



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 165
Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities entitled “Addressing Labour Shortages in the Canadian Transportation Sector”.

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

I want to thank all of my hon. colleagues for their outstanding work. Thank you also to the clerks and analysts.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, entitled “Up to the Task: Strengthening Canada’s Security Posture in Relation to Russia.” Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[*Translation*]

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology in relation to Bill C-244, an act to amend the Copyright Act with regard to diagnosis, maintenance and repair. The committee has studied the bill and, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(1), requests a 30-day extension to consider it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put, and a recorded di-

vision deemed demanded and deferred. Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 8, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising on behalf of my friend and our late colleague, Jim Carr, to table a petition from the residents and staff of Shaftesbury Park retirement home in Winnipeg South Centre.

The petitioners wish to bring to the attention of the House the 94 calls to action recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The petitioners are urging the government to accelerate their implementation and are specifically noting call to action 8, which calls on the government to eliminate the discrepancy in educational funding for reserve schools. They are also asking for this recommendation to be implemented as soon as possible.

• (1005)

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to present a petition to this House from constituents who are concerned about the proposed route and construction of Highway 413 in the province of Ontario. They have outlined a number of concerns with regard to the elimination of farmland, Greenbelt and wetlands, as well as the impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and on indigenous peoples. They are calling on the federal government to require an impact assessment for the Highway 413 project under the Impact Assessment Act.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

The House resumed from November 28, 2022, consideration of the motion that Bill C-27, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the wonderful member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[English]

I am grateful for the opportunity to rise today on Bill C-27, which is an act to enact the consumer privacy protection act, the personal information and data protection tribunal act and the artificial intelligence and data act, and to make consequential and related amendments.

The amendments are what I am particularly interested in today. As New Democrats, we will be supporting this at second reading. We support the need to modernize Canada's privacy laws and establishing rules around data governance and empowering the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to bring enforcement actions to protect consumers and citizens.

This bill takes some of those steps. However, there is a need to ensure that reforms are robust and effective. In my opinion, a long list of amendments will certainly be required to achieve these goals.

I am going to be referencing two important works that have been presented. One is from the Centre for Digital Rights, entitled "Not Fit For Purpose - Canada Deserves Much Better". From the title, we can note that there are some concerns with this bill.

However, we recognize that this privacy legislation must be amended because there are already glaring shortfalls in PIPEDA, which urgently needs updating.

Technology continues to evolve, and data-driven business continues to move away from a service-oriented approach to one that relies on monetizing personal information through mass surveillance of individuals and groups. While these businesses find new ways to expand their surveillance and methods of monetizing our personal information, Canadians' privacy is increasingly put at risk.

The GDPR is the bar that is currently considered the adequate level of protection. However, if we were to do a little bit of comparing and contrasting, we would see that this bill tends to fall short of this level in terms of what the European Commission has done.

What this means for us is that the ability for personal data to flow to Canada without any further safeguards is at risk. There has also been pressure from industry and advocacy groups, the privacy commissioners of Canada and abroad, and privacy and data governance experts. In fact, in this particular bill, we think that the government side has fallen short in its engagement with people; I will get to that in a moment.

When we are in these technological environments, it is an ecosystem that goes well beyond our borders. We are talking about what it is like—

- (1010)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask members who are having conversations to please take them to the lobbies.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, I am sure the hon. members from the other side are about to take some good notes on the recommendations we put forward. They are probably discussing among themselves how they can improve upon these serious gaps and have some public engagement on this.

We are not subject matter experts in this House when it comes to this type of technology. It is not clear whether there has been any public engagement specific to Bill C-27 as it is proposed. There was public engagement around the creation of Canada's digital charter, called the national digital and data consultations, that happened back in 2018. However, as I understand it, only about 30 or so discussions were held. That fell dearly short. The majority of digital leaders were from the private sector, and there were only a couple of universities involved. Therefore, it is unclear who the government is consulting with when it deals with this type of surveillance capitalism and the risks it presents to consumers.

Let us get right to the point. What are the gaps that exist in this legislation? How does Bill C-27 compare with the ideal privacy legislation? There are many gaps. Clearly, it does not compare to the GDPR; it also falls short of privacy legislation that is currently being proposed in la belle province of Quebec, in New Zealand and in the state of California.

For example, in California, the California Consumer Privacy Act, the California Privacy Rights Act and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act have all presented more robust solutions to what is before us here today. In addition, there are privacy protections that come into effect under the CCPA that we should be considering.

We need to ensure that the protections that come into effect include the rights to know, to delete and to opt out of sale or sharing, as well as the right to non-discrimination. Under that legislation, consumers also have the rights to correct inaccurate personal information and to limit the use and disclosure of sensitive personal information collected about them. There is a lot out there that we should be considering when it comes to amendments.

Government Orders

I am going to list examples of gaps within this bill so they are on the record. The bill does not promote the development of data stewardship models. It does not require that organizations take into account the potential consequences to individuals and societies through such measures as privacy impact assessments of a breach of security or safeguards. There is no section in Bill C-27 expressly dedicated to cross-border dataflows.

There has been no privacy impact assessment done to address any additional risks, which should be identified, justified, mitigated and documented in such an assessment. There is no assessment of the broader level of privacy rights protections in foreign jurisdictions. This is a very important conversation, particularly this week in the House, that includes how Canadians' privacy rights can be enforced.

This bill does not include specific rules that are applicable to data brokers, and these are important third parties who are not service providers. There should be a fiduciary duty to individuals if data processors act as intermediaries between individuals and data collectors. This would ensure that such service providers only use personal information entrusted to them for the purpose intended by the individuals.

This bill does not provide the right to disposal with respect to search engines' indexing of personal information where it could cause harm to the individual's privacy or reputation. It does not include the language that was in PIPEDA regarding individual access where it provides an account of third parties to which personal information about an individual or an organization has been disclosed. There should be an attempt that is as specific as possible.

This bill does not include the right of individuals to express their points of view to a human who can intervene or to contest decisions. When we look at AI or how algorithms are working in society today, they are inherently flawed.

In fact, there is another study that I would reference, titled "AI Oversight, Accountability and Protecting Human Rights", which has commentary on this. This was authored by a series of subject matter experts who gave a long list of needs for adequate public consultation and proper oversight of AIDI to effectively regulate the AI market in Canada.

• (1015)

The commissioner needs to be an independent agent of Parliament. We need to empower an independent tribunal to administer penalties in the event of a contravention, and we need to outline the best practices for auditing and enforcing the law. There are dozens of recommendations contained in both reports that, as New Democrats, we will be presenting to the government at the appropriate time at committee.

It is clear, from the body of the preliminary work that has been done, that this bill is inadequate as it stands. It is too big to adequately cover AI and consumer protections. It has always been our belief that those should be split up. That way we can have an investigation to ensure that consumer protections are met, that surveillance capital does not continue to profit off our most personal information and data and that, ultimately, we have safeguards with a robust and very firm platform on which these organizations, business-

es, companies, and in some instances foreign countries, are held to account when they violate our rules.

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Hamilton Centre. I see him all the time in our town, and we serve together on the Standing Committee for Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

I would ask whether he thinks there is urgency to this legislation, given the fast pace that this technology develops and that companies are using it to develop what can sometimes be invasive and can violate the privacy of Canadians.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, it is clear that Moore's law has extrapolated over the inaction of the Liberal government for the last eight years. We absolutely should have moved on this. However, we need to do it right. It is important that we do not put a piecemeal effort forward to try to keep up with technology that has surpassed our grasps.

There are subject matter experts who know this material better than we do. We need to have an engagement with them at committee, and we need to be able to provide independent safeguards so that when violations happen the legislation actually has teeth to address it.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am curious if the member would expand a little more on the artificial intelligence section of this bill.

Our reading of the bill is basically that the government has this vague definition of what artificial intelligence is and that it does not really know, but we should trust the government. The minister will define it all in regulation, will enforce the regulation, will investigate if one has broken that regulation and will impose fines on that regulation without ever having to go to Parliament to decide anything. Therefore, he is going to be judge, jury and executioner on artificial intelligence and on something the government has not defined.

I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Government Orders

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, that is an important question. Bill C-27 needs consistent, technologically neutral and future-proof definitions both to the consumer privacy protection act and the AIDA within Bill C-27. It should provide definitions for AI or algorithmic systems that are cohesive across both laws, and the definition for AI ought to be technologically neutral and future-proof. That is the question I just answered for the previous speaker. A potential pathway for regulation is to define algorithmic systems based on their applications, instead of focusing on the various techniques associated with machine learning and AI.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated hearing the member for Hamilton Centre's speech on Bill C-27. I would like to hear more from him, in particular on subclause 18(3). This section talks about a legitimate interest for an organization to collect a person's private information without consent.

There have been concerns shared here with respect to how open-ended this legitimate interest could be. I wonder if the member would reflect and share more about his concerns, if any, with the way the bill is currently written.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, that is also an important question, because I think what the member did not reference, which I will reference specifically, are the instances where governments used this information.

I think that informed consent is an inherent right to privacy and protection. The AIDA must apply to government institutions, given that the AIDA only currently applies to the federal private sector, as government institutions are explicitly exempt from this. It is imperative that the AIDA's framework be brought in to include government institutions.

Let us be very clear. Individuals ought to always have informed consent about where their information and data go. There ought not to be situations, outside of warrants expressed through our legal system, that allow for the collection, maintenance and distribution of personal information online.

• (1020)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, my colleague talked about the progress Quebec has made with Bill 25.

Bill C-27 appears to provide some protection or at least not go against Bill 25, but there is no real guarantee.

Does my colleague think that this is one of the changes that should be made to ensure that Bill 25 in Quebec is not hindered by Bill C-27 and that, instead, these laws complement one another?

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, while I have a growing appreciation for the Bloc's propensity to be here as representatives of the Quebec legislator, I am not here in that capacity.

Any legislation we put forward does have international ramifications that must be met in terms of the international standards related to the protection and collection of data.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to use my speaking time in the House to note that today is the 85th day of the blockade of the Lachin corridor. This blockade has left 120,000 Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh without access to health care, food and medication. This situation has been denounced by the European Parliament, by Amnesty International and, last week, by the International Court of Justice. I urge the federal government to do more and apply pressure to ensure that these 120,000 Armenians can have access to food and to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-27, an act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

This bill includes many things and covers many topics. I want to begin with the part on artificial intelligence. The NDP was a bit concerned by the fact that in the wake of Bill C-11, this whole new part on the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act was added to Bill C-27. We think this is a separate issue that needs to be dealt with separately. It is a huge topic in and of itself. We are pleased that the bill is being split so that we can study it in two parts.

In my riding, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, there is a burgeoning AI hub that provides jobs for hundreds, maybe even thousands, of professionals. I have met people who were a little worried about the federal government being kind of hasty in dealing with an issue as complex as AI. They are particularly worried about the fact that the U.S. and the EU have laws and regulations already. They think we need to take the time to make sure Canada's regulations are compatible with what is being done elsewhere, with our trading partners and our competitors, just so that it will be easier to attract talent down the line and get these professionals to go work in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and other places in Quebec and Canada. They want to avoid the kind of incompatibility that could result in unnecessary obstacles.

With respect to the protection of personal information, I believe that, sadly, a string of scandals has made people aware of this issue, and they realize that our laws and regulations must be updated and adapted. Consider the personal information and data breaches and the problems this causes for people. I will quickly mention a few examples. The problems with Yahoo, Marriott, and Mouvement Desjardins in Quebec, as well as Facebook, all revealed the need for new measures to help victims who have had data and their personal information stolen in several countries. We need only think of the 2019 settlement in the U.S. for the Equifax data breach. It is quite significant, given that Equifax is one of the largest companies people rely on for their credit score so they can make purchases or borrow money. This is not trivial.

Here, in 2019, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada found that Equifax fell short of its obligations to Canadians and Quebecers. He then had the company sign a compliance agreement that did not require the payment of any fines or damages for Quebec or Canadian victims. This happened just a few years ago and clearly demonstrates just how outdated Canada's legislation is.

That is why the NDP will be supporting Bill C-27 at second reading. We think it is important that the bill be sent to committee, because we see all the cracks and gaps currently in the bill. It is important that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner be strengthened to bolster enforcement measures to protect consumers and Canadians. Bill C-27 needs to be amended to improve things. There are some shortcomings in this bill. There is even some backsliding in relation to Bill C-11, its predecessor in the previous Parliament, before the last election.

Privacy concerns everyone. In a digital world where social media and online entities are taking up more and more space, we have to remember that, although it is nice to use them sometimes—and they can be of great service—we are the ones who have become the product. Our personal information is the source of huge profits, and we need to be aware of that.

• (1025)

Our information is used to target the advertising we see on our devices when we go to websites. That targeting is based on our personal choices, preferences and searches. Big corporations create profiles and use them to sell advertising. We are the product. These companies make money off the information we give them for free. I have met people who had an interesting suggestion. Maybe these companies should pay us because we are their source of profit. They make money off the targeted advertising they sell, and that is how they plump up their bottom line.

We need to modernize our privacy protection laws. We also need to start thinking about the implications of handing over so much information about our consumer behaviour, our travel patterns, our interests and everything we search for online. We have to prompt people to think about that.

The bill is interesting because it creates a lot of new regulations and a new tribunal. The NDP thinks that is a good thing, but the bill does not go far enough. For example, the bill sets out a private right of action for individuals, but it does not really make it possible for consumers who have fallen victim to privacy breaches to be com-

Government Orders

pensated, unlike what is being done in the United States. This right comes with various rather ineffective stipulations, so although there are new provisions, like this new tribunal, the bill provides for very little recourse.

A few years ago, the NDP published a digital bill of rights for Canadians. In it, we called for new, more effective provisions on consent and the sustainability of data. We called for the government to give the commissioner order powers and to impose larger and more consequential monetary penalties. We also called for transparency with regard to algorithms and more protection against abuse.

I think that the government could draw inspiration from the NDP's digital bill of rights to amend, enhance and improve the bill before us today. Once again, I have to say that this bill takes half steps because it proposes half-measures. There are some rather interesting measures in this bill, but they do not go far enough.

