• (1705)

One could say that it is just local hockey players. Well, guess what? Who was the MVP in the Stanley Cup? It was Cale Makar. Where did he play? He played for the Brooks Bandits. Nobody in the major media paid any attention to him until he was the MVP. That is the level of coverage that local communities do. For the 132 teams across this country, for example, and for many people sitting in the House, those teams are covered by weekly papers.

The weekly papers often have one or two employees. One of the amendments that I was asked to work on was for the owner-reporter, which was the one reporter working there, to qualify for this. Under the legislation, there had to be two journalists, and the owner-operator could not be one of them. What nonsense for weekly newspapers. They are often ma-and-pa operations. Often the editor-owner is a writer and has one other person writing with them. We did get an amendment that reduced it from two to one and a half, but that was not enough. Bassano Times is a one-person operation of a newspaper in that community of 1,200. It is one person, and it does not qualify for this.

The legislation could have been better. It could have met the purpose that it was set out for, but it does not. It does not do what we need for weekly papers.

I mean, we have heard already that the money was on the table. Am I out there saying that Google, Meta and Facebook should be paying? Absolutely, and we have said to put the money in a pool and let us get it negotiated. Obviously, 75% of the money is gone. People have figured out that they need to negotiate. However, it is Bell, Rogers and CBC that got 75% of the money already. I do not think the Toronto Maple Leafs and that hockey team need more money. That is not what it was for.

This was for supporting journalists at the weekly papers that are the lifeblood in our communities. Those are the reporters of those single papers who are out there on the weekend, out there on a Saturday night or a Tuesday night, and on Sunday, they are writing the stories. Those newspapers do charity advertising for charities in our communities. Communities in Bloom, which is all across this country, is an example. Local papers are writing stories about how great their communities are doing, such as Communities in Bloom, and they doing it often for free. That is how they get promoted. Weekly papers are very crucial, as is this particular one.

As many ministers have known, I have asked, “Where is the money for your advertising?” Many ministers said to me, “Well it is decided by every department where their advertising dollar goes.”

I have said, “I have had many weekly papers where 30% of their income, because they are small, used to come from government advertising, and that is gone. Where did the Canadian taxpayers' money go?”

It went outside of our country to Facebook and Google. To me, that is hypocrisy. We should be advertising in media productions and weeklies in our own country. That is where the dollars should have gone.

I support the idea of creating the fund, working at it and getting it divided up. Obviously, 75% of it could be done without any interference from the CRTC. However, the weekly paper associations have told me that they would be lucky to get \$400 or \$500 out of this deal a year. All that will be left are crumbs. They will be working hard to get those crumbs, which is all that is going to be left for our weekly papers. This does not make sense.

What it was set out to do could have been better, but it is not, and that is why it is a challenge for me, for our journalists and our weekly papers.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is like following a bouncing ball. The Conservative Party said that it liked the Australian model, and put that in its campaign platform. The Liberal legislation is a reflection of the Australian model, and now the Conservative Party is saying that it does not support Bill C-18. The member says that, well, they want to be there for the smaller community newspapers, but a question was just raised that indicated that there has been a greater uptake than expected in the Australian example and community newspapers have benefited by it.

However, the Conservative Party, even though its members talk about the community newspapers, what they are really talking about is empowering Facebook and Google search engines to distribute the money how they feel is appropriate and that they will work with different media.

I wonder if the member does not realize that it is a pretty hard ball to follow because the Conservatives are bouncing all over the place on a very important issue.

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate a question from the member across the way.

Government Orders

I do not have any problem following the bouncing ball, like that one we see in the hockey games, where we watch the ball and which cup it ends in, and people figure it out and get to win a prize. I can follow that one. The member needs some more practice at that one because I can follow that bouncing ball.

I will give another example of where the legislation had a problem. Where was the indigenous piece in this?

In my father's weekly newspaper, there was a gentleman. He was a war veteran, indigenous, from the Kainai reserve. He started a weekly newspaper with support from my father, a weekly paper, the first one on the Kainai Blackfoot nation, and it was a struggle. This piece of legislation did not have it in there. Why not? Why was it not there?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, Le Clairon, Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe, Boom FM, Journal Mobiles, Radio Acton, La Voix de l'Est, La Pensée de Bagot, NousTV and TVME are the local and regional media in my riding. I want to pay tribute to them. They do incredible work. Some of them are community media. However, they are only scraping by. Not everything is rosy.

We need them. They are essential for bringing us the latest news on events, local culture, artists, sports teams, what elected officials are up to. We need them because these stories does not make national broadcasts and the national news. That is why we need information about what is happening in the area and the region.

What are we now telling them? We are telling them to give up, to let the digital giants dominate this market, crush them, suck them dry. Well, I am saying no. That would be suicide.

Why does my colleague not understand this?

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I think that is just what I said. I am not sure what he missed in that, but I said this is a piece of legislation that is going to leave them crumbs to do what the member wants and what I want. It is not going to leave them what we think they deserve. This legislation is just not going to do it.

• (1715)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, Jeanette Ageson, with the Independent Online News Publishers of Canada, is quoted as saying that, without these amendments, small newsrooms that are operated by start-up entrepreneurial journalists would have been left out of opportunities to negotiate with web giants.

Can the member explain the discrepancy between the Independent Online News Publishers of Canada and how he understands this bill to be?

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I appreciated the time that the member and I worked on the indigenous committee together. She brings a unique perspective, and I very much appreciated working with her on the indigenous committee.

Government Orders

She is exactly right in saying what the amendment did not do, which was go far enough to fix that. That is what we worked for. It was an amendment that would have given that type of production the ability to negotiate, but it has been left out because it does not qualify.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to participate in debate in the House of Commons on behalf of my constituents in Chilliwack—Hope.

I do want to take some latitude, as I have noted has been given to other members, to pay tribute to Jim Carr. I had the honour to serve as the critic for natural resources during the time Jim was the natural resources minister. I disagreed vehemently with Jim on almost all of his policies, but it was impossible to dislike him as a man. I had the opportunity to travel with him, as critics and ministers often do, and we spent more time together than I think I spent with many family members over that period of time, in places like Mexico, Rome and China. I got to see Jim shine in those scenarios.

I even got to see him dance at the opening of a Mexican playground. A Canadian mining company had opened a playground for the children in the community near its operation, and he was not invited to dance, but he took it upon himself to join in the festivities. It is a memory I will always cherish. He was a good man who loved his family, and he will be missed, not only back at home in Manitoba, but also here in the House. I want to pay tribute to him, and I think of his family and his colleagues, who have all been devastated by the news.

I will move now to Bill C-18, the online news act. We have been hearing all day about some of the issues Conservatives have with the bill, and we think it would miss the targets. It would not do what it is intended to do, and it has been a bit rich to hear members of the Liberal government and its coalition partners in the NDP talk about web giants hovering up advertising revenue. If we go through the public disclosures of their MP expenses, we will see tens of thousands of dollars in voluntary advertising payments to Facebook, so forgive me if I think it is a bit rich to be hearing about these web giants swooping down to Hoover up ad revenue when members of Parliament are feeding tens of thousands of dollars into Facebook or Meta's bottom line.

Let us not get too self righteous here about what we are talking about, because members of Parliament, when they want to communicate with their constituents, as do many Liberals and NDP members, have no problem giving money to those web giants to use their platforms to communicate with constituents.

Members do not simply give to their local papers. They do not simply give to local online news organizations. They have willingly given money from their member of Parliament budgets to Facebook and others, so let us just spare the self righteous sanctimony about the evil of Facebook, when they are voluntarily giving it tens of thousands of dollars a year out of their own budgets.

In Chilliwack—Hope we now have only one weekly newspaper in each community. There is the Hope Standard and the Chilliwack Progress, which serve those communities respectively. It used to be, when I was first elected, that there were two local newspapers in Chilliwack, the Chilliwack Times and the Chilliwack Progress, and they both published two papers a week. We are down from two or-

ganizations with two newspapers, for a total of four editions a week, to one edition per week.

However, if we ask the Chilliwack Progress's editor, he is quite bullish about its current situation. He talks about its various revenue streams, and whenever somebody calls into question the paper's longevity and whether the Chilliwack Progress will survive, he assures his readers and the people in Chilliwack that it is on a strong financial footing and that they will be just fine.

Out of those closures of some of those newspapers came innovation. Journalists who had been employed, for instance, at the Chilliwack Times took it upon themselves to gather a couple of other journalists, and they formed the Fraser Valley Current.

● (1720)

They put together an online news service that actually uses Twitter and Facebook to distribute its product to our community. They did particularly excellent work during the flood and mudslide events that took place in and around my community in November of last year. They were on the ground, providing detailed analysis, things that, quite frankly, a weekly newspaper just cannot do. That was born out of innovation. They did not wait for, or need, a government incentive to create this. They went out into the marketplace and have been very successful in doing so.