For example, there is still a significant imbalance between commercial interests and individual rights. Unfortunately, the Liberals are still in the habit of putting commercial interests ahead of the rights of citizens. For example, the new preamble of Bill C-27 tries to present privacy as an individual interest tied to fundamental rights, but still does not directly recognize that privacy is not just an essential aspect of fundamental rights, but a fundamental right in and of itself. It considers the right to privacy to be part of Canadian norms and values, rather than a fundamental right. I think this part of the preamble of the bill should be changed.

There is also some backsliding. Under Bill C-27, individuals would have less control over the collection, use and disclosure of their personal data, even less than what was proposed in Bill C-11, which was introduced during the last Parliament. That is really the crux of the matter. If we do not have control over the information we provide or the way it is used or shared, it will be a wild west, total chaos. That is what we are seeing now, in fact. This is a step backwards, and I think that the NDP will be proposing amendments to restore this balance.

Under the bill, information that has been de-identified is still personal information, with some exceptions. There are quite a few exceptions, including in clauses 20 and 21, subclauses 22(1) and 39(1), and the list goes on and on. Roughly a dozen clauses contain multiple exceptions, so it gets extremely complex and confusing. It seems to me that this is going to give big corporations and web giants a way out, through loopholes and back doors. They will be able to do whatever they want because of this list of exceptions.

We in the NDP will be supporting the bill at second reading, but there is still a lot of work to be done to improve the bill.

Government Orders

• (1030)

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, certainly from the Conservative side and from the NDP, it seems like we are on the same page when it comes to looking at privacy, protecting privacy and stating that privacy should be a fundamental right, not only in the preamble but also in the clause statement. The clause statement is very important because that is what the bill is derived from. The definition of privacy and fundamental rights then goes throughout the rest of Bill C-27.

One example that came out this week was of our children using a game called Fortnite. There are a lot of other games children spend a lot of time on sometimes, but Fortnite was found to be in breach of error in the U.S. for exploiting our children, taking their data and selling that. Can the member please answer for me how important it is not only to protect our adult fundamental right to freedom, but also our children's fundamental right to freedom?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, because it is really important. I am not saying that just because I have teenagers at home. We also see the dangers of social media and the fact that young people's privacy or personal information can be exploited. In that regard, once again, Bill C-27 does not go far enough.

Bill C-27 includes an interpretation clause stating that the personal information of minors is considered to be sensitive information. However, in the current bill, there is no definition or explicit direction as to what constitutes sensitive information. Once again, the work is only half done. What exactly does "sensitive information" mean when we are talking about information on a minor, someone under 18 years of age?

We will have to move amendments to make this much clearer.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his speech. This is not a subject I know very well, but I am making progress.

I would like to remind everyone, however, that Canada is a digital wild west. There was no legislation that interfered with the commercial interests of these organizations.

In essence, Bill C-27 is a response to European legislation. Without Bill C-27, Canada would likely not be meeting the European Union's expectations. The financial community is applying pressure because it is under stress.

My question is going to cast a much wider net. What does my colleague think about the complacency of successive Canadian governments? I am talking about complacency in all sorts of other areas too, including transportation safety, cybersecurity and the environment. What does my colleague think about that?

The Canadian government is always forced to take action when it is pressured by the financial community or other countries.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Repentigny for her question, which gives me an opportunity to talk about the laissez-faire approach that has been taken.

There were years of neo-liberalism where private corporations reigned. The government let them do pretty much whatever they wanted. I think that the progressive forces and the left, in general, always need to be there to push our governments to do more to have more regulatory frameworks to keep people safe, for example.

Today, we are talking about the security of personal data, but we could also talk about rail safety. Think about Lac-Mégantic. The railway companies are inspecting themselves, to see if they meet the standards. I do not think it is responsible for a government or a society to allow these big corporations to supervise themselves, to do their own inspections and then to say that they did everything right, when they tend to cut corners to make a profit.

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts in regard to his critique of the legislation, when he said that there are many things missing.

A number of the things the member refers to could easily be done through regulation. The legislation sets in place a very substantial framework, which is there to protect the privacy of Canadians, and a number of things that have been raised already this morning could be done through regulation. In fact, many would argue they might be best done in regulation.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, when we hear that certain things can be done through regulation, that calls for a bit of a leap of faith. The bill needs to have clear guidelines and provide specific direction so that the regulations can then be coherent and consistent. It is not good enough to say that things will be done correctly later through regulation.

For instance, the current Bill C-27 contains no guarantee that when someone asks for their data to be destroyed, it will actually be destroyed and stay that way for any length of time. We will have to work on this to ensure that the regulations really do help Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-27 today. As I put forward to my friend in the form of a question, when we think of Bill C-27, I like to think that the government is on the right track in continuing to protect the privacy of Canadians in many different ways. Yesterday we had a debate on Bill C-26 on cybersecurity.

Government Orders

If we take a holistic look at what the government has been able to accomplish through legislation and, ultimately, in certain areas in terms of developing the industry through budgetary measures, Canada is indeed in a very good position in comparison to our peer countries around the world. I do not say that lightly, because I know that all members are very concerned about the issue of privacy. That is in good part why we have the legislation today.

The last time these changes we are proposing happened was two decades ago. Let us reflect on that time of 20 years ago. We did not have iPhones, and Facebook did not exist. Going back a little further than that to when I was first elected, when one clicked into the Internet, the first thing one heard was a buzzing sound, the dial tone and then clicking. Then one was magically connected to the world. How far we have advanced in a relatively short period of time. Last week, I was on the Internet making a purchase that would be delivered. I never had to go to the store. It involved my doing a little bit of design work on the computer before making the purchase. I was told yesterday that it was delivered to my home.

The amount of information out there is absolutely incredible, and it is very hard to imagine the types of data and the risk factors out there. That is why it is so important that, as a government, we bring forward substantive legislation that is going to protect the privacy of Canadians, to ensure companies are held accountable and, in the context of yesterday's debate, to protect them from security threats that are very strong and very viable. It was interesting yesterday listening to the debate for a number of hours.

I get the sense that a wide spectrum of support is shaping up today. The NDP is supporting the legislation. My understanding is that the Conservatives are supporting the legislation. The Bloc, in principle, is supporting the legislation. The Province of Quebec has actually made some significant gains on this whole front, so I am not surprised that the Bloc or members from Quebec within the Liberal caucus are very strong about these issues, whether they are cybersecurity issues or the privacy issues of Bill C-27 that we are debating today.

I raise this because I believe that it does not matter what side of the House one happens to sit on, as this is legislation worth supporting. As I indicated, it has been 20 years since we have seen substantial changes to the legislation. The expectation is very high that we will not only introduce the legislation but that, with the co-operation of members opposite, we will see it pass through in a timely fashion.

● (1040)

Being an optimist, I would like to see the bill pass before the summer, and it is possible. I realize that it would require a great deal of co-operation from opposition parties, but I do believe it is doable, especially after the comments I heard this morning.

The legislation is not meant to address every matter that Canadians are having to face in the digital world. That is not what it is designed for. As I indicated, the legislation, whether this one or Bill C-26, goes a long way in establishing a solid base for a framework that would enable the government of the day, which is held accountable by the opposition, to have the opportunity to do a lot of work in an area where we need to see a higher sense of security and protection.

One member across the way asked about engagement. There has been a great deal of engagement. I can assure the member that, whether it is from a constituency perspective, a ministerial perspective or, I would even suggest, the member would have to take some credit in terms of an opposition perspective, there has been a great deal of dialogue. This is not a new issue. This issue has been in the making for years now.

There have been some factors that are beyond the government's control in terms of the manner in which it can bring forward legislation, for example the worldwide pandemic and the requirement for substantial legislation in order to support Canadians and have their backs. There were issues of that nature, along with numerous other pieces of legislation. I would not want to give a false impression that this is not an important issue for the Government of Canada.

At the end of the day, based on comments I have heard on both Bill C-26 and Bill C-27, I believe the legislation would establish a solid footing or framework, whatever terminology we might want to use, and, at the very least, we should see it go to committee. The principles of the legislation are in fact endorsed and supported by all sides of the House, from what I can tell, and please correct me if I am wrong. No doubt we will have other legislation that might be somewhat more controversial, where there is real opposition to the legislation, and this would enable more time for debate on that type of legislation.

If we could somehow recognize the value of this legislation, given that there is so much support for its principles, we would allow it to go to committee, where members of Parliament are afforded the opportunity to get into the nuts and bolts, the details, where there is representation from different stakeholders at committee to express their thoughts and opinions on the legislation, and where members can find out directly from the minister what kind of consultation has taken place. The member does not to have to take my word for it, but I can assure him that there has been a great deal of consultation. He would be able to hear that first-hand from departmental officials, the minister and so forth.

I believe the government has done its work in bringing the legislation to the point where it is today. We have seen ministers, in their opening remarks and in their response to questions, in co-operation with opposition members. The government has demonstrated very clearly in the past that it is open to amendments that can improve upon legislation for the benefit of Canadians, and if there are ways we can improve this legislation, we will accept those types of amendments. We will support those types of amendments. I believe this is one of the areas where the Prime Minister has been very good in sending that message. It could be because of years in opposition, when the opposition never had amendments accepted by former prime minister Stephen Harper.

Government Orders

• (1045)

At the end of the day, if there are ways to do it, we can improve upon this bill. I heard yesterday on Bill C-26, and already today on Bill C-27, that members have genuine concerns. I do not question those concerns, but I do believe that it would be helpful if they can look at those concerns. If they already have ideas that they believe will improve the legislation, nothing prevents members of the opposition or government members from being able to provide those amendments or thoughts in advance to the ministry, which would potentially allow for a deeper look into it to see if, in fact, something is doable.

The NDP talked, for example, about digital rights for Canadians. There is a great deal of concern that we need to ensure and recognize them, whether they are consumer rights or privacy rights. These are things we all hold very close to our hearts. We all want to make sure the interests of Canadians are being served.

When I took a look at the specifics of the legislation, I highlighted three parts I wanted to make reference to. CPPA would strengthen privacy enforcement and oversight in a manner that is similar to that of certain provinces and some of Canada's foreign trading partners. It is important that we do not just look internally. There are jurisdictions, whether nations or provincial entities, that have already done some fine work in this area. We do not have to reinvent the wheel, and working with or looking at other forms of legislation that are there is a very positive thing. In particular, the CPPA would do so by granting the Privacy Commissioner of Canada order-making powers that can compel organizations to stop certain improper activities or uses of personal information and order organizations to preserve information relevant to an OPC investigation.

This is significant. We need to think in terms of the technology that I make reference to. I can remember a number of years back when a pizza store was becoming computerized. As someone called in and made an order, they recorded the telephone number, the name and the address, personal information such as that. I remember talking to the franchise owner, whom I happen to know quite well, explaining how the collection of data, if used appropriately, can not only complement the business, but also complement the consumer, and this was maybe 20 years ago.

We can contrast that to an iPhone and looking at some of those applications we see. The one that comes to mind is a true Canadian application and a true Canadian franchise: Tim Hortons. My wife never followed hockey, but nowadays she does because of Tim Hortons. One can win free cups of coffee by picking who is going to score goals or get assists. I am not exactly sure how it works, but Tim Hortons comes up with a program that is actually collecting data from people. It is a program that allows it to send out all kinds of notifications. It could be sales of product. It could be something like NHL standings. It really engages the consumers. An incredible amount of data is actually being collected.

• (1050)

Tim Hortons is not alone. One can go to virtually all the major franchises and find the same thing. It is not just the private sector. Yesterday we were talking about cybersecurity, and one can easily understand and appreciate the sensitivity of collecting information, even if one is a Tim Hortons or a Home Depot, but also many gov-

ernment agencies. For example, there is the amount of personal information Manitoba Health has, which is all computerized. There are also doctors' offices. The digital world, in a very real and tangible way, has changed to such a degree that many, including myself, would argue that things like Internet access have become an absolute and essential service nowadays. It is something we all require.

The incredible growth of data banks, both in the private sector and in the government, and I would throw in the non-profits and the many other groups that collect data, has been substantive in the last 15 or 20 years. That is the reason why today we have the type of legislation we have before us. Bill C-27 would ensure that we have something in place to provide consequences for offences. To give members a sense of those consequences, the new law would enable administrative monetary penalties for serious contraventions of the law, subject to a maximum penalty of 3% or \$10 million of an organization's global revenue, whichever is greater, and fines of up to 5% of revenues or \$25 million, whichever is greater, for the most serious offences.

I said I wanted to highlight three things, so I will move on to the second point. The personal information and data protection tribunal act would establish a new tribunal, which would be responsible for determining whether to assign administrative monetary penalties that are recommended by the Privacy Commissioner following investigations, determining the amount of penalties and hearing appeals of the Privacy Commissioner's orders and decisions. The tribunal would provide for access to justice and contribute to further development of privacy expertise by providing expeditious reviews of the Privacy Commissioner's orders.

The third point is that the AIDA would impose a duty to act responsibly by requiring organizations designing, developing, deploying or operating high-impact artificial intelligence technologies to put in place measures to proactively mitigate risks of harm and bias in the development of these technologies.

Government Orders

I have less than a minute left to talk, and I have not even touched on the AI file. I made reference at the very beginning to the financial investments of this government in encouraging the growth of that industry in the different regions of our country. The Government of Canada is not only bringing in the type of securities that are absolutely important for Canadians from a privacy perspective, to encourage continual growth in the area and have these protections in place, but also doing so through budgetary measures to ensure that we continue to enhance the opportunities of Canadians. If we take a look at the digital world today, it is very hard to imagine where it is going to be tomorrow, at least for myself, in witnessing the growth of the digital world over the last 20 or 30 years and how far it has gone.

This legislation is a modernization. It is legislation we can all get behind and support. I would encourage members, no matter what party they are from, to support it. Let us see it go to committee, where the committee can do its fine work and see if we can even improve—

• (1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, certainly this is important legislation and it is quite needed in our country to get a handle on the protection of people's privacy and, as the member was just speaking about, artificial intelligence.

One question I have for the member relates to the area of regulations. There is so much in this legislation that is dependent upon future regulations that would be written. I am just wondering why those regulations were not presented with this legislation and, failing that, when we can expect to see the regulations. So much of what is being talked about here really depends on how it is implemented through the regulations.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is one of the reasons it is important, once the bill gets to committee, that members have the opportunity to get a better sense of the types of regulations that would be put into place to support the legislation.