We also have the Fraser Valley News, which is an online organization run, as far as I know, by one journalist who used to work, for many years, in different radio newsrooms right across the country, as most radio news people do. They move around from small town to small town, covering small community events that are ignored by the bigger publications. Don Lehn had the final layoff from the local radio station when it was cutting back on its news services, and he took it upon himself to create the Fraser Valley News, which continues today. Again, he has a business model that seeks online ad revenue, etc. He did not need Bill C-18 to succeed.

We have Fraser Valley Today, which is another online news organization that has come out of when other newspapers have left the town and there is a void. When the newsrooms were cut from the local radio station, there was a void, and it was filled by journalists who wanted to provide a service to our community.

That innovation, the unique business model they have sought out, has been one that has worked for them. My fear was echoed by Jen Gerson at the committee, when she said this about the bill:

[I]t is predicated on a lie. The bill adopts a very ancient complaint of newspaper publishers that aggregation-based news websites and social media networks are unduly profiting by "publishing" our content. However, we know this isn't true. In fact, the value proposition runs in exactly the opposite direction. We publishers are the ones who benefit when a user posts a link to our content on Facebook, Twitter and the like. This free distribution drives traffic to our websites, which we can then try to monetize through subscriptions and advertising.

She went on to say:

I suspect that what we see here is a form of rent-seeking behaviour in which struggling media corporations are using every last iota of their dwindling financial and social capital to lobby for subsidies and regulations like Bill C-18.

I fear that Bill C-18 is going to backfire spectacularly, undermining the very problems it is trying to fix.

Peter Menzies, a former CRTC commissioner, said:

Bill C-18 will only perpetuate a market already distorted by subsidy and it will punish independence.

He went on:

If Parliament values a free press, it will not approve Bill C-18.

He continued:

Bill C-18 is as likely to kill journalism in Canada as it is to save it. The very prospect of it is already perverting news coverage and undermining trust, the commodity upon which the industry depends most. Bill C-18 will permanently entrench the industry's dependency not on the loyalty of citizens, readers and viewers, but upon the good graces of politicians and the ability of offshore, quasi-monopoly tech companies to remain profitable.

Those are some of the people who have been directly involved in the industry. Jen Gerson used to be involved in the traditional news model and has moved to an online subscriber model. She recognizes that this independence and this business model are what work for her, and that organizations who say they need a subsidy model are in fact distorting that market and are going to be competing with her and her organization, which has gone out into the market to seek innovative solutions.

There are local journalists who are struggling, but I think we need to encourage them to use the tools that are available and, quite frankly, to take a look at some of the entities that have succeeded in this market and are innovating and adapting to changes in the way we consume our news.

• (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, advertising on Facebook and advertising in community newspapers, both of which I do, has not compromised in any way my wanting to see this bill pass. The Conservatives who advertise on Facebook take the position, after a reversal, that they no longer support the government's bringing in legislation to ensure that companies like Facebook, YouTube and Google are obligated to support media here in Canada.

I wonder how members of the Conservative Party can justify flipping their position from the last general election, now telling Canadians that this bill is bad for them, when in fact the Bloc, the NDP, the Liberals and I believe the Greens—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, the fact that the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc support the bill gives me confidence that our opposing it is the right position to take. Quite frankly, the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals supported the amendments to Bill C-21 until very recently when they started to hear from their constituents.

What I pointed out was the hypocrisy of Liberal and NDP members standing in this place and talking about this magical hoovering

Government Orders

up. I kept hearing that the tech giants are hoovering up all of this advertising revenue when no one was forcing Liberal and NDP members of Parliament to give Facebook and Google money from their members' operating budgets to pay for advertising. That was the part I was pointing out. There is a hypocrisy in crying about that and at the same time feeding the problem.

I will take no lessons from the member on this matter. It is a position that we do not support, and we will be happy to oppose this bill.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a proud journalist for almost 25 years and having worked for Charles Clark newspaper in High River, I would say that journalists face, much like politicians nowadays, a lack of public trust. We saw that with the Liberal bailout of the media several years ago, and I know many of my constituents are questioning the integrity of journalists.

When there are government subsidies or government bailouts of the free press, what impact is that having on community trust when it comes to Canadian journalism?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I cannot put it better than the Independent Online News Publishers of Canada, which said:

Any government intervention into the free press, however well-intentioned, must be carefully considered, as there is a potential to warp outcomes, stifle innovation, determine winners and losers, and compromise journalistic independence.

In its current form, Bill C-18...fails this test.

I agree.

• (1730)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, with the passing of the Hon. Jim Carr in mind, I would like to begin by offering my condolences to our colleague's family and friends. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all members of the House a happy holiday season.

Getting back to my colleague's speech, it is important to remember that Meta, the company that owns Facebook, generated \$193 million in sales in Canada in 2021 from journalistic content. In Canada, Facebook makes between 35 and 58 times more money from the media than it pays to the media.

Facebook and Google should be forced to share those revenues, and the Conservatives know what “triple, triple, triple” means, so as to ensure that the media wins.

Would my colleague comment on that?

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, as I have said, Bill C-18 would, in our view, threaten the independence of local media. It would not allow single-journalist outfits, like those I mentioned in my riding, to qualify. Therefore, we cannot support it.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I suspect that if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to allow us to extend Government Orders to deal with this issue, if the debate has collapsed, so that we can have a vote to possibly pass it with a division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

[Translation]

The House has heard the terms of the motion.

All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 14, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 5:33 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (child sexual abuse and exploitation material), as reported from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

• (1735)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC) moved that Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (child sexual abuse and exploitation material), as amended, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold moved that Bill C-291, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts (child sexual abuse material), be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am honoured once again to rise in the House as a representative of the amazing people of North Okanagan—Shuswap to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-291, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

This may be the last time this bill is debated in the House, and I am compelled to thank the many Canadians who have helped progress this important legislation forward.

At the outset, I must thank the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, who was central to the conception and drafting of this bill. The hon. member possesses a keen sense of how we can and should improve Canada's laws. I thank the member for his work on the bill.

I must also thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, who has worked with us to move Bill C-291 through the process. I know that she strongly supports increased protection of children and support for victims of crime, and I thank her for assisting in today's debate.

It was only 26 days ago that the House debated this bill at second reading, and I thank all members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for their timely and thoughtful examination and support of this bill. I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada for proposing amendments to the bill to ensure that it captured exploitation and aligned with the definition in the Criminal Code. I also thank members of the justice committee and Department of Justice officials for their examinations of the bill at committee.

I would further like to thank the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Ratanak International and the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation for supporting this bill. I thank them for the difficult but essential work they do every day to fight abuse and exploitation of children.

I thank the hundreds of Canadians who signed e-petition 4154 calling on the House to pass this bill.

I believe we also owe thanks to the staff and officials who allow our work and debates to occur. I send my thanks to the office of the law clerk and parliamentary counsel, the Private Members' Business office, journals branch, Parliamentary interpretation and the interpretation bureau, and all of the House of Commons and parliamentary personnel who work with us every day.

I also extend my thanks to law enforcement and judicial personnel who deal with child sexual abuse exploitation in their daily roles and hope that this bill will help in their work of increasing safety for children. I thank them all.

As I stated in previous debates, child sexual abuse material is a growing problem in Canada, and Canadians look to us, their elected representatives, to take the steps, big and small, that are required to deal with problems like the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. This bill is a meaningful step that we are taking together, and I thank hon. members from all parties in supporting it. Together, we are serving Canadians.

There has been discussion between all parties and to my knowledge there was agreement to allow the debate to collapse today by keeping our speeches short so that Bill C-291 can be voted on tomorrow, moving it one step closer to calling child sexual abuse and exploitation material what it really is.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, whenever a member comes up with a private member's bill, it is always encouraging to see it get through to third reading.

I understand that there still are a number of members who would like to speak to the legislation. At the end of the day, there will be a great deal of sympathy towards seeing the change that is being proposed in the legislation before us. Could the member provide his thoughts in terms of recognizing members who have been very supportive of the name change itself?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, the support has truly been across all parties.

There has been discussion that members would limit their speaking time today so that we could move this bill as swiftly as possible to the Senate for its consideration, so that we can hopefully, very quickly, have this bill receive royal assent and move into legislation so that it can start to do the work that it is meant to do as proposed by my fellow member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

• (1740)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really would like to thank the member for putting the bill forward. Ensuring that our children are safe is probably the number one priority for all Canadians and for members in the House.

I recall the work we did on Bill C-233, which was called “Keira's Law”, and the importance of getting it through, because all parties recognized the importance of the bill. At committee, at all stages, we ensured that we allowed debate to collapse so that it could move forward. I really do hope that we will be able to get this bill through immediately so that we make a change to the Criminal Code and ensure that our children are safe.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London for all of her advocacy on women's rights, children's rights and victims' rights. She has been an incredible advocate on behalf of victims.

This bill is so important, as all parties have seen. There is no opposition to the bill. I would really hope that debate could be al-

Private Members' Business

lowed to collapse today, so we could move forward to get it through to a vote and through the House as soon as possible.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the speech he made today.

As a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I will also add my voice to that of my chair. This type of non-partisan bill that addresses the safety of our young women and our young girls is essential. As my colleague mentioned, we worked together on Bill C-233. I will not elaborate on this, but I just wanted to say that, to me, it is essential to finish the year on this note, with no partisanship, to ensure the safety of our women and girls.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, there is really no debate on this bill. Everyone is in support of it. To see it move forward as quickly as possible through the debate stage today, to allow the debate to collapse so it could go to a vote tomorrow and move on to the next stage, would be in the best interest of the children who have been or who could become victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap for his work on this bill. I also thank him for sticking to the things that unite us today and not taking the opportunity to try to divide us on issues that, at other times, do severely divide us.

We are in agreement with this bill. I will be speaking briefly to it later, and I share his optimism that we can get this done before we leave.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I thank the member from the NDP for his support and the support from his entire party on this, as they have indicated. I certainly hope that we can move this bill as quickly as possible to help protect children from child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at the outset let me acknowledge that I am speaking to you from the traditional lands of the Algonquin and Anishinabe people.

As this is my first opportunity to speak since the passing of the Hon. Jim Carr, I want to express my deepest condolences to the Carr family and my appreciation to them for sharing Jim with us, both in Parliament as well as in Canada, and for the remarkable legacy that he leaves in being who he was, such an honourable gentleman who crossed party lines and in many ways reached out across the aisle. I am heartened to see so many very positive comments coming from everyone, from all parties.

I wanted to particularly express my condolences to Ben Carr, whom many in the House may know as someone who was very much part of our government at the beginning stages. He moved on to Winnipeg, to serve his community locally.

Private Members' Business

As we close the year, Jim's passing should give us some guidance in terms of how we should not only work with each other and towards strengthening this institution, but also work across the aisle to make things happen for Canadians. As we know, one of the last things Jim did was see the passage of his private member's bill to build a green prairie economy, Bill C-235, which received unanimous support.

Today, we are in a very similar moment here, with Bill C-291, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts in respect of child sexual abuse material, brought forward by the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, providing that opportunity.

I would note that during this process we worked very well together, collaboratively, with him and his colleague, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, in terms of getting this bill both through the House and through the committee stage at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I want to thank the member and his colleague, and all members who are part of the justice committee, for working on this bill expeditiously and getting us to this point.

We must take measures to fight child sexual exploitation. We have comprehensive and robust criminal laws against it. We need to have strong and effective law enforcement, and we need to continue to advance and facilitate measures that seek to support victims.

I would like to take this time to highlight the vital work done by the child and youth advocacy centres across this country. These centres provide a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach in a safe, comfortable environment to address the needs of children and youth and their families. Children and youth who are victims or witnesses of crime in Canada deserve protection and justice. Online child sexual exploitation is some of the most disturbing conduct facing society today. The pandemic has contributed to a rise in sexual offences committed against children, including their facilitation through technological means.

In the fiscal year 2021-22, the RCMP's national child exploitation crime centre received 81,799 complaints, reports and requests for assistance relating to online child sexual exploitation, which was a 56% increase compared to the previous fiscal year in 2020-21, with only 52,306 reports received, and an 854% increase compared to 2013-14, when 8,578 reports were received, based on the internal numbers provided by the NCECC.

The website cybertip.ca, run by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, reported a 120% increase in reports of children being victimized online in comparison to prepandemic rates.

• (1745)

According to Statistics Canada, in 2020, police reported crime data which included the first year of the pandemic, as indicated, and that incidents of making or distributing child pornography had increased by 26% in 2021 compared to 2019, and by 58% over the five-year period of 2017 to 2021. Possession of or accessing child pornography increased by 44% in 2021 compared to 2019, and represents a 146% increase since 2017. Incidents of luring a child via a computer have gone up 23% compared to 2019, a 48% increase from the previous five years.

This bill changes the term “child pornography” to “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”. This new term captures the full scope of Canada's law, as well as the jurisprudence available from the last 30 years. The Government of Canada, therefore, is committed to preventing and protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation of any kind, including internationally.

Canada works closely with international partners to combat online child sexual exploitation. This includes not only the extent of information regarding new and emerging threats, but also the sharing of best practices and lessons learned in combatting this crime.

Canada is a state party to a number of international agreements to protect children from sexual exploitation, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and the convention on cybercrime, or what is called the Budapest convention.

The sexual exploitation and abuse of children has devastating and long-lasting consequences on victims. We remain committed to taking meaningful action to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse materials. Canada's existing criminal laws against child sexual exploitation and abuse materials are among the most comprehensive in the world. The Criminal Code prohibits all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse materials, including against possessing, accessing, making or distributing it, which can be punishable with a term of imprisonment of up to 14 years for each event.

Serious crimes deserve serious consequences. I, along with my fellow members, look forward to watching this important bill progress in the other place. As a community, we all have a role to play in protecting children.

• (1750)

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-291 is a bill that could, in other circumstances, be described as practically useless. It only changes some words. Changing the title of a bill and the name of a crime in the Criminal Code may seem rather inconsequential.

In this case, there is absolutely nothing inconsequential about it. In this case, we are talking about holding criminals responsible for their actions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I must remind the member he should make sure that his documents do not touch the microphone, as this bothers the interpreters.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, I was saying that in the case of Bill C-291, words carry weight.

We are debating replacing the term “child pornography”, which is currently used in the Criminal Code, with “child sexual abuse material”. The RCMP proposed the use of the term “child sexual exploitation material”.

Whether we use the term child sexual exploitation or child sexual abuse, I think that we should clarify these actions or describe them for what they really are.

Pornography in our society—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Once again, the hon. member's papers seem to be touching the microphone and that makes things quite difficult. I would like to remind the member to note that the microphone is close to him.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Madam Speaker, next time I will remember to ask for a lectern.

As I was saying, child sexual abuse has a significant connotation. It is pedophilia. When people talk about pornography in today's society, there is apparently some ambiguity around that word. The meaning and significance of pornography vary considerably from person to person. Some people may consider certain actions pornographic. Some actions, some audiovisual material and some books may be considered pornographic by some and art or just sexuality by others. To some people, it is not that at all.

I think we can live with some degree of ambiguity with respect to pornography. That may be a subject for another time in another place, but child pornography is something else entirely. Child sexual abuse is unacceptable in our society, and I think it is important not to mince words. The Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-291 because we think it is essential.

The point I want to make about pornography is that it has everything to do with the participants' consent. Child sexual abuse is totally different.

Let us look at the statistics. We are told that, in Quebec, the number of victims under the age of 18 has grown faster than the number of adult victims in recent years. We are talking about an annual increase of 9.5% in cases of child pornography, cases of sexual assault against children. Meanwhile, the number of crimes involving pornography or sexual assault against adults increased by only 4.3%. That is a lot. I am not saying that it is not significant. I simply want to emphasize the fact that what we consider abusive, namely sexual assault against adults, increased by 4.3% and we find that unacceptable. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that, for children, that increase amounted to 9.5% a year.

I think we need to take action. There are all kinds of ways to do that. I am thinking about the possibility of educating children on the topic in schools and the need to make adults more aware of this problem. All sorts of measures can be taken as part of the administration of justice to ensure that children are better protected.

In the federal Parliament we work with the Criminal Code. Yes, we may need to review some provisions of the Criminal Code, impose harsher sentences or find other approaches. One thing is certain, what Bill C-291 is proposing is no minor matter, unlike some

Private Members' Business

bills that simply seek to change the terms that are used without doing anything that has a real impact.

At the same time, I think we have to keep the issue of the healing process in mind. In the current system, an adult who sexually assaults a child could be charged with sexual assault or with using child pornography, without any real understanding of what that means. Often, children will feel responsible for acts that should be blamed on the adult who abused them.

During the victim's healing process, it is important to ensure that the victim does not feel responsible in any way. This is important. It is equally important, for the victim's sake, that we ensure that the abuser is blamed and identified as the perpetrator of the acts.

I think that being accused of having consumed, used or sold child pornography is already a serious matter. Being accused of child sexual abuse is much more serious, much more significant. Young victims will understand that the burden of what took place falls not on them, but on the abuser, the person who is accused of child sexual abuse. I think that will help in the healing process.

• (1755)

In closing, Bill C-291 is not a panacea. I said earlier that perhaps we need to review certain provisions of the Criminal Code in terms of how we deal with the offenders in question, but we also need to ensure the sound administration of justice.