There is another way of looking at it. When we have legislation such as that which is being presented and going into committee, members on all sides of the House have the opportunity to be able to express their thoughts and concerns with respect to the legislation even before regulations have been drafted. I would not want to give the impression to the member opposite that we have a pile of regulations and the moment that the legislation passes these regulations would be put into place. I suspect that there is a lot of fine tuning going on.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He appears to have extensive knowledge of almost every issue.

The protection of personal information is a shared jurisdiction in Canada. Bill C-27 should therefore not apply in provinces that have protections as stringent as those included in the bill.

The legislation passed by the Quebec National Assembly, in February 2021 I believe, is strong legislation. Can my colleague re-

assure us that Quebec businesses are indeed excluded from the federal legislation?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the bill is aligned closely with approaches in other jurisdictions, both in Canada and internationally. The CPPA does not apply in jurisdictions where the provincial law is deemed substantially similar, which is likely to include provinces like Quebec.

It is important to recognize that the national government does have, which this legislation clearly shows, a responsibility and we are living up to that responsibility. That is one of the reasons we need to look at the regulations, as I made reference to in the previous question. However, I do not believe that there would be the overlap that would cause issues in Quebec or B.C. or any other jurisdiction.

• (1100)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke at length about administrative tribunals being a way in which people can access justice as it relates to their appeals processes and so on, but yet, this is in direct contradiction to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, who is clearly opposed to the creation of a new personal information and data protection tribunal, citing it would be unnecessary to achieve greater accountability and fairness and counterproductive in achieving quick and effective remedies. In fact, the OPCC states that adding a new level of appeals delays would delay resolutions of cases, especially when the power to impose monetary penalties is limited to the tribunal.

I wonder if the hon. member could comment on how the OPCC argues that the system proposed under Bill C-11 encourages organizations to use the appeals process rather than to seek common ground with the OPCC when it is about to render an unfavourable decision.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, sometimes one needs to agree to disagree. I look at the tribunal as something that is to the benefit of Canadians. It is an opportunity to ultimately seek fairer justice. At the end of the day, I suspect and hope that it will ultimately prevail. Perhaps there are ways in which the member can enhance or put in something that might deal with his concerns, if not directly then indirectly, but it is important that we keep the tribunal.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is long overdue. The current privacy laws were drafted 20 years back when iPhone and Facebook were not in existence. Advanced technologies like artificial intelligence are ever evolving. They are almost getting changed on an everyday basis. Does the member agree with defining things like artificial intelligence in the legislation and casting it in the legislation so that it becomes inflexible; or would it instead be better that we have regulations which would be more flexible, that would allow the ministers and the government of the day to make changes as may be required, as and when the technologies advance?

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think that the hon. member's overall assessment of the situation, when it comes to AI, is accurate. That is one of the reasons why, whether it was in the question that I had put forward a little bit earlier this morning or in my statement, the rapid change that we are seeing in the digital world is going to continue to be greatly enhanced through AI.

I think that having what we have proposed within the legislation and allowing for regulation is by far the best way to go.

I do not live in fear of AI. I think that AI is going to improve the quality of life for Canadians and people around the world.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I believe I heard the member for Winnipeg North say in his presentation that the Conservatives were supporting the bill. That is incorrect. We are opposing the bill, not that we oppose the modernization. It is needed, but this bill is inadequate.

There are many reasons but the primary reason is that it does not put personal privacy interests above those of business interests. In the “purpose” section of clause 5 in the bill, it says that, basically, they are of equal weight.

Further on, in subclause 18(3), the bill says that a legitimate interest of a business, determined by a business, is a reason that a business can use one's data without one's permission, in a way that they did not get permission for.

That is one of the fundamental flaws in the bill, in terms of the idea that personal information, mine or anyone's, is mine and should be paramount and superior to that of the business. The business is there just to serve my interest, not of equal value.

I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is why I was reflecting on Bill C-26. If we look at the debate that took place yesterday on cybersecurity, dealing with the digital world, at the end of the day, Conservative member after member was standing up saying that, yes, they were going to support the bill but that they had a lot of problems with the legislation, and that the principle of Bill C-26 is something that they support.

I kind of made a leap, and apparently the wrong leap, by seeing the Conservatives, in principle, support the privacy of Canadians and the legislation that will give an enhanced privacy legislation. I guess I should not have made that particular leap.

Inconsistency from the Conservative caucus is fairly well known. I will try my best not to make that sort of mistake going forward.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague has shown that he is quite open to the possibility of amending the bill.

Amending a bill and passing it is not something that is done lightly. I do not need to tell anyone that. Issues must be studied in depth, which most parliamentarians do not do when the issue is artificial intelligence. We must also make comparisons with international standards so that we can draw inspiration from best practices.

Does the government intend to allow parliamentarians to study the bill in detail, or will it silence them with time allocation given the urgency we sense in their tone and their desire to pass the legislation?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I said, at the very beginning of my comments, how wonderful it would be if, somehow, we could pass this bill before summer comes. I suspect that was maybe a little optimistic. Hopefully we can do it before the end of the year.

The government needs to get a sense of co-operation from at least one opposition party and we are hopeful that there will be more.

It would be nice to have that unanimous type of consent moving forward. I would have thought that the principles of the legislation should at least allow us to get it to the committee stage, where the member herself makes reference to how there are some possible changes and it is important that the government be open to ideas.

That is why I said that if there are specific ideas—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in this House.

Another day, another debate about an NDP-Liberal piece of legislation about Internet freedom in Canada. The good folks on the west side of Saskatoon have heard me speak in this place about Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, two bills aimed at controlling what Canadians see and post on the Internet.

Today we are dealing with Bill C-27, which is aimed at protecting the online data of Canadians. This legislation is meant to put safeguards around the use of artificial intelligence and establish rules around Internet privacy. Sounds good, sounds noble and sounds like something we should support. To a certain degree I do support these initiatives.

However, I have deep reservations with this legislation as it exempts the Government of Canada from these very safeguards. Do we as Canadians need the protections in this bill from companies? Absolutely, but we also need protections from government, especially this NDP-Liberal coalition government that wants to take away some of our liberties and freedoms.

Some on the other side may accuse me of fearmongering about the NDP-Liberal suppression of civil liberties and freedoms on the Internet; I am not. Let me lay out the facts, and the people in Saskatoon West can decide for themselves.

Government Orders

Bill C-11 is the first piece of legislation meant to strip of us of our rights to free speech on the Internet. Conservatives such as myself and free speech advocates have been warning that the provisions put in place by the NDP-Liberals to have government-appointed gatekeepers decide what is acceptable speech or not in Canada will lead to disaster.

We have already seen that a prominent University of Toronto professor has been threatened with the revocation of his licence and livelihood for tweeting out against this legislation and the current Prime Minister. Imagine what would happen when the Prime Minister has the full weight of the law to simply muzzle this type of speech. Anyone who disagrees with him would be silenced and would be fined, lose their livelihood, and what is next, go to a re-education camp? We all know about the Prime Minister's fondness for the basic dictatorship of the People's Republic of China, heck, he does not even mind if the People's Republic of China funnels money to his family foundation and tilts elections towards the Liberal Party of Canada in this country.

How about the second piece of legislation meant to limit our Internet freedoms, Bill C-18? That legislation allows government-appointed gatekeepers to decide what is or is not news in Canada, and forces private companies to block content they do not like from their feeds and search engines.

If there is a story critical of the NDP-Liberal coalition and the Prime Minister, they call it fake news and ban it. If there is another fawning story by Andrew Coyne in *The Globe and Mail* about the Trudeau Foundation and the Chinese Communist Party, it is forced to the top of everyone's news feed and search engine, like it or not.

When I spoke about Bill C-18 in December I warned of the consequences that this legislation would have. Specifically, I mentioned conversations I had with Google and Amazon Web Services and the impact on how they deliver services to Canadians. Google flat out told me it would simply get out of the business of delivering any and all news to Canadians as it did not want to become an instrument of the Canadian government to spread partisan messaging for the party in power. Just last month it began beta testing how it could shut down its news services for Canadians.

We need a 21st century solution to this problem, not one based on ideas from 40 years ago. Bill C-27 is supposed to protect people's data from corporations. We need that but what we need, as well, is protection from this NDP-Liberal government when it comes to privacy.

Bill C-27 completely fails us in that area. The government has dragged its heels on Internet privacy for years, and unfortunately it has been a pattern to consistently breach our digital privacy rights. We saw it when the government waited until just last year to ban Chinese telecom giant Huawei from operating in Canada while other countries did the right thing years before us.

We saw it with the \$54 million "arrive scam" app tracking Canadian border travel up until September 30, and the public bank account freezing for people who donated to the truckers last year. The list goes on and on. In the words of Alanis Morissette, "Isn't it ironic?" when we hear the government start to talk about online privacy

rights. I just hope it learns to start respecting the privacy of Canadians.

Let us take a look and see if this legislation actually protects the online privacy of the people of Saskatoon West. After all, they are rightfully distrustful of government and corporations when it comes to accessing their data

Here are some examples showing why they are distrustful: Tim Hortons tracking the movement of users after they have ordered something on their app; the RCMP using Clearview AI to access a data bank of more than three billion photos pulled from websites without user consent; and we cannot forget Telus giving the federal government access to the movements of over 33 million devices over the course of the pandemic.

When governments abuse their power, it destroys the level of faith Canadians have in their institutions. In fact, if we look at polling data, we see that the number of Canadians that have faith in their government is at an all-time low. With scandals like these, it is no wonder why.

If we want to improve the level of trust held between individuals and institutions, we must look at protecting Canadians' private data. If we dive into this legislation, it seems the intent is to create a level playing field between citizens and companies when it comes to how their data is used. However, if we look into it further, the balance between businesses using business data and the protection of our privacy is off.

● (1110)

The bill, as it is currently written, skews toward the interests of corporations rather than the fundamental rights of individuals. There are too many exceptions granted to businesses in this legislation. Some are so broad that it is like the legislation never existed at all.

For example, business activities are exempt if a "reasonable person" would expect a business to use their data, without including the definition of what a reasonable person is. The concept of legitimate business interests has been added as an exemption to consent. How does one determine if a business interest outweighs the privacy rights of an individual? Finally, the bill does not recognize privacy as a fundamental right. This absence tips the scales away from Canadians and could affect how their privacy interests are weighed against commercial interests in the future.

Government Orders

Artificial intelligence comprises a major component of this legislation. AI is becoming a key tool in today's world, much like engineering was in the last century. In the past, an engineer would sit down and design a bridge, for example. Obviously, the failure of a bridge would be a huge event with the potential for major disruptions, significant costs, potential injuries and even death. Therefore, we have professional standards for engineers who build bridges, but what about artificial intelligence?

In today's modern world, AI is used more and more to perform ever more complex tasks. In its early stages, AI was used as a shortcut for repetitive tasks, but as the technology advances, it is now being used for much more. In the future, it is not unreasonable to expect AI to play a significant role in designing a bridge, for example. Artificial intelligence also needs to have standards, which is why our universities teaching AI put a big emphasis on ethics, as there are huge implications.

I know first-hand the dangers of unregulated AI systems interfering in our day-to-day lives. On the immigration committee, we have studied this issue and looked at how Canada's immigration department is using Chinook, a so-called e-tool to help IRCC bureaucrats assess applications in bulk form. This AI program was introduced in-house by these bureaucrats, which means the software's algorithms are beholden to the beliefs of its creators.

The concerning part of all of this is that there is a known culture of racism within the department, and members do not have to take my word for it. The NDP-Liberal Minister of Immigration said this of his own department at committee: The IRCC "has zero tolerance for racism, discrimination or harassment of any kind. However, we know that these problems exist throughout the public service and in our department...[and] we must first acknowledge this reality."

There were no outside consultations done on the use or creation of this artificial intelligence application, and rejection rates have climbed since its introduction. Although I am pleased that the government is finally looking to add a framework to address concerns surrounding AI, it needs to get its own house in order first.

I will wrap up with these final thoughts.

If we are going to address concerns surrounding our digital privacy, we must listen to Canadians, and many Canadians are worried that this legislation does not protect them. I have met with Bryan Short from OpenMedia, and he said this:

Bill C-27...only plays brief lip service to privacy being a fundamental human right in its preamble; Bill C-27 fails to do the more important task of inscribing the privacy rights of people as being more important than the business interests of companies.

The bill before us is supposed to be about protecting Canadians' privacy, yet it completely avoids inscribing privacy as a fundamental right. We all know the saying "There is no point in doing something unless you do it right", and it is quite clear that the government needs to go back to the drawing board once again on some aspects of this legislation since there is not much evidence of it consulting Canadians on how their data was actually used.

I believe the former Ontario privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, said it best in 2020 during the initial Liberal attempts to bring in privacy reform to Canada when she stated:

[With] the Liberals under [the Prime Minister], it's been extremely weak. They have not addressed repeated requests from the federal privacy commissioner to strengthen existing privacy laws.... I'm tired of that. I want a party that will walk the talk. And I'm hoping that will be the Conservatives.

Canadians can count on the Conservative Party of Canada to walk the talk when it comes to strengthening our privacy laws, and Canadians can count on the Conservative Party of Canada to respect their freedom of expression online. We will scrap the online censorship legislation put in place by this tired, worn out, costly coalition. We will allow people to choose for themselves which news they want to consume, not just what the government wants them to see. Under our new leader, we will be the voice of those left behind by the NDP-Liberal government, and we will put Canadians back in the driver's seat of their own life.

● (1115)

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the Canadian Conservative Party has become such a champion for big tech companies. Since the member opposite brought this up even though it is not related to this legislation, does he think it is okay that Google blocked news access to hundreds of thousands of Canadians in order to strong-arm the government? Does he think Google is a paragon of virtue that will, on its own, protect Canadians' privacy rights?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I have many things to say, but where to begin?

First, Google is one option. There are many other browsers that can be used. If someone does not like one of them, they can go to another. That is the beauty of the free market and companies providing services.