We recently passed a bill that requires training for new judges who will be appointed in the federal system. They will be required to take training on sexual assault law. This is important. We want to avoid a repeat of what happened in 2017 with former judge Braun, who made wholly unacceptable comments about a young girl, saying that she should perhaps feel proud, or something like that, to have been forcibly kissed. It was unacceptable and despicable. The Court of Appeal refused to hear his appeal, as did the Supreme Court. We never want to see anything like that happen again. Training for judges is therefore important.

The bill we passed is important, but there is still more to do. Quebec and the provinces will no doubt follow suit with measures to ensure that kids in our schools and adults who work with young people are very aware of this issue. The federal Parliament has done its job with Bill C-291, and I congratulate the member who introduced this bill. I think it will be good for everyone.

I will conclude by wishing everyone a happy holiday.

Private Members' Business

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment, since it is my first time rising since the passing of our colleague Jim Carr, who was the member for Winnipeg South Centre, to express my condolences to his family and friends and to say that I faced Jim across the aisle here for quite a long time. The flowers on his desk today certainly remind us all of his absence. We often shared a nod, a headshake or a smile at things that happened in the chamber. He was one of the MPs who exemplified to me the best of what it means to be a member of Parliament.

Turning to the subject at hand, Bill C-291, the NDP will be supporting this bill as it has been retitled, “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”.

I accept the good intentions of its author and its sponsor in the House, and I believe that it is more than magical thinking, as some have accused. I think it is about making clear what we are doing and what we are condemning. We are broadening that definition so we can more easily get prosecutions done under this new title of “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”, and removing the word “pornography” takes away the sense that, somehow, there was anything ever consensual about these kinds of materials and activities when they involve children.

Those in the House now know that this is part of my own story. I stand in the House not just as an ally of child sexual abuse survivors but as one of them. I have a strong message for all of those out there, every time I speak, and it is that this could happen to anyone. It has happened to many of us, and it need not destroy our entire life, but it is a burden that we will carry forward. I am glad to see all of us supporting strong action against these kinds of crimes against children.

When it comes to child abuse and sexual exploitation, we know what works, and I am hoping that those who have sponsored the bill and all of us who are supporting this bill will also be there when it comes time to have additional resources for enforcement, and when it comes time for additional supports for those who have survived these crimes. I trust that we will all be there when that time comes.

I trust what the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap said today, in that we can agree to keep our speeches short and to limit the number to make sure that this bill can pass today before we rise for the holiday.

I know that there have been some discussions and some back and forth here today, and I am siding with the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap in that hope that we can do our best to make sure this is concluded so we can vote tomorrow to send it off to the other place.

I am really at the end of what I wanted to say today, so let me also take this opportunity to wish my colleagues, however they celebrate, a very happy holiday season. I look forward to being back here at the end of January to continue the important work we do on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. I am going to speak not from notes but from the heart today. Before I begin, however, I want to note two things. First, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kelowna—Lake Country. This will be likely a brief speech that I am giving, from the heart—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no splitting of time.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, may I have unanimous consent to split my time?

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

I want to highlight the exemplary work of someone from my community who recently passed, and that is Melanie Savage. She was a captain in the Blackpool Fire Department. Only 34 years old, she served the community with diligence. I got to know her father through his work in the RCMP when he was a Queen's jubilee medal recipient four or five months ago. I had the privilege of speaking with him today. My condolences go to her family and may eternal light shine upon her.

Similarly, I want to express my condolences to the family of our colleague, the Hon. Jim Carr. May eternal light shine upon him as well.

I had to look up the date. It was about 2015 when my supervisor came to me when I was a prosecutor and said that I had done a lot of work prosecuting what we call child pornography offences, that I was good at it and asked if I would consider doing more. I said no. I went home that night, I talked to my wife about it and I said that somebody had to do this work, so I agreed to do it and said that I would take it on for two years. Six years later, I was more immersed in the work than ever.

Through my work prosecuting child sexual abuse and exploitation material, its production and its dissemination and also the hands-on offences such as sexual assault, sexual interference and Internet luring, I came to understand the importance of victims not only getting justice but moving forward. The reality is that in those six years I looked too many victims in the eye not to know that, if we think that this is something that happens elsewhere, we must think again. As one noted jurist said, Internet luring, for instance, is an insidious crime and it is connected to child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

There is no reason why this bill should not pass and that this bill should not be voted upon tomorrow. This is an important bill; let us make no mistake about it. This bill passed unanimously at second reading. I am confident it will pass unanimously again at third reading.

I drafted this bill based on my experience and I want to thank the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap for sponsoring the bill and using his spot in the order of precedence. I want to thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, taking a team British Columbia approach, for bringing this bill here today. I am going to look into the camera first and then I am going to look at my Liberal colleagues. In fact, I am going to look at all my colleagues and say this: There is no reason that this bill should not pass tomorrow.

After my colleague from Kelowna—Lake Country, we as Conservatives will not be putting up any more speakers. There will be roughly 20 minutes of debate left. If debate collapses, we will vote tomorrow. Therefore, I want to be very clear. My exhortation to the people in the House is to let debate collapse. If we believe in this and we say this is important, let us put our money where our mouths are and let debate collapse. I want to be very clear. If debate does not collapse, it is not because of anybody here who wishes for it not to happen because I would love to see a vote occur on this tomorrow.

My heart goes out to victims, to law enforcement and to all those who deal with these difficult, insidious offences. That is all I have to say. My hope is that we are voting on this tomorrow.

• (1805)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to speak today on this important legislation, Bill C-291, from my Conservative colleagues, the members for North Okanagan—Shuswap and Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, and to help move this piece of legislation along.

Changing the term “child pornography” to “child sexual abuse and exploitation material” is not only more accurate, but the terms “abuse”, “sexual abuse” and “exploitation” also currently exist in the Criminal Code and better align with the facts. As a mother, I have to say that I am not sure what could be more disturbing than child exploitation through sexual abuse material. The victims are children, and the unimaginable robbing of children of their innocence should be reflected in our Criminal Code.

Our 21st century digital age has brought many great things to our lives, but it has allowed the darkest and most pervasive crimes imaginable to be available to anyone. As a result, the ability of predators to monetize their evil behaviour means more children than ever are at a risk of repeat victimization.

It is shocking that in 2021 there was a 14% increase in sexual violations against children. A Statistics Canada 2021 report detailed how child sexual abuse material is a growing problem across Canada. We need to sharpen our laws so they ensure that the prosecution and punishment of offenders reflects the crime. Words do matter, and it is important this bill passes quickly in this place.

I am proud to support this bill, and I call on all members to join the Conservatives in acting to protect innocent victims, the children of today, who are the leaders of tomorrow.

• (1810)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it pleases me to see that the legislation received wide support at its introduction, at second reading and at committee, and

Private Members' Business

now we have the legislation before us today in its first hour of third reading. Based on the comments we have heard consistently over the last while on this legislation, I expect that all members of the House of Commons will be supporting and voting in favour of it, and for good reason.

When the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo was standing up and reflecting on his time as a prosecutor, he said that he was prepared to take on and continue the challenge of going after these offenders. It made me reflect on a discussion I had with a police officer a number of years ago. The police officer said that he and a couple of others were involved in gathering information related to child pornography. What we are now talking about is widening the scope of child pornography to call it “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”.

There was an impact on that particular police officer, and he provided comments on that. He was making reference to Calgary at the time, because I believe that is where some additional attention was given by the government of the day in terms of going after Internet exploitation. It had an impact on individual investigators, and it was difficult for those who had children to go home and see them. One can only imagine having to deal with that on a daily basis.

I can sympathize with individuals who look at the legislation and say it must happen. There is no doubt in my mind that we will see the change. I say that based on discussions I have had with caucus colleagues and after listening to members across the way talk about it.

Replacing the words “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse and exploitation material” broadens the scope and gives a much clearer and better sense of what we are talking about. Child pornography is, in fact, one of the most disgusting and horrific ways one can abuse a child.

When we talk about it, we need to have an understanding of the impact it has. It has a devastating impact on the lives of not only the victim, but the people around the victim, such as their family and friends. Obviously most important is the victim.

As the words say very clearly, we are talking about a child. When we think of the ages of the children being exploited, as has been brought to my attention on a number of occasions, we are talking about children as young as six months old to children up to the age of 18.

• (1815)

Regarding the type of exploitation that takes place, I do not know if trying to describe it in terms of actions is the way to go here, but what I would like to do is emphasize the degree, because often when people think of these materials being circulated, they think of things such as organized crime being behind it. I would like to highlight two things that I find so upsetting in dealing with this issue.