The other thing is that Google's response was a direct response to the government's proposed legislation. The government refuses to admit that there are consequences to what it is proposing. There are significant consequences to the government dictating what consumers in Canada can see. This will affect everybody from consumers themselves to the companies that provide content.

It is an example of the government being completely oblivious to the real implications of what it is proposing with its legislation in Bill C-11 and Bill C-18.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I, too, found my colleague from Saskatoon West's comments on Bills C-11 and C-18 quite interesting. There will be an opportunity to return to Bill C-11, likely later. I was particularly surprised by the comments on Bill C-18, especially in a context where Google is currently blocking access to news content for nearly 2 million Canadians, which is no trivial matter. By the way, we still do not know why.

I have heard so much misinformation, it is outlandish. Bill C-18 requires digital giants to negotiate agreements. It is not forcing them to do anything other than negotiate agreements to pay the companies that produce the news content they use and get rich off of. It seems quite logical to me.

The point I took the most issue with in my colleague's comments was when he said that Bill C-18 will allow the government or the CRTC to decide what news people will be able to access online.

Since he seems to be an expert on the subject, I would like him to tell me specifically what clause of Bill C-18 would allow the CRTC to do such a thing.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, we have talked a lot about Bill C-18 and Bill C-11. There have been many comments from people outside of this place, like experts in the field. Lots of different things have been said, and the reality is this. The government is going to have gatekeepers in place who will tell Canadians what they can see and what they can hear on the Internet. That is what we as Conservatives are fighting against. We do not want the government to be the one to tell Canadians what they can see, what they can read and what they can post online.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, right now, Bill C-27 does not explicitly apply to political parties. We know there have been privacy breaches and the misuse of data in the past in the political area. Does the member think this kind of legislation should be amended to include political parties?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. It is a good example of why this bill needs to go to committee to be studied. There are many questions that I have raised and other speakers have raised, and these are things that need to be looked at in committee. The committee is in a great place to call witnesses and to look further into some of these things.

I believe that changes need to be made to this legislation to improve it. The member's suggestion is one possible way that it could be looked at. There are many more things that could be looked at, and I believe the committee is the right place to do that.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think it is ironic that members of the Liberal Party, the government, are claiming some sort of aversion to big corporations. Obviously, they have not read the bill. Subclause 18(3) says:

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

The government does not believe in the protection of personal privacy. It believes in the protection of access to data for companies.

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I agree with the summary of that. The government is mostly concerned about big business and the ability to use data. The Conservatives are concerned about individual Canadians and their right to privacy protection.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week, the federal government banned the use of the TikTok app on government devices because of data privacy concerns, so it is very appropriate for us to be discussing this matter today. Digital data privacy can be seen as a fundamental right, one that urgently requires strengthened legislation, protections and enforcement. Canadians must have the right to access and control the collection, use, monitoring, retention and disclosure of their personal data.

This is a pressing issue. Realizing that, the European Union introduced the GDPR, its General Data Protection Regulation, in 2016. EU countries were given a couple of years to adapt to this new privacy reality, with the regulation coming into effect in 2018. The GDPR has been used by many other countries as a framework for privacy protection.

With the GDPR as an example, and faced with a changing digital data universe, the government basically did nothing to protect data privacy for Canadians. Perhaps that is an unfair statement. After all, digital and online data privacy was addressed in the last Parliament under Bill C-11. The Liberals recognized that Canada needed to bring its privacy laws into the 21st century.

However, that bill was never passed. Apparently, data privacy was not a big enough issue to be made a priority, and the digital charter implementation act was scrapped in favour of an election that Canadians neither wanted nor needed. Now we are asked once again to address this subject. It is indeed better late than never. I would have hoped, though, that with the delay, the government could have improved on what it is proposing.

Government Orders

Perhaps if the government had moved a little faster, Canadians would not have had to question how their data was being used and how their privacy was being invaded by governments and corporations. We are left to wonder how many privacy breaches have gone undetected or unreported. The ones we know of are disturbing enough. Tim Hortons used its app to track customer movements. The RCMP used Clearview AI's illegally created facial recognition database. Telus gave customer location data to PHAC.

• (1125)

It has been more than 20 years since Canada's existing digital privacy framework, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, PIPEDA, was passed. With technological changes in recent years, legislation is needed to address subjects such as biometrics and artificial intelligence. We have to consider how Canadians understand the issue of consent when it comes to the use of their data and their privacy.

I am deeply concerned and disappointed with how sloppy the Liberal approach in Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act, 2022, currently is. Privacy is a fundamental right. This bill does not mention that, despite the Supreme Court of Canada having acknowledged it. We need to clearly distinguish the extent to which Canadians' digital privacy will be protected. If the government wants the bill to be fully effective, it needs to further explore the scope of accountability required when privacy is breached.

The clear definition of consent is a major improvement from what it once was in the Personal Information Protection and Electronics Document Act, but a good definition is only the beginning. Because technology has greatly expanded and evolved since the implementation of PIPEDA, should we not also expand the umbrella of activities that consent would cover? The large number of exemptions allowed would weaken the impact of the legislation.

Bill C-27 may be a good beginning, but I had hoped for something better. It is sad that the bill's title is perhaps the strongest statement in the legislation. While the title gives some idea of what the legislation is all about, it is already dated. We are no longer in 2022, and the Liberals are once again falling behind.

As parliamentarians, we know the power of words and the importance of speaking in a way that can be understood by those receiving the message. It is important that legislation can be understood. It is even more crucial that the bills we pass spell out exactly what we intend.

Perhaps the most important part of any of the laws is the section that provides definitions. They need to be clear and comprehensible and not subject to differing interpretations that weaken the intent of the legislation. Legislation that allows each person to provide their own definitions is problematic. Bill C-27 uses words such as "significant impact" or "sensitive information". I cannot help but question what is covered by these vague terms.

Before the people of Edmonton Manning sent me to represent them in the House, I was a businessman. I understood the importance of safeguarding the personal information my customers entrusted to me and not to abuse that trust. However, as we have seen, some companies make unauthorized use of the information they gather to gain a competitive edge or for profit.

With that in mind, there must be a balance between acceptable use of data by business and the fundamental protection of our privacy. It seems to me that the balance is wrong on this bill, given the way it addresses user consent and the use of collected information.

The more I read Bill C-27, which 100 pages-plus, the more questions I have. There is too much in it in need of clarification. Yes, that will be done when it goes to committee after second reading, but the government could have presented a better bill to make the committee's work easier.

I do not want to sound too negative. I know the Liberals mean well, even if they do not seem to be able to quite understand just how important digital privacy is to Canadians in the 21st century. I am pleased therefore to see that they understand that sometimes mere words or a scolding are not enough.

It makes sense to me that the Privacy Commissioner will receive new powers to enforce violations of the consumer privacy protection act. That may be the most impactful change the legislation brings about. It is not enough to simply recommend that perpetrators stop their violations. Any parent could tell us that consequences are needed if we want to ensure improved behaviour.

• (1130)

With the Privacy Commissioner finally being able to force violators to conform to the rules, I think we will see increased respect and better treatment of Canadians' personal information. The harsh financial penalties for non-compliance will be a powerful motivator.

Given the amount of time the Liberals had before presenting Bill C-27, we must question why they did not come up with a better bill. They have left me, and all Canadians, asking if they really understand what their own legislation is supposed to do.

Does the consumer privacy protection act, as proposed in the bill, do enough to properly protect Canadians' personal information? The Liberals had a chance to look at the EU's GDPR and see how well that worked. Did they learn anything?

Would Bill C-27 improve the protection of Canadians' personal information or are there so many exemptions for needing consent in the sharing of personal information that the words of the bill are meaningless?

Government Orders

Would the legislation create proper protections for Canadians' biometric data? Given that no such protection currently exists, perhaps we should be thankful that the subject is addressed at all.

Is it reasonable to exempt security agencies and departments, such as CSE, CSIS and DND from AI regulations? How do you balance privacy and security concerns?

Canadians' digital privacy and data needs to be properly protected. This bill is a flawed attempt to start the long overdue overhaul of Canada's digital data privacy framework. The Conservatives will be looking at putting forward some common-sense amendments at the committee stage to ensure we have the best possible legislation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to go to the principles of the legislation, which the member just said he would like to see a series of amendments at committee.

Would the member concede that if the bill does not pass through, he will never have the opportunity to propose those amendments? It would, in essence, sabotage legislation that is substantive and that is there to protect the privacy of Canadians. There would be substantial financial consequences where there have been violations of this law.

Could he provide his thoughts on that?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, in a previous Parliament, the government killed Bill C-11 because it wanted to have an election. It did not see the importance of that bill. Now the government is proposing a flawed bill and expecting us to support it. We will support a bill that really makes sense, a bill that will help and work for Canadians.

I do not think we have any interest in wasting time. It is up to the government to do something with its bill to make it acceptable for other parties to support it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Manning for saying something at the start of his speech that we believe is quite important. He said that a lot of our personal data is already compromised. It is already compromised because the government was so lax before introducing legislation. It would not even have gone ahead with Bill C-27 if it had not felt pressured by the European legislation.

Bill C-27 does nothing to protect individuals whose data is already compromised, so does my colleague from Edmonton Manning have some ideas for amendments that would address that?

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I did mention the European law and the fact that the government was too late at looking at it and in considering steps to bring Canadians legislation that would help and that was most needed.

I also mentioned the fact that there are a lot of vague definitions that will lead to problems for this bill to be resolved.

The government presented the bill much later than the Europeans, who presented their bill in 2016. It is 2023 now. It could

have done something much faster, quicker and more mature so we could work together to provide Canadians something that is most needed.

• (1135)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his recommendations on the many amendments that are needed to strengthen this bill. In particular, I am interested in one of them, which is about empowering the Privacy Commissioner. We know that this is essential if we want to protect the rights of Canadians. One way to do that would be to equip the Privacy Commissioner with the power to seek the imposition of administrative monetary penalties in a manner that would be similar to the powers that the commissioner for competition has under the Competition Act.

I would like the member to elaborate on how we must empower the Privacy Commissioner and ensure that he has the powers to enforce Canadians' privacy rights. In particular, on this issue, does he agree we need to amend this legislation?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I go back to the one thing I mentioned. Even these vague definitions would still be in the hands of the minister to decide after the fact, and that is one of the biggest flaws in the bill. We do not understand how the minister would handle this and whether the minister would let the commissioners play their roles and do their jobs. That is why we have to be very careful approaching the bill and examining it, especially at committee, to be able to bring forward an acceptable and effective piece of legislation.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, as it stands now, federal laws do not require federal political parties to follow the same privacy laws that apply to others across the country. This is an issue that could have been identified and addressed in Bill C-27, but it has not been. I wonder if the member for Edmonton Manning has a position on this and would he like to comment on it.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I did actually edge on where the federal and provincial responsibilities come on certain aspects of privacy and privacy protection. Again, the definitions come into play in understanding the legislation. That is why the government could have done much better in bringing more clarity to the bill, so we could at least study it better.

Government Orders

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here today to talk about Bill C-27. It has got a big fancy name: an act to enact the consumer privacy and protection act. I worked on this extensively as former chair of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. A big part of what we talked about was Canadians' privacy.

I want to lead off with a question that I think all who are watching here will want an answer to by the end of what I have said, and I hope I get there. Can we trust this government when it comes to privacy?

We have heard many accounts. We have heard of foreign interference. We have seen evidence that that has been happening under the government. We cannot even keep track of all the ethics breaches.

There was a recent article in the National Post about Canadians' data, and many folks out there would remember this, called "Canada's public health agency admits it tracked 33 million mobile devices during lockdown" and it read, "The Public Health Agency of Canada accessed data such as cell-tower location to monitor people's activity during lockdown, it said".

Can we trust this government? I think the answer is becoming more and more clear.

What have we done to protect consumer privacy? I was, again, part of that ethics committee. We formed an international grand committee of nine countries, representing half a billion people, where we really tried to tackle this and get to some better practices for big tech.

Cambridge Analytica was a scandal where big tech was getting our information. Many points are being collected, and 53,000 points of information is what we heard was the Facebook average amount they are collecting on us, and that is being sold to the highest bidder. It is being used to not only give us a choice on what cereal we should buy in the morning but also surveil us to make predictive behaviour so we will kind of go in the direction they want us to go.

We Conservatives saw a need to have a better, more robust policy, so I will read from our constitution, our policy, which I was part of drafting, along with many other EDAs from across the country. This is from the Conservative Party:

The Conservative Party believes digital data privacy is a fundamental right that urgently requires strengthened legislation, protections, and enforcement. Canadians must have the right to access and control collection, use, monitoring, retention, and disclosure of their personal data. International violations should receive enforcement assistance from the Canadian Government.

That is just a little snapshot of what we have been doing over here. We would hope that legislation like this would address some of those privacy concerns. What we learned and what many are hearing from this debate is that there are huge exemptions for big tech, huge ways to use consumer data in ways that, first of all, consumers do not want their information being used for, and they do not even know how their information is being used.

I am going to get into some of the critics of Bill C-27. I will read from an article today by a young man, Bryan Short, who has some concerns around Bill C-27. Referring to Bill C-27, the article says:

...this change opens the door for companies to begin describing their data collection and surveillance practices in a highly simplified manner, leaving out important details about how this information could be used to harm and discriminate against a person or group of people, and ensuring that the data broker economy continues to thrive while people in Canada's privacy rights are pushed to the side.

Well, according to the Liberals, this is what this bill is supposed to be addressing. Here, we see simplified consent. That is something that we have supported too. It should be something that we can understand, but not to be abused in this manner, where the fine print is down here and we just check that little box to make ourselves feel good that we have done it. We feel like our data or our privacy is protected, but it really is not.

I will read on: "But with deceptive design practices already being regularly used to encourage people to click 'agree' without really understanding what they're signing up for, Bill C-27's weakening of consent could be a big step backwards in terms of privacy."

I will keep reading, as I have a little bit more from this particular author. We talk about the right to request deletion, and that is part of one's data that is online.

In reference to Bill C-27, the article says, "What's lacking is a mechanism for when people change their mind about consenting to the collection and use of their personal information, or if they're opposed to the use of their data and consent wasn't required at all".