Private Members' Business

One is the end-user, the individuals who are participating and who ultimately cause any form of a demand for it. They are the consumers of these disgusting materials where children are being exploited. That is what offends me most. The individuals in question might actually surprise some. I was at a discussion where we were talking about child exploitation, and I was surprised to hear that there is a very strong component where we get family members who will exploit their own children.

How does a mother, father or any guardian take a four-year-old and put that four-year-old in an environment where there is some form of exploitation, sexual exploitation in particular? When I posed that question, I was told that there is an issue in many third world countries where the child is the source of income for the family. In my mind in no way does that justify the exploitation of the child, but I learned something from that.

We could then bring it forward to that more organized crime element, where it is well thought through. We could call it Internet luring. There are also individuals who will hang out at terminals where they know young people will go by. They lure young people through all forms of trickery, and before we know it, they are being exploited and being taken advantage of.

Whether it is the individual guardian or parent exploiting their own child or it is organized crime where we get that exploitation taking place, and everything in between, I believe Canadians look at it in the same manner I do and see it for what it is: a horrific crime of child abuse in the worst way.

At the end of the day, we factor in all the things that need to be factored in, and we take a look at the legislation. It is legislation many would argue is fairly straightforward legislation. It is legislation, as I indicated, that I am expecting all members to be voting in favour of when it comes to a vote. It is pretty straightforward in the sense of changing or replacing the word “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”, which I said at the very beginning widens the scope and provides a better clarification of what civil society, our neighbours and our constituents, would want us to do.

It is indeed a very serious issue, and I believe all members on all sides of the House recognize the sensitivity of it. As I said, I do believe that all members will in fact be voting in favour of it.

An hon. member: Then pass it today.

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I know this is a very sensitive issue, but there is only one person who has the floor, and he is the only person who should be speaking at the moment.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to join the third reading debate on Bill C-291, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, regarding child sexual abuse and exploitation material, which was introduced on June 17, 2022, by the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. There is some cross-debate happening. That is not very respectful for the person who has the floor.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, before I continue, I also want to express my sincere condolences to the family of our hon. friend Jim Carr, who we lost. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends and constituents.

When we talk about this bill, the protection of children against sexual abuse and exploitation of any kind is an objective that I believe all members support. It is also a priority for the Government of Canada, and this is why we proposed amendments to this private member's bill that would strengthen it and ensure that it does what it was designed to do.

The bill, as it was introduced, proposes to change the term “child pornography” to “child sexual abuse material” at section 163.1 of the Criminal Code, and to make other consequential amendments.

We proposed that the term “child sexual abuse material” in the bill be amended in order to be more descriptive of its definition, which is at section 163.1 of the Criminal Code. The new term, “child sexual abuse and exploitation material”, better describes not only materials that portray the sexual abuse of actual children, but also materials that advocate or counsel—

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, could you tell us if we will be running out the clock or actually voting on this, perhaps tomorrow?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not really a point of order. The debate goes until 6:33 p.m.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, this includes materials such as works of fiction that promote the sexual abuse of children, as well as the sexualized portrayal of adults as children. I am pleased that the new term was adopted unanimously by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, as it is an important step towards bringing Canada in line with the general trend away from the term “child pornography”.

The second amendment proposed by the government is an entirely new provision, a one-year coming-into-force provision for the entire bill. I am pleased that this measure, too, was adopted unanimously by the committee.

This proposed amendment came about as a result of studying Bill C-291 after it was introduced. The government noted that the federal regulations made pursuant to An Act respecting the mandatory reporting of Internet child pornography by persons who provide an Internet service would require amending as a result of this bill, as they contain the term “child pornography”.

Those regulations will not be amended as a result of the enactment of Bill C-291 and, therefore, time would be required to get the process under way. I also learned that there are at least 50 pieces of provincial and territorial legislation from across Canada that incorporate or make reference to the term “child pornography” as defined by the Criminal Code, statutes as well as regulations.

Giving the provinces time to adapt their legislation, if they wish, to ensure the coherence of the legislation across Canada, is an important government responsibility. The one-year coming-into-force period would allow time for those amendments to be made in their respective jurisdictions. This delayed coming into force would also allow time for necessary administrative changes to be made at both the federal and provincial levels in places such as courts administrative systems and IT systems.

Finally, the third amendment proposed by the government, which was also unanimously passed in the committee, was the addition of a transitional clause. This new provision would assist participants in the criminal justice system to understand how ongoing proceedings that use the term “child pornography” would be affected on the date of the bill coming into force.

This new provision clearly states that the changes of terminology would not affect the validity of any ongoing proceedings that have already begun under the old term “child pornography”. Similarly, the validity of any documents related to those proceedings would not be affected by the change in terminology.

In short, this transitional clause tells the criminal justice system participants that this change is a change in the name only. There should be no impacts on ongoing prosecutions as a result.

These three government amendments will, I believe, better achieve the objectives of not only calling these materials what they truly are, but also ensuring that the transition to the new terminology is done in a coherent and non-disruptive way.

I would like to thank the members of the justice committee for voting in favour of the government's amendments and for co-operating in bringing this bill through the House so quickly.

It should not be a surprise to members that the pandemic has contributed to a rise in the sexual offences committed against children, nor should it be a surprise that these offences are primarily committed via telecommunications networks.

• (1825)

In fiscal year 2021-22, the RCMP's National Child Exploitation Crime Centre received 81,799 complaints, reports and requests for assistance relating to online child sexual exploitation. This was a 56% increase compared to the previous fiscal year and an 854% increase compared to 2013-14.

Police-reported crime data from Statistics Canada which includes the first year of the pandemic indicates that incidents of making or distributing child pornography increased by 26% in 2021 compared to 2019. Possession of or accessing child pornography increased by 44% in 2021 compared to 2019 and represents a 146% increase since 2017.

There are many things needed to help combat child sexual exploitation. Clearly, we need to have comprehensive and robust criminal laws against it. We need to have strong and effective law enforcement. We need to continue to advance and support measures that seek to meet the needs of victims and survivors. The government supports the national strategy for the protection of children from sexual exploitation on the Internet, which has four pillars: raising awareness, reducing the stigma associated with reporting,

increasing Canada's ability to pursue and prosecute offenders, and working with tech leaders to find new ways to combat the online sexual exploitation of children.

I want to conclude by expressing my thanks to the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap for sponsoring this important bill and for co-operating with all parties to bring it to the House.

I also am thankful for the opportunity to speak.

• (1830)

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by expressing my sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Jim Carr. He was a devoted parliamentarian who worked tirelessly for his community. He will be missed forever.

I am pleased to join the debate on Bill C-291, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, regarding child sexual abuse and exploitation material, introduced by the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap on June 17.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge and thank my colleague for introducing this bill, which has a very important objective, to ensure that the terminology used to refer to child pornography means that this harmful material is actually abuse of children.

The Government of Canada is committed to preventing and protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation of any kind, including in Canada and abroad.

Canada works closely with international partners to combat online child sexual exploitation—

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

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, on Tuesday last week, the Auditor General released an absolutely damning report on the government's COVID-19 programs. This is report 10 from the Auditor General. This report chronicled mismanagement, waste and a lack of focus leading to tens of billions of dollars in government waste.

Adjournment Proceedings

Let us be very clear: We are not talking about the policy of the COVID support programs. This was a policy that, in principle, all parties supported and it is not the Auditor General's mandate to critique the government's policy, but rather to analyze the effectiveness of implementation. That is whether the actions of government lined up with the stated policy goals.

The Auditor General pointed out that the government made a policy decision not to have an effective pre-disbursement review. It basically relied on an attestation model, an honour system, where people would say they met the criteria and they would get the benefits. Many Canadians were honest and accurate in how they filled those out.

Generally, we say there should be some kind of verification mechanism, either before or afterward. The government said that it needed to get these dollars out the door quickly in terms of these benefits, so it did not do the advance verification, but it said it would do verification after the fact. It would follow up and see if the money went to the right people, and if it did not go to the right people, it would follow up in the appropriate fashion.

The government is now saying it is not going to do those after-the-fact reviews and verifications in every case. For much of the money that the government spent in various COVID-19 support programs, there was no checking before the money went out and no checking after the money was received. This means people could simply attest that they were eligible for benefits. They got cheques as a result and there was no verification.

The Auditor General was able, based on data the government already had available, to assess what indicators there were of whether people who did not meet the requirements of various programs ended up getting money anyway. Here is what she found.

Incredibly, she found that \$4.6 billion went to ineligible recipients. That means people who were not eligible for these programs still got money to the tune of \$4.6 billion.

Another \$27.4 billion went to individuals who, on the face of it, did not meet the program criteria where the Auditor General conservatively says further investigation is required. There were cases, for instance, where individuals did not meet the income requirements, yet still received CERB.