● (1140)

We have seen the exemptions. They are a big haul. My colleague from Edmonton just referred to those exemptions. We want some better pieces of legislation. I applaud the effort. The previous privacy commissioner Therrien was excellent in caring about Canadians' data and really pursuing a solution for it and defending Canadians. I applaud him for that.

However, I am going to go on to another critic whom I have gotten to know very well from being on the committee, and from his work in Canadian information and how important that is to protect. He is a man named Jim Balsillie, a stranger to none of us in this place and former part owner of BlackBerry. I will read from the article from the Globe and Mail called, "Privacy is central to human well-being, democracy, and a vibrant economy. So why won't the Trudeau government take it seriously?" The article, written by Mr. Balsillie, states:

Government Orders

Privacy is a fundamental human right that serves as a gateway to other rights and freedoms such as freedom of expression, individual and collective autonomy, and freedom from harassment or invasion. Privacy is critical for the healthy development of the human brain, identity, close relationships and social existence.... "True realization of freedom, that is a life led autonomously, is only possible in conditions where privacy is protected."

We absolutely agree that privacy is a fundamental human right. I will go on, as this helps explain what Mr. Balsillie is referring to in that paragraph. The article continues:

Behavioural monitoring, analysis and targeting are no longer restricted to unscrupulous social-media companies, but have spread across all sectors of the economy, including retail, finance, telecommunications, health care, entertainment, education, transportation and others.

I have told many high school classes an example of this. We learned that people's data is being monitored in real time, so when standing in front of a display at a big box store, it is known that one happens to be standing in front of a certain brand of headphones, so people should not be surprised if they get an ad for these particular headphones, and why they should buy them, before they leave the store. In a good way, it is incredible, but it is scary in other ways too with the predictive nature of having all that information.

Mr. Balsillie goes on to criticize the current Liberal government. He says:

Yet, Canada's federal government has repeatedly failed to take privacy seriously and construct a legal and regulatory framework that protects the rights of Canadians in the digital age...the Digital Charter Implementation Act, normalizes and expands surveillance and treats privacy as an obstacle to corporate profits, not as a fundamental right or even a right to effective consumer protection. After years of cozying up to Big Tech and meeting with its lobbyists as often as twice a week, the Canadian [Liberal] government is finally coming to terms with the fact that the digital economy needs to be regulated.

The act expands surveillance. It does not reduce it.

I asked initially this question: Can Canadians trust the Liberal government? The Liberals are pretty close to big tech guys. I will use the example that many have been talking about, which are smart cities. That conversation was brought up many years ago and as recently as just a few years ago. Our efforts at the ethics committee were to really push back on this invasion of privacy and that a particular smart city in Toronto, Sidewalk Labs, would have been an invasion of Canadians' information. The Sidewalk Labs project would monitor data on many levels, and it has connections to the current Liberal government. I will read from an article, which states, "Sidewalk Labs project gained support from Trudeau in 2017 call ahead of bid process".

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member knows we cannot use the names of current members.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: My apologies, Madam Speaker. It is a title, but that was my mistake.

What is concerning about this particular article is not just that the Prime Minister supports an invasive smart city kind of concept of monitoring everything, but that it was really done in secret. The people who wanted to get to the bottom of the Prime Minister's conversation with Google and Alphabet Inc. had to get a freedom of information request to find out that the government was having secret negotiations behind the scenes.

• (1145)

I started off by asking a question: Can we trust the Liberal government when it comes to privacy? I think the answer is a clear no.

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if my colleague opposite does not trust the government, does he trust Google to make the rules, follow its own rules and protect Canadians' privacy that way?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, that is a very interesting question from a Liberal member across the way. No, I do not. That is the reason we are tackling big tech, such as Facebook and Google. The invasiveness of big tech on our privacy and data is a huge concern.

Google was so linked to the current Liberal government and the former member for Vaughan was carrying the water for Sidewalk Labs. It was really something else. There were secret conversations happening to usher a Google project through. Absolutely, I do not trust it.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the member is aware, this bill is actually three bills packaged into one. It was the NDP that asked for a division to vote on artificial intelligence. The previous manifestations of Bill C-11 were enhanced with this bill.

What are his thoughts on the fact that this is the first time we are debating how to regulate artificial intelligence? Would it have been more appropriate to have an entirely separate process, as opposed to packing it in with two other pieces of legislation that we have done before? We have at least had some review in the chamber on one them, and they are less controversial in many respects. I would appreciate his comments on that.

I thank him for referencing Jim Balsillie, who has done a tremendous amount of work on this issue in protecting Canadians' privacy rights, which is the same as what the NDP has done. Physical rights and digital rights should be equal.

• (1150)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, yes, we absolutely support it being separated out. It is such a big issue to tackle, and we should tackle these things individually. They are huge issues.

Government Orders

As a testament to when we worked in ethics, often, across the aisle, we do not agree on things in this place, but the one thing we agreed on in our ethics committee was that we all cared about our privacy and Canadians' data. Among the Liberals across the way, there were a couple of members who were supportive of where we were going. I think, in the efforts of supporting all Canadians' right to privacy by not having our data sold and farmed out to the highest bidder, it is in our best interest to defend all Canadians' privacy in this place.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I agree with some of the points my colleague made regarding concerns about privacy violations.

It really gets on my nerves too when I am looking at something and suddenly get bombarded with ads. We need laws to deal with that.

Here is my question for my colleague. We need a digital charter and better protection for our private data. Does my colleague think this ought to go to committee for an in-depth study so we can hear from all the relevant experts, make top-to-bottom improvements to the bill and make sure it is airtight?

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. The more alarming part is that we get pop-ups, and they mysteriously show up after we have been in a certain place. We can extrapolate that to include testimony we have heard at committee.

These data farms and data-mining operations know how someone will vote before they even know how they are going to vote. That is what leads us to huge concerns around being guided in certain directions to vote, which is really anti-democratic. We believe this bill needs to go back, get rewritten and done right. We have the expertise in this place. The minister across the way just needs to listen.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have talked about legitimate interest being an exception of a business being able to use data without permission. Another provision in the act, subsection 15(5), gives a business the ability to do implied consent, which is really consent without consent.

Can you comment on how the Liberals are in the pockets of big tech on that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows that I will not be commenting on anything.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, the evidence that the current government has been in the back pocket of big tech has been there since the member across the way, the member for Vaughan who is not here anymore, was just so obviously supporting Google in all its ambitions.

We all understand that there is interest for data. It is something we need to use, but it needs to be done with proper—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise once again in this place as we resume debate on Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act.

During discussion of this bill and related issues, we are not going to get anywhere if we do not start to recognize that privacy is a fundamental right. This is what Conservatives believe and is where we are coming from when we talk about the positive or negative aspects of this piece of legislation. Not only is it true, but it has to be a priority. That is what Canadians expect from us and that is the message we are delivering to the current government. It is also what has been echoed by many of our constituents as we get emails or phone calls from people who are concerned about this bill and about this issue in general.

The world we live in is rapidly changing and the pace of change seems to be getting faster as we go. It is really amazing what people can achieve with digital technology, yet it has also left us in a more vulnerable and insecure position. There are many ways to intrude upon and violate our privacy that did not exist before, and it is safe to say that this trend will continue in the coming years.

If it was not clear already, it is easy to see now that we have to do more than respond to the changes simply as they come. Instead, we need to do our absolute best to think ahead and make sure that our efforts to protect privacy will not become outdated shortly after we pass any kind of bill into law. It is the least we can do if we are serious about preparing our country for the future, but it is true that, before we can do that, we first have some catching up to do.

Our current privacy legislation is long overdue for an update. It has been 22 years since Canada updated its privacy legislation. Twenty-two years ago, the Internet was basically a new phenomenon, and only about half of Canadians were online. Back then, I think Joe Sakic was the MVP of the NHL, and I was only 13 years old, so a lot has changed in that time.

Today, the Internet is a valuable tool used daily by the majority of Canadians. Generally speaking, people basically are living online. We use social media to connect with family, friends and professional networks. We use a GPS to get directions to move from place to place and navigate around our cities and towns. We have online banking to manage our finances. However, at the beginning of the new millennium, pretty much the majority of this was unheard of. In fact, I think we can all remember what we thought was going to potentially happen on Y2K and the implications it was possibly going to have on technology, which thankfully never came to fruition.

Government Orders

It has been years since the Liberals announced a new data strategy for Canada, which also has not become a reality. The promise also came four years after they formed government. It has now been about as long from then until now. After such a long time, Canadians are still waiting for someone to provide higher standards for the use and collection of their personal data.

So much of what we do these days involves an exchange of our data. Facial and fingerprint recognition are used for security, along with our passwords. Digital maps and search functions track our locations in real time. Many of us upload and share an overwhelming amount of personal information on social media accounts and platforms. We are constantly giving our data to different online companies in order to use their services. People feel comfortable enough to do all this because there is a voluntary loss of privacy for the sake of convenience, but this arrangement also requires a deep level of trust. It could not exist otherwise.

Whenever there has been a breach or loss of that trust, the problem of privacy becomes more obvious. There have been organizations exploiting the trust of people to sell their personal information without authorization. In some cases, the data has gone to places that are not working in their best interests.

I am sure, Madam Speaker, like many people in the House, when you go to a website it asks you if you accept the cookies, for example. Obviously, people just accept and go on there because they want to read the articles. What they do not realize is what they are agreeing to when it talks about what is going to happen with their search history or different aspects that might be invaded by those cookies. Therefore, we have to get serious about privacy. We have to mean it when we say that we recognize that privacy is a fundamental right.

The first draft of Bill C-27 says in the preamble, “the protection of the privacy interests of individuals with respect to their personal information is essential to individual autonomy and dignity and to the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms in Canada”.

Of course, I am not going to disagree with that. I believe it is good for a law to make a statement like this. However, it is also true that we can and should take it a step further in the same direction. Why not have this type of statement included in the text of the bill instead of only in the preamble? That way, it would more likely be stronger for enforcement and interpretation by the courts. With the situation we are in today, it is worth making our privacy law as strong as possible, and this would be a simple way for us to set the right tone. That is something we are calling for.

• (1155)

This is one example, among many, of how Bill C-27 could be improved with some amendments. Conservatives want to make sure we update our legislation in the right way. After all, in this area of privacy, we should not settle for less.

There is more that can be done to fill the gaps in our privacy law. If the government does not accept stronger legislation, it will simply be insufficient. The law must ensure that the privacy of our citizens would be respected by the activities of government and business. Canadians are the owners of their data, and corporations

should ask for consent if ever they hope to collect, use or disclose a client's information.

Instead, the Liberal government still has loopholes with respect to privacy. Corporations can still operate with implied consent instead of express consent, which is freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous consent. What happened with Home Depot and Facebook shows how relying on implied consent can go wrong. In this case, a person could ask for email receipts from Home Depot. Their email address, as well as details of their purchase, were given to Meta, which then matched the person with a Facebook or Instagram account.

When brought to court, Home Depot claimed that it had the implied consent of customers to share their emails with whomever it pleased. When I shopped at Home Depot, I never gave my email address to it, but it never once asked me if I was okay with sharing that data with somebody other than for its own transactional purposes.

We have a lack of clarity, which is not protecting the consumer as much it should be. Implied consent has been losing relevance over time. In our context, it creates headaches for customers who are going about their regular business. They expect one thing and later find out that something much different is going on with their personal data. Even if they agreed or simply went along with something, they rightly feel misled by what happened. That is not informed consent. Our peer countries have been moving away from this. Europe's general data protection regulation has been heralded as the gold standard for privacy laws, and it has done away with implied consent.

Going back to discussing Home Depot, it also said that anything people bought there would be classified as “non-sensitive”, which is something this bill fails to define. Vague language will not favour our citizens in the end. With the Home Depot case, we can see that the law could be interpreted by larger organizations to allow them to do what the law actually intended to restrict. We should clearly define “sensitive information”, and it needs to apply to everyone.

Another vague part of this bill is the implementation of the right to disposal. Bill C-27 would allow the user to request that their data be destroyed, but clarification is needed regarding anonymization and the right to delete or the right to vanish.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, this bill is like many announcements the Liberal government likes to make. It sounds good, but the incompetence, the vague language and failure to close loopholes mean that it would not do what it says it would do. However, it should not surprise anybody if a Liberal bill has significant weaknesses and gaps on the issue of privacy. It is hard for Canadians to take the government seriously based on its own record. It has not shown respect for privacy.

We have seen a government agency use location data from cell-phones for tracking purposes. We have seen law enforcement access Clearview AI's illegally created facial recognition database, and, of course, last year we saw the public doxing of online donors. While that was happening, the Liberals decided to mess with the bank accounts of Canadians, and some of those people had not even made donations themselves and certainly had not committed crimes.

It is easy for things to go wrong when there is government overreach, but today the federal government has an opportunity to modernize and protect our country for the problems we face in the 21st century. If it does not listen to us and fails to make the right decisions, it would be truly shameful.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member can enlighten us. He referred to what he believes are shortfalls in the legislation. I would ask him to indicate clearly if he has specific changes he would like to see in the form of an amendment that he believes would enhance the legislation to such a degree that he would be prepared to support it.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I think a lot of it, too, falls on the vague language that we see throughout the bill. I alluded to that multiple times throughout my speech. Canadians want to see strong safeguards because right now the fact is that there are not as many protections currently in the law, but as this bill is currently written, it would not necessarily strengthen it either. It is good to see that the government has put legislation forward, but at this point it just feels like it is a virtue signal that the government is going to take this issue seriously, but it is not actually doing anything substantive to it.

Conservatives want the bill to have stronger language to make sure there would be real rules in place to protect people's data and make sure they would not be victimized either by big government or big business.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am wondering about something. People have been talking about anonymizing data and the importance of protecting individuals' personal information by keeping it anonymous.

That said, we will be working on the online hate issue shortly. I think that, in some cases, we do need that ability to trace Internet users so we can pass legislation and take action if people make statements that cross the line and are found to be illegal or even criminal.

Does my colleague think it is possible to protect personal information and anonymize data online while also keeping Quebecers and Canadians safe by making sure users who commit online crimes can be traced?

• (1205)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I think anonymizing and aggregating data is extremely important. One example we saw where that was not necessarily taking place was with Tim Hortons. A couple of years ago, if someone had the app and was going to the store to buy a product, or if they just had it on their phone and went through there, Tim Hortons would track where people were going for a period of time after they had been at the store. It was very clear where that data was going and what it was going to be used for, because it was not anonymized or aggregated.

I do think there is something to be said for having a proper regime in place to make anonymization and aggregation take place. It does happen in some cases, but I think it needs to be utilized a lot more in cases where people's data is there. People need to know for sure, have absolute confidence, that it will be done and that the data cannot be unscrambled. We have heard many times in other committees that the unscrambling of data can happen and that it can happen quite quickly too, so we need to make sure people are protected, even if their data is being anonymized and aggregated.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think one of the things we have really benefited from in Canada is the Privacy Commissioner and the office. There is no doubt that the United States not having this position has created an issue for that country. For ourselves, the commission having appropriate resources and reformation to enforce the decisions, as well as having independence from Parliament in many respects, is crucial for the NDP.

I am just wondering where the Conservatives stand on this, with regard to the Privacy Commission, because there would potentially be a tribunal created with Bill C-27, and then there would be far more regulation and oversight necessary from the Privacy Commissioner in the age of artificial intelligence.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, having the Privacy Commissioner is fantastic, and it is interesting to see provinces that have their own privacy commissioners as well. For a number of meetings, I substituted in on the ethics committee, and we heard from some of the provincial privacy commissioners who did fantastic and important work. I think, generally speaking, Canadians would like to see them continue to be able to do their work. They play an important role. I am only going to talk about what is happening here in Canada, but I would like to see their offices continue to function, and I appreciate the valuable work they do.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are talking about Bill C-27, an act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts. The length of the bill's title is commensurate with the work that will be required of legislators.

Obviously, the Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of the bill, since we have wanted it for quite some time. Quebec is actually already ahead of the curve on this issue. We absolutely must send Bill C-27 to committee so we can hear from experts who will point out the flaws in the bill, shed light on how to improve it and put some flesh on the bones, so to speak.

There are too many details in terms of the areas of action and application, and we cannot look at them all too quickly. We need some clarification, and that is to be expected. The committee needs to hear from a wide range of witnesses. The bill must not pass too quickly. What matters is taking our time in committee. That is what taking responsibility looks like, if we want Internet users to do the same.

On November 28, 2022, the Speaker of the House made the following decision regarding Bill C-27:

...two votes will take place at the second reading stage.... The first will be on parts 1 and 2, including the schedule to clause 2. The second will deal with part 3 of the bill.

Thus, if the House votes against the AI portion, work on Bill C-27 will continue without that portion. If the House votes in favour of the bill in its entirety, it will go to committee. Even if we vote in favour of the AI portion at second reading, there is still an opportunity to vote against it at third reading. That sort of latitude is important.

The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act has needed reform for years. A digital charter is urgently needed. Canada's privacy law is pre-digital, if not prehistoric. Today's context is completely different from that of the 2000s.

Bill C-27 is also a response to the strict and ambitious European privacy legislation, the General Data Protection Regulation. We already know that without an adequate legislative response, it will become impossible for European organizations to exchange information with countries or international organizations that have not adopted legislation as strict as theirs.

If Bill C-27 is not well structured and up to date, Canada will not meet the European Union's expectations. I consider that to be important and very serious.

In Canada, the financial sector is beginning to worry, and it is putting pressure on the government because it fears losing a portion of its European market. That makes sense.

There is less pressure in Quebec because our laws are already compliant, or almost. What is governed by Quebec is already relatively protected. The problem is when two levels of government overlap and one is inadequate. For example, *Mouvement Desjardins* is already prepared, but the same cannot be said for *Fiducie*

Desjardins, which is the Ontario counterpart. It is the former Trust Royal, an Ontario trust company.

It is troubling, for example, that Ontario does not have updated privacy and artificial intelligence legislation when we do and that even the same institutions with the same names do not have the same laws.

However, even though this is an urgent issue, we cannot take a scattershot approach and let the most important things get lost in the shuffle.

Let us talk about protecting individuals. In many ways, Bill C-27 seeks to protect individuals' anonymity. It puts the individual and the idea of consent back at the centre of reflections on digital exchanges. To date, in Canada, organizations have been given a free pass and they have taken advantage of the digital wild west to share personal information without any legislation to stem their greed. Bill C-27 will not only limit and restrict their excessive freedom, but it will also give them responsibilities.

Bill C-27 creates a tribunal. It sets out three types of sanctions for those who contravene the act. The first is administrative monetary penalties, or fines, which work for road violations, at least. The other two are criminal and penal offences.

● (1210)

Bill C-27 is clearly binding and it has real power.

Privacy protection is a shared jurisdiction. Even if Bill C-27 gives the impression that it will be consistent with Quebec's new Bill 25 on privacy protection, as currently drafted it offers no such guarantee. The government must ensure that Bill 25 is substantially similar to Bill C-27 and stipulate it by decree. We understand that Bill C-27 is not intended to infringe on Quebec's legislation. This needs to be confirmed in committee.

Let us now talk about artificial intelligence, more specifically about individual identification. There are currently three ways to identify an individual, either with a password or social insurance number, biometric data and voice recognition and our possessions, such as text messages, phone calls and so forth.

Currently, European law requires companies to rely on two of those ways, and maybe three, eventually. Bill C-27 needs to legislate on this as well.

There is also the variable of sensitive personal information. Inspired by European law, Quebec's Bill 25 on privacy protection defines information as sensitive if "due to its nature or the context of its use or communication, it entails a high level of reasonable expectation of privacy."

Government Orders

On that point, although Bill C-27 does not define what sensitive data is, its meaning will guide the development of cybersecurity measures. In other words, the AI legislation enacted in Bill C-27 will serve as the foundation upon which more ambitious legislation will have to be built so that we can more adequately regulate the AI environment. It is a good start, albeit a late one.

In closing, I would point to the many feats of artificial intelligence. This is a process of imitating human intelligence that relies on creating and applying algorithms in a dynamic computing environment. We have all seen the Prime Minister responding in a fake interview where he can be heard making false statements. The sound and image were really similar. It was uncanny.

It has also been shown that artificial intelligence can create works of art whose similarities are so close to the original creation that they could compromise its original value. I am a songwriter, and, thanks to the ChatGPT concept, one could take the various characteristics of each of my 80 original songs and make an 81st that would have essentially the same melodic flourishes and the same kinds of metaphors. I confess that this troubles me immensely.

We all understand the potential scale of this kind of thing and how it can have all kinds of repercussions. However, we have also been told that, for science, this tool can be revolutionary as long as we have a legislative framework that is adapted to the current state of AI and future-proofed for developments to come. What worries us is the minister's stated intention to pass the bill quickly. Bloc members believe the committee should take all the time it needs to hear from a broad range of witnesses so we can identify and fix the bill's grey areas and blind spots.

The government indicated openness to slowing the work down. Will it do as we ask? We hope so. If that is how it works out, that would be good.

AI is more about the data analysis process and the ability to do that thoroughly than about a particular format or function. That is why we have to deal with the issue carefully and understand its impact so we can make the necessary legal framework as good as possible. Doing that means taking the time for an in-depth study of Bill C-27.

Here again, Quebec is the leader of the pack, and others would do well to follow suit.

• (1215)

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the work that my colleague does with me on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

As my colleague knows, I have three young children, aged seven, eight and 10. Sometimes, when I see them using their devices, I think about how much things have changed from when I was their age. I would like to ask my colleague whether she thinks it is important that this bill makes it possible to protect children and set up parental controls to keep our children safe from everything that is on the Internet and social media, so that they are protected from data theft and identity theft.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I admire him and appreciate his friendship because we work very well together in committee. We have a great connection and I appreciate that.

I also appreciate the fact that his wife is a music creator like me. She knows what I mean when I talk about the threat of our artistic productions being copied.

With regard to cybersecurity for children, I completely agree with my colleague. I think that the committee will be very interested in examining that unique aspect of the bill. We talked about cyberviolence yesterday, and I think that will be an extremely important aspect. We also need to think about educating families and parents so they get the tools they need to better protect our young children, who certainly need protecting in today's tumultuous cyber-environment.

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague is probably hearing from constituents, as I am. The bill seems to be silent on the selling of personal data. It is silent on facial recognition. She mentioned the artificial intelligence part of it. It seems that the new artificial intelligence part of it was just jammed alongside, and there is not a lot of thought in there.

She did not comment on the concept of implied consent. I thank my Liberal colleague for bringing up the protection issues. The bill does mention the term "implied consent". That would allow businesses to take a user's consent to use their data and information for new purposes without actually obtaining it. I wonder if she could comment on that and why it is so important to get that right.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question. When it comes to consent, I believe that very clear guidelines need to be set in order to avoid ambiguity.

Why does the bill before us need so much study and deliberation in committee?

I think we will find that consent is a very particular aspect of this domain and that, as I said, we will have to set very clear and precise guidelines that cannot fail in practice. I believe the experts will enlighten us on this subject. I hope we will have the ability and the opportunity to hear from them during the committee study.

Government Orders

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an important piece to talk about. Megacorporations, in particular those corporations that utilize AI and other digital tools, have been doing something nefarious, which is putting in these long, giant legal descriptions. Many people just scroll to the bottom of these and accept them. However, many people do not know how complicated those arrangements are that they are coming into.

I wonder if the member would talk about how dangerous it is to have such complicated agreements that regular folks are signing on to, while not knowing the explicit dangers and damages that come along with agreeing to those terms and conditions, like the ones we are talking about today and like the ones that are harvesting data. Would the member expand on that, please?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I will give a brief answer.

Cigarette packs have a warning label on them to indicate that smoking causes cancer. I think it will be important to include similar warnings about the security of our personal data on the Internet.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, privacy is important, and I think nearly all Canadians agree on this. I presume that all members of the House agree on that as well. A generation ago, the Supreme Court also agreed; it said that privacy was something upon which our most basic and ancient expectations of liberty depend. The security of the person depends on privacy, and without a basic expectation of privacy, it is difficult to imagine how any freedoms and security can exist.

What about privacy in the digital age? There is a growing awareness of how both businesses and governments threaten people's privacy and their expectation of privacy. Over the last few years, Canadians have seen high-profile examples of gross violations of this basic expectation of privacy, from both the private sector and government.

Users of the Tim Hortons app were rightly appalled when they learned that a private business was tracking their movements without their knowledge or consent, well after they had ordered and purchased their products. We also heard about Home Depot and the sharing of emails without the knowledge or consent of its customers.

We have seen where Telus Mobility gave the Public Health Agency the mobility data of not only its own customers but any customers whose signals passed through its infrastructure. It did this without following Canada's existing privacy laws, which required the Public Health Agency to consult the Privacy Commissioner before obtaining or using that data.

There is a private corporation, Clearview AI, which is a business that scrapes billions of images of people's faces from across the Internet. It identifies these images however it can from whatever sources, public or whatnot, that it has and then sells these identified images to law enforcement agencies without the consent of the people whose faces and identities it sells.

These are examples of how both public and private institutions flout existing laws.

On the public side, we have seen how the Privacy Commissioner has been ignored by both PHAC and the RCMP. When knowledge of what they had done became available, it was clear that they had not followed the existing laws or consulted with the Privacy Commissioner. The RCMP even disputed the finding of the Privacy Commissioner that it had violated the act, treating it like some kind of matter of opinion with which it could disagree. It repeated that refusal to accept the Privacy Commissioner's finding at a parliamentary committee. The RCMP also used sophisticated spyware to hack cellphones. Again, it did so without consulting the Privacy Commissioner about the use of new technology and new investigative tools, which is required under existing law.

Therefore, we have a real problem with both businesses and the government, which does not take its obligations to Canadians' privacy seriously enough. The government has a problem with respecting Canadians' privacy, and it has a credibility problem around privacy-related issues.

In addition to these well-known breaches by law enforcement and law enforcement's casual attitude towards compliance with privacy law, there are enormous commercial incentives for businesses to use new technologies like facial recognition with artificial intelligence. We have studied these concerns at parliamentary committees, and we have heard experts testify about the dangers to Canadians from the potential misuse of artificial intelligence, both by businesses and law enforcement.

● (1225)

What happens when artificial intelligence goes wrong? Facial recognition technology has built-in biases. We have heard expert testimony about how the efficacy of facial recognition under existing software is best with middle-aged, white male faces. When an individual is a child, a senior, a woman or a person with a darker skin tone, these applications are far less likely to correctly match people. This may have life-changing consequences when we are talking about law enforcement, never mind all the potential commercial applications of AI for retail and other potential users.

Government Orders

In facial recognition, the images are often scraped from the Internet without the consent of the consumer. Consent and the system of consent are completely broken with privacy. This needs to be updated. I know that this bill tries to address this.

We all have these devices that are connected to the Internet. I think everybody in this chamber and most Canadians have had the experience of trying to obtain access to a new application or use a new device. One is confronted with an incomprehensible set of policies and disclosures with an “agree” button at the bottom. Even people who would actually undertake the painstaking process of reading through one of these enormous statements would generally get to the bottom and conclude they do not really understand what they are getting into. However, they need to proceed with whatever task is at hand, and they click “agree”. That is a very small number of people.

Most people just get to the bottom and hit the “agree” button. Nobody has any idea what they have agreed to. I think that a lot of Canadians are sadly resigned to the belief that clicking “agree” means giving up a part of their privacy. They know they are giving something up, but they do not really know what. They just shrug their shoulders and think there is just no way around it; there is no other alternative other than to hit the button.

There is no doubt that the consent model is thoroughly broken or that Canada's privacy laws need to be modernized. Does this bill cut it? I would say no. This bill is too vague. It has too few details and leaves too many unanswered questions to warrant support, even so far as a committee study. This bill is a missed opportunity to get something right that has long been wrong. The failures of the existing privacy laws have been known for a very long time. The government has had a long time to get it right, and it has not done so.

What we are debating is a bill that is consistently vague and leaves too many questions about what it does and what it fails to do. Furthermore, the concern is that if this bill passes, a number of these questions will simply be settled by the minister and departmental bureaucrats rather than through parliamentary oversight.

This bill still does not definitively answer questions about when and how consent for the use of personal information is collected. It talks about the need for plain language, which of course I agree with, but it offers significant exceptions and no details. The bill does not clearly define a series of new terms, including “sensitive information” as being distinct from other types of information.