The total of certainly ineligible or almost certainly ineligible, based on the Auditor General's analysis of data in the government's own possession, came to \$32 billion. Some \$32 billion of COVID-19 benefits went out to individuals who were not eligible for those benefits.

Again, we are not talking about whether offering this support was a good idea. We are talking about whether the government should be held accountable for over \$30 billion going to those who did not meet the stated criteria for those programs.

The Auditor General is recommending in this report that the government follow up, get to the bottom of this and track down that money. The government does not agree, does not support it and will not implement this recommendation of the Auditor General. It says, on the final page of the report, that it will not follow up with every one of these cases, as the Auditor General recommends.

The response of the Minister of National Revenue when this issue was raised in the House was to impugn the Auditor General's independence. The Minister of National Revenue got up in this House and said that the Auditor General made the decisions and the recommendations because of pressure from the opposition, which is a totally outrageous attack on a strong, independent public servant by the government simply to cover up its own incompetence.

The government wasted \$30 billion. It should be held accountable for that waste and it should not be attacking the Auditor General.

● (1835)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that was an interesting speech, as always, from our colleague.

I would be remiss if I did not begin tonight by speaking about the late Jim Carr, a colleague to all of us and a friend to many. He was someone who served with distinction provincially and federally, among so many other different pursuits, and who had a very impressive life. He was a mentor to many MPs who began with him in 2015, and words of advice given by him over the years will not be forgotten, certainly not by myself, not by anyone.

I listened with interest to the hon. member, and we thank the Auditor General for her report, which was tabled last week. The government affirms her independence and integrity, which is true of the minister and true of myself. As I said, this is a very important office, and we affirm all of those important principles. In listening to my hon. colleague though, I wonder if he actually read the report or only those parts he could use to his political advantage.

First of all, the report makes clear that, without the emergency programs put in place, the poverty rate in Canada would have doubled. Particularly important was the CERB, but there was also the wage subsidy. It is also true that we would have seen the massive economic contraction that was impacting the country at the outset of the pandemic simply continue. In 2020, we saw GDP contract by 17%. Again, this is all in the report.

I am sure my friend has the report at hand, if he has not looked at it already, which I suspect he has not, but he can easily bring it up. The report makes clear that, by November 2021, the economy had come back to prepandemic levels. Again, that is because of the emergency programs that were put in place by the government and supported by all parties in the House.

Interesting also is what was said by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who recently made it clear that, were it not for the programs, the results for the country would have been “catastrophic”. We would have seen mass bankruptcies, and it would have resulted in significant human costs. Again, I leave that for the consideration of the hon. member.

Underpinning all of the emergency programs, of course, was the attestation-based approach put in place by the government to ensure that funds needed by Canadians, either individuals, families or businesses, were dispensed very quickly, and I am thinking of CERB, the wage subsidy and various other programs. The attestation-based approach made that very possible.

Verification is certainly the objective, but it comes after the fact, which is about the only part of the speech from my hon. colleague across the way that I agree with. Verification was not possible at the beginning. It had to come after the fact because of the unique circumstance, which was a crisis. A crisis necessitates specific approaches tailored to the moment. This is why the government took the approach that it did. The work is ongoing to verify whether or not individuals, businesses and others were actually in need of the various supports that were received.

Yes, there is respectful disagreement on the \$27.4 billion between the CRA and the Auditor General, which is, again, a respectful disagreement over calculating the wage subsidy eligibility over GST revenue loss versus general revenue loss. That is a technical matter that will be sorted out.

Over 800,000 notices of redetermination have been given to individuals. Thousands more will be sent. The work of the CRA continues on these matters. It is very serious about ensuring fiscal responsibility and verification.

• (1840)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member is trying to constantly shift this into a debate about whether or not the emergency benefits were a good policy. As he pointed out, all parties supported providing emergency supports during COVID. However, the question is not whether these emergency benefits were required and were valuable. The question is whether the government was right to pay tens of billions of dollars to people who were not eligible for the programs. That is, the House agreed to specific criteria for these programs, and tens of billions of dollars, according to the Auditor General, very likely went to individuals who were not eligible for those programs.

The government said that it had to get the money out quickly at the beginning, fair enough, but the bargain was that there would have to be clear, effective, after-the-fact verification in every case. Either we have to do the verification up front, which is normally what happens, or we have to do some kind of verification after the fact. However, the government has said clearly, in response to the Auditor General's recommendation, that it will not, in fact, do this verification in every case, and the minister attacked the Auditor General on this.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, I ask my hon. colleague what the Conservatives would have done had they been in power. What approach would they have taken? The result that we see is that the country was sustained. It was sustained because of

these programs. The audit work continues. Verification is being carried out. It is being carried out in multiple ways and in line with international best practices.

The member also neglects to mention that, in November 2020, in fact the Conservatives put forward an effort to delay verification and to delay the way the government would carry out that important work. I am thinking specifically of the wage subsidy here. The Conservatives want it both ways. They want to ensure that verification happens, which it is, but when they had the chance to ensure that it happened as soon as possible on the wage subsidy, they delayed it.

I ask my hon. colleague, why is that?

ELECTIONS CANADA

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians deserve transparency from the government when it comes to Beijing's interference in our elections.

That is precisely the advice that the government received from CSIS. It stated that the government's policy in response to foreign interference be guided by transparency and sunlight, and that foreign interference be made known to the public.

The approach of the Liberal government has been to do precisely the opposite of what CSIS has advised. It has been anything but transparent when it comes to the reported vast campaign of interference in the 2019 election by Beijing. The Prime Minister and ministers, for weeks, have refused to answer basic questions about what they know about this interference.

More than that, they have acted as though there is nothing to see and that there is nothing to be concerned about, except we know that is not true. There is indeed plenty to be concerned about from just the very limited disclosure that the procedure and House affairs committee has received, which is undertaking hearings around Beijing's 2019 election interference.

For example, a daily foreign intelligence brief dated February 21, 2020, prepared by the intelligence assessment secretariat of the PCO, which was disclosed to our committee yesterday and is heavily redacted, states, “Investigations into activities linked to the Canadian federal election in 2019, reveal an active foreign interference (FI) network”.

An active foreign interference network is hardly something to be brushed under the rug, yet when I asked the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Foreign Affairs today at committee, they provided nothing in the way of an answer with respect to what they know about this active foreign interference network from Beijing involved in the 2019 election campaign.

Adjournment Proceedings

Then there is a briefing to the Prime Minister from CSIS, in which there is a subheading referencing politicians and riding associations that have been targeted by foreign interference. Today when I asked the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs about who the politicians and the riding associations were that had been targeted by foreign interference, his response was as if it was a figment of my imagination, when in fact it is in a CSIS document to the Prime Minister.

When will the Liberals finally take the advice of CSIS, be transparent and tell Canadians what they know about Beijing's campaign interference, what they know about the active foreign interference network in the 2019 election campaign and which riding associations and politicians have been targeted by foreign interference?

• (1845)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member can rest assured that there are no cover-ups, as he has repeatedly implied in this House. At a time when democracy is being challenged around the world, Canada's electoral system remains healthy and robust. Canada continues to rank among the world's healthiest democracies, something that we can all be proud of in the House and across the country.

Members of the procedure and House affairs committee, of which the member opposite is a member, heard from the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs earlier today, who confirmed that Canada's democracy is strong, but that does not mean there are no attempts being made to interfere in our elections. Working diligently to preserve the integrity of our elections is essential to maintaining the legitimacy, credibility and reliability of Canada's democratic processes, and interference in Canada's elections is absolutely never acceptable.

In anticipation of the 2019 election, at a time when we were witnessing increasing efforts by malicious foreign actors to undermine democracies around the world, the Government of Canada did not sit on its laurels. Rather, it rose to the challenge and took preventative action to safeguard our democratic institutions and processes. The result of such efforts took the form of the plan to protect Canada's democracy.

While this plan certainly contributes to the strength and health of our democratic institutions, we know we cannot afford to be complacent. We are aware that malicious foreign actors are consistently evolving their tactics over time as they adapt to emerging opportunities and new tools. That is why we continue to adapt our tools and approaches to ensure that our institutions are resilient to any potential threats of foreign interference.

As the Prime Minister and various ministers have repeated, the government put in place an independent process of experts, chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council. That is something the previous government never thought important enough to do. Of course, this work needs to remain independent. That is obvious to most. It is incumbent upon all of us to recognize how important it is, given that we all have partisan interests, the member opposite and me included, that this work remain in the hands of independent people.

That group of experts is chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council and includes the heads of Canada's security and intelligence agencies. They were given the important responsibility of ensuring that Canadian elections continue to be free and democratic. The good news, which I know will not excite the member opposite, is that experts confirmed that both elections were exactly that, free and democratic.