Will this bill be compatible with the European Union's GDPR? Some call the GDPR the gold standard. I do not know if it is really golden, but there is a consensus that it is the best balance between commercial expediency and consumer privacy. We do not know if this bill is even going to meet up with it.

I wanted to get into a number of shortcomings that this bill has, but I am going to have to get to them in questions. However, I am not going to support it. It is not strong enough to warrant approval even as far as a committee study, although I understand the need for a bill that will address privacy.

With that I will let the questions follow.

• (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, 20 years after the need to see changes was shown, Bill C-27 is here.

The last time we saw changes, Facebook and iPhones did not exist. This is important legislation. Within it, to use a couple of examples, there are frameworks that allow for substantial fines and protection of Canadian privacy.

What we are hearing from the Conservative Party is that Conservatives do not want any of it. They are going to vote against the bill. The Conservatives are ultimately arguing that the bill is not amendable.

Does the member not see any value in the substance that is actually there to protect Canadians and empower things such as substantial fines?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, while it is true that this bill contains the provision for substantial fines, who is going to be fined? Who would it apply to?

Will the tech giants, with their armies of lobbyists and lawyers, figure out the loopholes within all the ambiguity in this law? For a small business owner, who is not in the business of harvesting data but nevertheless must collect information to complete a transaction, will this just give more red tape and more potential liability while letting off the tech giants?

I do not know the answer to that question, and it should be clearer in this bill.

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There appears to be a problem with the interpretation.

[*Translation*]

We will take a moment to fix the problem.

• (1240)

[*English*]

Things seem to have been fixed.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I just want to put a question to my hon. colleague from Calgary Rocky Ridge, with whom I worked on the ethics committee and who is knowledgeable about situations concerning access to information. It is a question that the people of Trois-Rivières asked me when I was out in the community.

With the arrival of ChatGPT, is it not true that a large part of this bill will have to be rewritten because it has become obsolete due to this important change in the reality of access to information?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question, and the member may well be right. The bill certainly has a lot to catch up with. It has been, as has been pointed out, a long time since the existing law was updated. It seems to me that so many questions remain unanswered about problems that have been well identified by all sides in this chamber, yet they are not clearly and definitively solved by the bill. The emergence of new technologies, while we are not even coping with some that have existed for years, is a problem. We are in the third decade of the Internet age. A lot of this stuff is not new, and we are still catching up with decades of issues around privacy.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am a little concerned with the Conservative position of not sending the bill to the industry committee as a co-operative approach to trying to fix problems in bills, which we are currently doing. I would like to know from the Conservatives exactly what it would take to at least move it to committee.

I have a lot of concerns about the bill. There are many issues that we have raised and spoken to. It is a fairly unfortunate position that we are going to leave it to Google and the Internet giants to basically rule over Canada, unobstructed, for the next couple of years, if we do not at least try to fix some of the problems that have been well identified.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, if I was convinced the bill would do no harm, at a minimum, perhaps I would be inclined to send it to committee. I am not sure of that. If we send a bill that has this many holes in it and this many items that need to be fixed, I am not sure that can be done at committee. I am disappointed the government did not table a better bill.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to address the House with respect to Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act, 2022. It is just a year or so behind.

Thirty-four years ago, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that privacy was at the heart of liberty. Much has changed since 1989 and little more drastically than the continuous transfer of the private information of Canadians to other organizations. The questions we need to ask are these: What are the costs of and what are the benefits of the availability of Canadians' private information for the use of others?

Many organizations see themselves as supplying useful value to Canadians by being provided, whether by contract or by capture, private information that is not knowingly provided by citizens. Examples include service companies that recognize when a consumer

might be able to save a percentage of their fees by bundling certain services. In such a case, the benefit of this information availability is shared by the consumer and the service provider.

Let us make no mistake. What drives the action by the service provider is profit, which is known as the greater share of wallet. Nevertheless, in such cases, the consumer sees the benefit of being included in the information sharing, whether they know it has occurred or they do not.

This apparently benign approach to gathering information has now stretched to our daily lives, where our computers, our phones and our in-home private intelligent assistants, like Siri and Alexa, are gathering information on us. When my sons are at their homes and use Siri, they say, "Siri, turn on". They have figured out that Siri was listening the whole time. A lot of information is being culled. Do we know that our information, in that case, when we have not actually disclosed it willingly, is being used in a benign or creditable way? Which of that has become public information to be monetized by somebody else? That is what is occurring.

Large corporations are gathering data that is being sold to others for their own purposes. That supposedly benign relationship is now being passed to another organization, in that case, that is paying the information gatherer, and so on. There is no accountability mechanism to the individual for the benefit of the supply of one's information to flow.

There is only one measurement at play, and that is profit. One need only look at the incredible financial returns associated with these technological information-gathering companies, including the Googles, the Metas, the Amazons, etc. None of those are Canadian, by the way, and realize that the value-extraction industry is lopsided in their favour. At no time in human history have start-up companies, many without a tangible product, achieved such lofty valuations so quickly. Billionaires are created out of computer code, which provides what, exactly. It provides our information.

Value is created and destroyed in commercial markets. That is the economic engine that has led the western world to prosperity, but value is only traded in financial markets. Let us ask this: Is the culling and selling of private information, however obtained, creating value or transferring value?

Government Orders

In that respect, the intent of this bill is good. It is designed to modernize the protection of Canadians' digital privacy rights. It is past due, and it is important. It cannot be delayed by another pro-troged Parliament or another unnecessary election call, as happened to the prior bill that was introduced to advance this issue in the last Parliament. The aim of this bill is good. The execution, I would say, is way off. I see a bureaucratic solution, designed by bureaucrats, for use by bureaucrats, with what would be a minor effect for the Canadian population in general. As we say, if you are a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

The design outcomes of this bill are increasing bureaucratic oversight. The personal information and data protection tribunal act would have six members and would be put together in a tribunal, three of whom would have experience in information and privacy law. Only three out of six, which is half, are going to have experience in the very laws that they would be overseeing.

• (1245)

This is going to be responsible for determining the severity of financial penalties. It would have a staff of 20 with a budget, along with a larger budget for the Privacy Commissioner, which already exists. Does anybody see any redundancy in this solution?

There is a litany of financial penalties listed through this bill and a host of requirements of all businesses, even small businesses, which are going to find the requirements of this bill onerous in the extreme. Joe's Garage is going to be treated with the same expectations as the Royal Bank and face the same potential penalties.

I will read from this legislation something that would scare any small-business person. This is about privacy management programs, as required under the legislation. It states, "Every organization must implement...a privacy management program that includes the [organization's] policies, practices and procedures".

It further states, "the organization must take into account the volume and sensitivity of the personal information under its control." What does that mean, and how do we interpret that?

It also states, "the organization must ensure, by contract or otherwise, that the service provider provides [substantially the same] protection". Therefore, a businessman is going to need to ensure that something nebulous is not being provided by their service provider when forwarding information. Clearly, no one involved in this bill's design has even considered what this means for Canada's small-business community.

Here is the issue for Canadians. Who has the most information on Canadians? Governments, first of all. Who is likely to get information hacked? Those same governments.

This bill shows a complete lack of accountability by the government regarding how it might misplace or misuse Canadians' data. Is the government going to fine itself in such an instance? I doubt it. That would be a round-trip anyway, at that point in time.

Banks, secondly, have a lot of information about Canadians, and they use that information to increase their returns. They have large bureaucracies, large legal departments and government relations departments to stick-handle these fines. I should note, in this legislation, many exemptions are included. Therefore, we are building

more bureaucracy. That is just what Canadians have elected us to do, I say very sarcastically.

On top of the 30% increase in federal government employees over the past six years, we are going to build more bureaucracy. What this bill should be doing is trying to strike a balance between business use of data and the fundamental protection of our privacy.

Let us quickly discuss some of the nefarious uses of digital information gathering. Let us go back to the pandemic, when CERB payments were given out to Canadians, and how many criminal organizations misused that government information to pilfer the pockets of Canadian taxpayers and get undeserved CERB payments into the wrong accounts. This is what happens when government information is pilfered, and this is the main problem with the privacy of Canadians' information.

My advice to the government is to get this bill moving. It is way behind other jurisdictions on this very important issue. Look at how the absence of privacy protection has affected Canadians, and take a look at where the value of Canadians' information has gone: to all the large American tech companies.

The government must listen to that input and the alternatives that are going to be put before it when it puts together this bill. Hopefully, the government amends this bill so it actually addresses the privacy of Canadians in a more complete manner. Listen to that input and to those alternatives. As the Supreme Court of Canada reiterated 34 years ago, Canada needs to recognize privacy as a right, so let us get to work in providing an outcome that actually safeguards Canadian's privacy.

• (1250)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to relate to the hon. member an experience I had back in 2014 or 2015. I saw something on Facebook that said it was Stephen Harper's birthday and to wish him a happy birthday, so I did. What the heck. I am a Liberal, and I know he is a Conservative. I disagree with what Mr. Harper did, but a birthday is a birthday.

Government Orders

Imagine my surprise when, after that, I saw posts online that put me down as a supporter of Stephen Harper. That did raise some questions among my family and others. That is an example of something that also needs to be paid attention to. How many times, for instance, have we been asked to fill out a personality test, or whatever, not knowing that we are giving all this information that could be used against us? I am wondering if the hon. member could reflect on that.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, it is a very good question. Often, we differ on policies in the House, but it is still good to wish others here a happy birthday, no matter whether we differ in our policy positions one way or another. Cordiality, of course, is very common here. When we are saying happy birthday to somebody, I think it is recognizable that when we are on that website and filling out a form, people are culling that information. They are using it and they are actually interpreting it as something that we may not necessarily intend.

That is exactly what is happening in the world right now. How this bill addresses that concern is beyond me at this point in time, because we have actively given that information, and that is going to continue to happen. We have probably filled out the form or checked off the box that says that we agree to supply the information, and it is probably 60 pages long, about how to actually access that going forward.

This is something this bill needs to address. It is something it needs to address in a legitimate and concise fashion so that small businesses and individuals understand what that relationship is and how it transpires.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I will repeat the comments I made earlier for another one of his colleagues concerning the very delicate line between the need to protect the personal information of each user on digital platforms and digital services in every business and economic sector. There is also the issue of security and how to protect people who may be more vulnerable or more likely to be targeted by online attacks, or cyberviolence. We spoke about this yesterday during an interesting meeting with the two spokespersons for the StopCyberviolence campaign, who directed the film *Backlash: Misogyny in the Digital Age*.

I would like to know if my colleague believes that we are going to have to do some work to be able to identify and intercept cyber-attackers and to legislate against cyberviolence, while at the same time protecting the personal information of users of online services.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, obviously the victims of artificial intelligence crimes are usually seniors. The victims of this type of violence are primarily seniors in our community.

We need to protect people who do not realize they are sharing such personal information with service providers. As a society, we need to protect people who are not really aware of the relationship between service providers and the value of personal information.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was hoping the hon. member could just elaborate a bit on some of the concerns around the personal information and data protection tribunal. It seems there is no justification for this tribunal. No privacy regime in the world has this tribunal. It introduces unprecedented levels of complexity, potential delays and uncertainty, so I am curious about the member's thoughts on this.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, never in all my speeches have the questions been so astute as this. That is exactly the case. We have a tribunal now being created, with a whole bunch of people, six people, three of whom are going to have to know something about what they are talking about, which is ridiculous, quite frankly. It is actually six new people, when we already have a Privacy Commissioner who can do all of this work and, supposedly, accomplish something.

In addition, all the details of this are going to be in the regulations. There is nothing we are looking at here in Parliament that deals with the details, which are very important for us to look at, as well.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about Bill C-27. I will focus on the artificial intelligence and data act, but before that, I would like to briefly talk about the overall digital charter implementation act.

Canadians have never been more reliant on the digital economy, yet the current privacy law was last updated over 20 years ago, before iPhones or Facebook even existed. In the new digital economy, enhanced privacy would not only benefit consumers but allow companies to innovate, compete and thrive. We are now at a juncture where, over the next few years, the rules of the road for digital privacy and AI are being written and entrenched. That is why it is crucial to have clear rules when it comes to this sector. For Canadians to prosper and benefit from the digital economy, they need to have confidence that their data is safe and trust that their privacy is being respected.

That is why the government has introduced this legislation, which would ensure that Canada has critical protections in place. Bill C-27 would ensure that Canadians have first-class privacy and data protection and that companies that break the rules face severe consequences, some of the steepest fines in the world. It would also hold organizations to a higher standard, in particular when it comes to protecting the personal information of minors by giving them and their parents more power over their information, including the ability to have it deleted. With Bill C-27, we are moving beyond traditional privacy protection to ensuring data control for all Canadians. Canadians can be reassured that we will never compromise on the trust and safety of their privacy.

Government Orders

Over the last decade, artificial intelligence technologies have been expanding rapidly and have been benefiting Canadians in a variety of ways. These technologies are evolving rapidly and with that, there is an increase in risk and harms due to the use of AI systems, whether intentional or unintentional. The artificial intelligence and data act, or AIDA, would establish rules to promote the responsible use of AI and the related governance practices. The framework would ensure that the development of AI systems has to include plans to mitigate bias and harm and that organizations are accountable for their practices.

The AIDA seeks to regulate international and interprovincial trade and commerce in artificial intelligence systems by requiring that certain persons adopt measures to mitigate risks of harm and biased output related to high-impact artificial intelligence systems. The act would provide for public reporting and would authorize the minister to order the production of records related to artificial intelligence systems. The act would also establish prohibitions related to the possession or use of illegally obtained personal information for the purpose of designing, developing, using or making available for use an artificial intelligence system in an intentional or reckless way that causes material harm to individuals. This would ensure that Canadians have strong privacy protections and clear rules of the road for business, as well as guardrails to govern the responsible use of artificial intelligence.

This bill would provide Canada with adequacy within the European Union's GDPR framework and international interoperability on privacy. Further, it would enable Canada to remain on the cutting edge of artificial intelligence development. This bill would help us to build a Canada where citizens have confidence that their data is safe and their privacy is respected, while unlocking innovation that promotes a strong economy.