It is important to remember what we heard from witnesses at committee, including from Canada's Chief Electoral Officer and CSIS officials. They commented on the fact that attempts to influence democratic elections do not equate to causing actual influence, nor are they a new phenomenon in Canada or around the world. The work done by committees like NSICOP, CSIS and the national security experts strengthens the democratic process and Canada's elections, and the Conservatives are undermining this important work rather than offering a more productive contribution to the discussion of security throughout our electoral processes.

To be clear, Canada's elections are free and fair. The non-partisan national security experts who oversee these threats to our elections are confident in the results of these elections, and I would like to repeat the fact that it is in the hands of non-partisan experts, not in the hands of people with partisan interests, like the people who are elected to this House.

• (1850)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, no one is contesting that the 2019 election was anything other than free and fair overall, but that does not take away the fact that there was a reported campaign of interference by Beijing. It does not take away the fact that the PCO intelligence assessment secretariat determined there to be an active foreign interference network involving Beijing in the 2019 election, and it does not take away the fact that candidates and riding associations are being targeted by foreign interference.

What is undermining Canadians' confidence in our elections and their integrity are the non-answers provided by the government. When is it going to be transparent?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, Canadians continue to have and should have confidence in our electoral processes.

As I mentioned before, Canada's electoral system is strong. Improving, strengthening and protecting our democratic institutions against all forms of foreign interference remains our government's top priority. We have implemented a series of measures, such as the plan to protect Canada's democracy, that strengthen our response and ensure that we are equipped with the tools and mechanisms to combat electoral interference.

Our democracy remains robust, and our electoral systems are healthy. We know that malicious actors are becoming more creative at using online platforms to manipulate options, and we will continue to invest in and adapt our strategies to effectively increase transparency, authenticity and integrity in our systems. It is important, now more than ever, because the previous Conservative government did not consider it a priority.

We will also ensure that Canadians are protected from foreign interference and that our elections remain some of the most fair and free in the world, something we can all be proud of.

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, first off, I would like to give a shout-out to and acknowledge the health care workers across this country. Nurses, doctors, health care workers and health care professionals are doing such a remarkable job in such difficult circumstances right now with our health care system.

As members are well aware, what we have seen is a virtual collapse of the health care system in parts of the country. Over the course of the last few months, we have seen a situation in Ontario where the average wait time in emergency rooms is now 20 hours. That is 20 hours for patients to wait, for seniors to wait, for children to wait. In pediatric hospitals, we are seeing the same incredible length of time for people to get into the hospital. Tragically last weekend, as a family was waiting, a child died in an Ajax area hospital, reportedly because there was no access to emergency support.

In Alberta, we have seen a collapse in dozens of Alberta communities. Of course, we can say that the UCP, the Conservative government in Alberta, has an appalling disregard for the health and well-being of Albertans, just as we can blame Doug Ford in Ontario for showing an appalling disregard for the health of Ontario citizens. However, the reality is that the health care system across the country is under intense pressure. The health care professionals I mentioned earlier are the ones struggling to provide services to keep people alive and to provide the kind of medical care that Canadians deserve in this profound deterioration of health care.

What are the origins of this? Well, as we saw, the Stephen Harper government basically slashed the accelerator fund for health care in this country. There was hope back in 2015, when the new Liberal government came in, that it would reverse what was effectively a cut to health care funding. However, surprisingly to all of us and in repudiation of the commitments the Prime Minister and Liberal candidates across the country made in the 2015 election, we have not seen the Liberals reverse the Harper cuts to the accelerator clause.

Federal funding for health care in this country is at 22%, which means, as a result, that even provinces that are well meaning and want to reinforce the health care system do not have the wherewithal to do that. The NDP has put forward the proposition that we have to provide supports for health care and treat health care as the precious and valued public service that it is.

The Liberal government, within four days of COVID hitting, provided an unprecedented \$750 billion in liquidity supports to Canada's big banks to maintain their profits. What the NDP mem-

bers say is that the Liberal government should treat health care with more importance and with a higher priority than it treats the priorities of bank profits in this country. If three-quarters of a trillion dollars can go to bank profits, the federal government has the wherewithal to ensure adequate funding for the health care that Canadians need.

● (1855)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I start, I feel compelled to say a few words with respect to the passing of our friend and colleague Jim Carr, the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

I was one of the members who got to sit behind the member for Winnipeg South Centre during his last speech in the House of Commons, when he spoke so eloquently about his bill to ensure the Prairies have a green economy on the horizon. It was a beautiful speech and he had a lot of emotion. It was tough to see him suffer over the last couple of years, but I know that his legacy in this place and in Winnipeg is extremely strong.

I just want to send condolences to his family, his staff, his friends, his entire riding and indeed every Canadian whom he touched with his intelligence, wisdom, compassion and legislation in this place. He will be missed.

[*Translation*]

I am grateful for the opportunity I have this evening to discuss this very important issue for Canadians. I also want to thank my friend, the hon. member, for drawing our attention to this very important subject.

[*English*]

We know that many hospitals in the country are experiencing extremely long wait times and they are way above capacity. Health force vacancies have almost doubled in the past two years and they have continued to climb. This is especially true of Canada's nursing workforce, where the vacancy rates reached a record high of 136,800 in the first quarter of 2022. That is up 5% from the peak in the fourth quarter of 2021. Health care workers are overworked and they do not feel supported, which has many quitting and is also likely preventing a lot of new talent from choosing that as their future career.

Our government is focusing on sustainably increasing the supply of health care workers and helping to create healthier workplaces to support the retention and mental health of health care workers. That is why budget 2022 announced \$115 million over five years with \$30 million ongoing to expand the foreign credential recognition program and help up to 11,000 internationally trained health care professionals per year get their credentials recognized so they will be able to work in the fields in which they are educated.

Adjournment Proceedings

While we work on recruitment and retention of health care workers, we will also be working on improving other areas of health care to alleviate the burden in hospitals. We know that family health services are the backbone of high-performing health care systems and that some across the country are doing better than others, so ensuring the best practices are known across the country is one big part of that.

Difficulties in accessing timely family health services impacts the use of hospital services. A lot of people choose to go or are forced to go to the emergency room when there should be better services in place from a primary care perspective. For instance, in 2020, 38% of Canadians reported their last emergency department visit was for a primary care treatable condition. As a priority, we are working to improve family health care so that Canadians do not end up in the emergency room when they could have an appointment with their family doctor.

While more funding is needed, we also need to spend smarter. Canada spends more of its GDP on health care than the OECD average. We can tackle inefficiencies in the system and use innovative approaches and tools to both improve health outcomes for Canadians and also improve cost-effectiveness, because Canadians demand that of us as well.

The member opposite referenced a number that has been used a couple times by other parties. I suggest he have a conversation with his colleague from Vancouver Kingsway. We work very well together on the health committee. That number, 22% of currently allocated costs from the federal government is not correct. It is more than that. The Canada Health Act indicates that the federal government should be paying for 50% of hospital and doctor costs, and that is very close to true.

Still, health care is about more than just hospitals and doctors in 2022, so our government will continue working with provinces and territories in the coming months to tackle this crisis and to build on the investments we have made, which have been vast, to improve health care for Canadians.

● (1900)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, we talk about innovation. The member for Vancouver Kingsway, the NDP health critic, has been very clear about this, as has the leader of the NDP, the member for Burnaby South.

First off, we have talked about Canada pharmacare and brought forward the Canada pharmacare act exactly for that reason. Putting in place pharmacare, as we know, provides for the bulk purchasing power that reduces the cost of drugs to the health care system. In New Zealand, some of the drugs that were referenced by their pharmacare program were reduced in cost by 90%. We brought the Canada pharmacare act forward, and the Liberals and Conservatives voted against it.

We have talked about home care, because that reduces costs as well, and enforcing the Canada Health Act is vitally important. The reality is that Conservatives are trying to burn down the health care system, and they are pyromaniacs, but Liberals are bringing the gasoline by refusing to fund the health care system adequately.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I strongly disagree that we are not willing to invest incrementally into the health care system, as evidenced by the past couple of years and all of the incremental funding we have dedicated to health care and preserving our robust health care system.

The health care money we send to provinces and territories ought to be spent on health care, but in provinces like mine, Ontario, a lot of that money is going to refunds for their licence plate stickers. Some of it is being used to balance the budget and create a surplus. Ontario's government is operating at a surplus right now, saying there is an emergency in the health care system.

During times of an emergency, a serious government does not run a surplus. It invests in its population, and that is what we would like to see across the country. We would like to see priorities. We have priorities around data, around human resources and health care, and around long-term care, as my colleague referenced. We have priorities to remove the backlog in the health care system and to ensure people are getting the primary care they need. We will spend money on that, not balancing the books.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:03 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Vacancy

Winnipeg South Centre

The Speaker 10777

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

National Defence

Ms. Anand 10777

Access to Information

Mrs. Fortier 10777

Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsperson

Mr. Fragiskatos 10777

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lamoureux 10777

Committees of the House

Justice and Human Rights

Mr. Sarai 10777

Foreign Affairs and International Development

Mr. Genuis 10777

Motion for concurrence 10777

Mr. Lamoureux 10781

Mr. Viersen 10781

Mr. Trudel 10782

Mr. Oliphant 10782

Mr. Genuis 10784

Mr. Virani 10784

Mr. Virani 10784

Mr. Genuis 10786

Mr. Barsalou-Duval 10786

Ms. McPherson 10787

Mr. Genuis 10789

Mr. Lamoureux 10789

Mr. Trudel 10789

Ms. Kwan 10789

Mr. Angus 10790

Mr. Bergeron 10790

Mr. Lamoureux 10792

Mr. Morantz 10792

Mr. Angus 10792

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné 10793

Mr. Genuis 10793

Division on motion deferred 10794

Committee Travel

Mr. Lamoureux 10794

Motion 10794

(Motion agreed to) 10794

Petitions

Refugees

Mr. Longfield 10794

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis 10794

Medical Assistance in Dying

Mr. Genuis 10794

Employment and Social Development

Ms. Gazan 10794

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 10795

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lamoureux 10797

Request for Emergency Debate

Situation in Children's Hospitals

Mr. Singh 10799

Speaker's Ruling

The Deputy Speaker 10799

Privilege

Alleged Misleading Statement by the Member for Burlington

Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) 10800

Mr. Angus 10801

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Online News Act

Bill C-18. Report Stage 10802

Mr. Rodriguez 10802

Motion for concurrence 10802

(Motion agreed to) 10802

Third reading 10802

Mr. Barsalou-Duval 10803

Mr. Angus 10804

Mr. Dong 10804

Mr. Lamoureux 10804

Mr. Redekopp 10805

Mr. Trudel 10806

Ms. Barron 10806

Mrs. Gray 10806

Mr. Blanchette-Joncas 10808

Mr. Angus 10808

Mr. Redekopp 10808

Mr. Redekopp 10808

Mr. Lamoureux 10810

Mr. Villemure 10810

Mr. Angus 10811

Mr. Champoux 10811

Mr. Lamoureux	10814
Mr. Julian	10814
Mr. Waugh	10814
Mr. Lemire	10814
Mr. Julian	10815

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Aga Khan	
Mr. Noormohamed	10816
Christmas Greetings	
Mr. Maguire	10816
Eden Food for Change	
Mrs. Valdez	10816
Mascouche Community Group	
Mr. Thériault	10817
Tourism Industry	
Mr. Iacono	10817
Winter Tourism in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord	
Mr. Martel	10817
Christmas Greetings	
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South)	10817
Orléans Santa Claus Parade	
Mrs. Lalonde	10817
Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Tolmie	10818
Charlottetown Christmas Market	
Mr. Casey	10818
Public Safety	
Mrs. Vecchio	10818
Cost of Living	
Mr. Aitchison	10818
Holiday Wishes	
Mrs. Shanahan	10818
Indigenous Rights and Title	
Mr. Bachrach	10819
Mirabel Firefighters	
Mr. Garon	10819
Human Rights in Iran	
Ms. Lantsman	10819
Hon. Jim Carr	
Mr. Duguid	10819

ORAL QUESTIONS

Firearms	
Mr. Poilievre	10820
Mr. Trudeau	10820
Mr. Poilievre	10820

Mr. Trudeau	10820
Mr. Poilievre	10820
Mr. Trudeau	10820

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Poilievre	10821
Mr. Trudeau	10821

Ethics

Mr. Poilievre	10821
Mr. Trudeau	10821

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Blanchet	10821
Mr. Trudeau	10821
Mr. Blanchet	10821
Mr. Trudeau	10821

Health

Mr. Singh	10822
Mr. Trudeau	10822
Mr. Singh	10822
Mr. Trudeau	10822

Finance

Mr. Hallan	10822
Mr. Boissonnault	10822
Mr. Hallan	10822
Ms. Gould	10822
Ms. Lantsman	10823
Mr. Boissonnault	10823
Ms. Lantsman	10823
Mr. Fraser	10823

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Ellis	10823
Ms. Hutchings	10823
Mr. Ellis	10823
Mr. Fraser	10823

Health

Mr. Simard	10824
Mr. Duclos	10824
Mr. Simard	10824
Mr. Duclos	10824
Mr. Thériault	10824
Mr. LeBlanc	10824

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Uppal	10824
Mr. Fraser	10824
Mr. Uppal	10825
Mr. Fraser	10825
Mr. Paul-Hus	10825
Mr. Fraser	10825
Mr. Paul-Hus	10825
Mr. Fraser	10825

National Defence

Ms. Mathysen	10825
Ms. Anand	10826

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Ms. Kwan	10826
Mr. Fraser	10826

Infrastructure

Mr. Coteau	10826
Mr. LeBlanc	10826

Firearms

Mr. Martel	10826
Mr. Lametti	10826
Ms. Dancho	10826
Mr. Lametti	10826
Ms. Dancho	10827
Mr. Lametti	10827
Mr. Brock	10827
Mr. Mendicino	10827

COVID-19 Economic Measures

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	10827
Mrs. Lebouthillier	10827

Official Languages

Ms. Gaudreau	10827
Ms. Petitpas Taylor	10827

Ethics

Mr. Barrett	10828
Ms. Ng	10828
Mr. Bezan	10828
Ms. Ng	10828
Mr. Berthold	10828
Mr. Holland	10828

Justice

Ms. Dhillon	10828
Mr. Lametti	10828

Carbon Pricing

Ms. Rempel Garner	10828
Mr. Duguid	10829
Ms. Rempel Garner	10829
Mr. Wilkinson	10829
Mr. Tolmie	10829
Mr. Boissonnault	10829

Fisheries and Oceans

Mr. Rogers	10829
Ms. Murray	10829

Firearms

Ms. Barron	10830
Mr. Mendicino	10830
Ms. Ashton	10830
Mr. Vandal	10830

Presence in Gallery

The Speaker	10830
-------------------	-------

Charles Robert

The Speaker	10830
-------------------	-------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Online News Act**

Bill C-18. Third reading	10831
Mr. Julian	10831
Mr. Lamoureux	10831
Ms. Gladu	10831
Mr. Champoux	10831
Mrs. Gallant	10832
Ms. Gladu	10832
Mr. Lamoureux	10834
Mr. Champoux	10834
Mr. Bachrach	10834
Mr. Waugh	10834
Mr. Lamoureux	10836
Ms. Larouche	10836
Ms. McPherson	10836
Mr. Aboultaif	10837
Ms. Hepfner	10838
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	10838
Ms. Idlout	10839
Mr. Mazier	10839
Mr. Bittle	10840
Mr. Garon	10840
Ms. Idlout	10841
Mr. Kurek	10841
Ms. Hepfner	10842
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	10842
Ms. Idlout	10842
Mr. Patzer	10843
Mr. Lamoureux	10844
Ms. Larouche	10844
Mr. Bachrach	10845

Business of the House

Mr. Lamoureux	10845
Motion	10845
(Motion agreed to)	10845

Medical Freedom Act

(Bill C-285. On the Order: Private Members' Business) ..	10845
(Order discharged and bill withdrawn)	10845

Criminal Code

(Bill S-4. On the Order: Government Orders:)	10845
(Bill concurred in at report stage, read the third time and passed)	10845

Online News Act

Bill C-18. Third reading	10846
Mr. Shields	10846
Mr. Lamoureux	10847
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	10847
Ms. Idlout	10847
Mr. Strahl	10848
Mr. Lamoureux	10849
Mr. Barlow	10849
Ms. Bérubé	10849
Mr. Lamoureux	10850
Motion	10850

(Motion agreed to).....	10850
Division on motion deferred.....	10850

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Criminal Code

Bill C-291. Report stage.....	10850
Mr. Arnold.....	10850
Motion for concurrence.....	10850
(Motion agreed to).....	10850
Third reading.....	10850
Mr. Lamoureux.....	10851
Mrs. Vecchio.....	10851
Ms. Larouche.....	10851
Mr. Garrison.....	10851
Mr. Anandasangaree.....	10851
Mr. Fortin.....	10852
Mr. Garrison.....	10854

Mr. Caputo.....	10854
Mrs. Gray.....	10855
Mr. Lamoureux.....	10855
Mr. Dhaliwal.....	10856
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South).....	10857

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Democratic Institutions

Mr. Genuis.....	10857
Mr. Fragiskatos.....	10858

Elections Canada

Mr. Cooper.....	10859
Mr. van Koeverden.....	10860

Health

Mr. Julian.....	10861
Mr. van Koeverden.....	10861

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