● (1300)

The University of Toronto's Schwartz Reisman Institute for Technology and Society studied this bill, and I would like to quote from an article written by policy researcher Maggie Arai:

As technology continues to advance and permeate almost all aspects of modern life, it has become necessary for regulators to grapple with how to best regulate it. New ways of collecting and processing personal information necessitate new regulations to protect those whose information is being collected, analyzed, and sold—often whenever they visit a new website or sign up to a new app like Facebook or TikTok. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are also top of mind for many regulators, posing unique risks and challenges that must be addressed. The recently tabled Bill C-27 represents Canadian regulators' efforts on both fronts.

She goes on to say:

The Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA) is the federal government's first attempt to comprehensively regulate artificial intelligence. Canada is not alone in this: AIDA comes in the wake of similar initial attempts at AI regulation by other governments around the world, such as the European Union's 2021 AI Act and the United States' 2022 Algorithmic Accountability Act. AIDA, like the EU's AI Act, takes a risk-based approach to regulating AI. However, it is worth noting that Canada proposes categorizing AI based on whether it is "high-impact," while the EU uses the language of "high-risk." AIDA is also far less prescriptive than the EU AI Act. The draft Act is quite short, with much room left for the enactment of provincial AI laws as well as further federal regulation....

She continues:

A person becomes a "person responsible" for an AI system if they design, develop, make available for use, or manage the operation of an AI system in the course of international or interprovincial trade and commerce.

The major requirements contained in AIDA for "persons responsible" for AI systems include ensuring the anonymization of data, conducting assessments to determine whether an AI system is "high-impact," establishing measures related to risks, monitoring and keeping records on risk mitigation, and requirements for organizations to publish a plain-language description of all high-impact AI systems on a public website. If at any time the Minister has reasonable grounds to believe that a person may be in contravention of these requirements, the Minister may order that person to conduct an audit into the possible contravention, or engage an independent auditor to conduct the audit.

She goes on to say:

The tabling of Bill C-27 represents an exciting step forward for Canada as it attempts to forge a path towards regulating AI that will promote innovation of this advanced technology, while simultaneously offering consumers assurance and protection from the unique risks this new technology...poses.

She also states:

There are also sections of C-27 that could be improved, including areas where policymakers could benefit from the insights of researchers with domain expertise in areas such as data privacy, trusted computing, platform governance, and the social impacts of new technologies.

She goes on to say:

To ensure that the powerful new technologies that shape our world today benefit everyone, it's essential that our policies are well-informed—especially when it comes to how technical systems work, how they interact with our legal infrastructure, and how they impact society. As we approach the implementation of this landmark regulation, it's critical that Canadians are engaged and informed on these topics and ready to make their voices heard.

I will now quote from an article written by the law firm of McCarthy Tétrault, which states:

Bill C-27, if adopted into law, is set to have a significant impact on businesses by creating new requirements for those who make, use, or work with AI. The bill imposes several new obligations on the AI sector which are backed by serious penalties for non-compliance.

● (1305)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the speech from the member for Nepean. I note that at the beginning, the member talked about the issue of children, and the minister went on about that in his opening speech. However, the bill is 124 pages, and do members know how many times minors are mentioned? It is once, and it does not define what a minor is. It says that a minor's information is "sensitive", but it does not define what "sensitive" is.

Perhaps a member of the Liberal government could define for the House what a "minor" is under this proposed law and what "sensitive information" is, as it would say in the definitions section.

Government Orders

• (1310)

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, there are two things to note here.

One is the definition of “minor”. There is well-recognized legislation that has been adopted by various authorities and institutions on who a minor is, and I think that would be applicable here.

On the definition of “sensitive” and “sensitiveness” and other definitions related to these technologies, my view is that we should not cast in iron in the legislation the definitions of various things that are involved here, but leave it to the government and the regulators going forward to have the flexibility to define the various terms that are used in this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I would simply like him to answer the following question.

Since Quebec already has its own privacy legislation and it works very well, does my colleague not think that Bill C-27 should clearly state that it will not contravene Quebec's legislation?

This should be stated in the bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, the member is right that Quebec has an existing law, but this proposed law in no way would impede Quebec's ability to promote and act on its own law. In fact, this legislation would enable Quebec and other provinces to move forward with any changes they may need to make to improve their own laws to protect the privacy of people.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, the bill is actually three pieces of legislation stuck together. I would like to get his rationale as to why the Liberals chose that path, especially given that the first two pieces of legislation had some time in the House. After the NDP's question to the Speaker about the bill, we separated it into two different votes, because the artificial intelligence part in particular is new and requires different processes.

I think it is unfortunate that the Liberals could not find a proper way to bring this bill forward, and I would like his reflection on that, because it appears the Conservatives will not even support bringing it to committee. It appears as well that the Liberals seem intent on perhaps sabotaging efforts where there seems to be some consensus.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, there are a lot of things that overlap all three pieces of legislation that put them under one bill, especially artificial intelligence, which goes beyond one particular domain. It acts on almost every aspect of the Canadian economy and of Canadian society, and it permeates almost everything else it touches. That is the reason the government has brought in one single piece of legislation.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this is my first opportunity to get in on the debate on Bill C-27 today, and I have to say that my thoughts resonate a great deal with those mentioned by the hon. member for Windsor West in his pointing out that this is three bills in one.

To focus on the part that is completely new, artificial intelligence, I find that there is a great deal of tautology when we look at the bill. For instance, it says that we will know what a high impact of artificial intelligence is if it “meets the criteria for a high-impact system that are established in regulations.” There are a number of other places like this, but we do not have regulations yet. When will we know what the bill means?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that there are a lot of things that could be explained much better, and I am sure this will be looked into at the committee level.

With respect to artificial intelligence, it is very difficult to define everything in the legislation, because it is a moving thing. Artificial intelligence is evolving on a daily basis, which is why it is best that we allow it to be done through regulations.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here today to debate Bill C-27, the digital charter implementation act. With this bill, the government seeks to bring Canada's consumer privacy protections up to date, to create a tribunal to impose penalties on those who violate those protections and to create a new framework on artificial intelligence and data.

For my constituents, I think the most important question is this: Why are consumer privacy rights important? Our personal information has become a commodity in the modern world. Businesses and organizations regularly buy, sell and transfer our personal data, such as our names, genders, addresses, religions, what we do on the Internet, our browsing history, our viewing and purchasing habits, and more. This happens so often that it is almost impossible to know who has access to our sensitive data and what they do with those personal details. Unfortunately, this bill fails to adequately protect the privacy of Canadians and puts commercial interests ahead of privacy rights.

The first part of this bill is the consumer privacy protection act, and I will note, as many others have during this debate, that it is really three bills in one. It is the largest part of this bill and brings in new regulations on the collection, use and sale of the private data of Canadians. I will cover three issues that I have found in this act in the first part of this bill.

The first issue relates to how organizations may collect or use our information without our consent. Subclause 18(3) states:

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

Without defining what a “legitimate interest” is, this subclause risks giving organizations free rein to define “legitimate interest” in whatever way suits their own commercial interests.

Government Orders

The second issue I will cover relates to how the bill would protect the privacy rights of children. Subclause 2(2) states:

(2) For the purposes of this Act, the personal information of minors is considered to be sensitive information.

However, nowhere in this bill are the terms “minor” or “sensitive information” defined. This will lead to confusion about how the personal information of children should be handled, and will ultimately lead, in my opinion, to weak protection of that information. There is also no other provision in this legislation that regulates the collection and use of children's personal data.

Every parent in the House of Commons is very concerned about their child going on Minecraft and about their interactions with other people and other gaming sites. This bill does not do enough to protect children in the context of online gaming.

The last issue I will raise in this act relates to when organizations can rely on implied consent to collect and use personal data. Subclause 15(5) states:

(5) Consent must be expressly obtained unless, subject to subsection (6), it is appropriate to rely on an individual's implied consent, taking into account the reasonable expectations of the individual and the sensitivity of the personal information that is to be collected, used or disclosed.

This subclause highlights that the bill lacks a clear definition of “sensitive information”. This means that organizations will have free rein to determine when they can rely on implied consent, and they will be free to decide what information is or is not deemed sensitive according to their interpretations and not the legislation's interpretation.

The second part of the bill relates to the creation of the new personal information and data protection tribunal act. The bill would create a new semi-judicial body with the power to levy financial penalties against those who violate the CPPA, the first part of the act. I question whether this tribunal would be able to enforce the penalties outlined in clause 128, which are tied to global revenue and a proportion of profit in the previous fiscal year.

How does the government plan on ensuring accurate figures? Does the government really believe that it will go after Google in a global context, hold Google accountable and collect up to 4% or 5% of Google's global revenue? It is farcical.

• (1315)

We need very clear and very big amendments to this section. We need to question whether we even need a tribunal, because if it is in charge of enforcing clause 128 of the bill, I already know it is going to fail.

Under the third section of the bill, the artificial intelligence and data act, new provisions would be created that apply to the private sector. However, this bill does nothing to address the relationship between government and artificial intelligence.

Right now in Parliament, we are debating Bill C-11, which talks about the government's use of algorithms in the context of the CRTC. This bill has rightly infuriated Canadians across the country who are concerned about how the government would determine what people say and do on the Internet and where they would be

directed. Why is the government not trying to apply the same standards upon itself as it is trying to apply on private corporations?

I want to address some other key oversights in the bill.

First, in the U.K., EU and even Quebec, certain personal details, such as race, sexuality and religion, are given special protection in comparison with other personal information. Why does the government believe the most identifiable aspects of our personal information are not worthy of being defined as sensitive information in the context of privacy law?

Second, the bill does nothing to regulate the sale of personal data. I am reiterating this point. In a world where the sale of personal data has become an integral part of our economy, why is the government not concerned with setting clear rules on how data and what kinds of data can be bought and sold, especially in the context of children?

Third, the bill fails to regulate the use of facial recognition technology. The RCMP used Clearview AI's facial recognition database, which was illegally created. Why does the government not think it is appropriate to ensure this never happens again?

Fourth, the consumer privacy protection act and the personal information and data protection tribunal act proposed in this bill are nearly identical to the acts proposed under last Parliament's Bill C-11. The consequence is that Canada's consumer privacy laws will be out of date by the time they come into force.

This bill was an opportunity to put forward strong regulations on the collection and use of personal data, but it failed to meet some basic criteria and thresholds. While the increased penalties for violating the act are welcome, they are watered down by the implementation of a tribunal that would take months or potentially even years to make a decision and levy fines. It is even questionable whether such a tribunal could actually do what it is purported to be responsible for.

Do we really need privacy legislation that fails to protect the privacy of Canadians? Do we really want privacy legislation that fails to put consumer interests ahead of corporate interests? Do we really want privacy legislation that fails to protect the personal information of children? Do we really want AI regulations that do not apply to government? Frankly, the government needs to withdraw Bill C-27, break it up into different parts and come back to Parliament after it has looked at the drawing board again and done something a little more comprehensive.

Government Orders

• (1320)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the deeper we get into the debate, the deeper the Conservative Party gets into disliking the legislation. I look at the legislation as something that will have a very strong positive impact in protecting the privacy of Canadians. Penalties are going to be put in, substantial financial penalties, even though the member opposite mocks them. There are other issues as well, such as the privacy management programs that businesses would have to put forward.

There is so much good stuff in this legislation, yet the Conservatives are prepared to say they do not care; they have other things on their agenda, and they are going to prevent this legislation from passing. Does the member not feel that Canadians deserve this kind of legislation, at least as a starting point, and that the Conservatives could do whatever they like afterwards?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, why bring forward legislation that does not define “sensitive information” in the context of children? We all know this is a problem. I acknowledge this is a problem. Why not do the work right now? There are a lot of very talented public servants who could define “sensitive information” in the context of children.

In relation to clause 128 and the fines imposed on people who would break the Privacy Act, the Government of Canada wants the ability to go after global tech companies and ask them to pay the government a portion of their earnings from a previous fiscal year, but the government is not capable of doing that right now. It is absolute fluff.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was curious to hear my colleague's opinion on apps that use games or quizzes to not only get information out of the people who respond, but also access their cellphone contacts.

Does my colleague think the bill should legislate that?

• (1325)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, that is a very important point. I have a seven-year-old son, and he is starting to play games on my iPhone and whatnot.

We cannot say that Bill C-27 will protect children because this bill does not include a definition of sensitive information, which we need.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, what is unfortunate with the Conservatives' position on this is that they have raised some significant problems with the bill, but they want to stop it from going to committee, which is rather ironic. The suggestion is to hand the entire project back to the Liberals, their central party organization and their political infrastructure to start over as opposed to moving it to public debate, witness testimony and expert dialogue, which is necessary.

I am not willing to turn this entire project back to the Liberal machine, and that is what is unfortunate here. I can attest that his

members in the committee are very good. We have heard speeches from the Conservatives saying that they want amendments. Why will they not bring the bill to committee and get those amendments? That is a better choice than turning it back to the Liberals, whenever that is going to take place.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I will note that I am on the industry committee with the member for Windsor West, and he provides a lot of intelligent insight and corporate knowledge to key pieces of legislation like this one. Unfortunately, we are in a situation today where the New Democratic Party has decided to support the Government of Canada on all key pieces of legislation. Therefore, even if the member for Windsor West has a problem with a key aspect of the bill, I am not confident the supply agreement between those two parties will result in good legislation.

That is why the Conservatives are calling on the Government of Canada to go back to the drawing board. At the end of the day, the New Democrats do not have enough money to fund a federal election. That is why they are supporting the Liberals, despite the poor legislation.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to rise today to speak to the digital charter implementation act, 2022. With Bill C-27, our government is showing leadership in a new digital world. Privacy is important to the residents of my riding of Hamilton Mountain. It is important to all Canadians. This legislation would not only benefit consumers, it would allow companies to innovate, compete and thrive.

The world I grew up in is significantly different from the world in which my son is growing up. This bill gives me confidence that we will be able to take advantage of the latest technologies, while at the same time be assured that our personal information is safe and secure.

I want to specifically talk about the consumer privacy protection act and how it sets out a balanced approach to compliance and enforcement.

Canadians clearly want their personal information to be handled responsibly, and they want meaningful consequences for organizations that break rules to gain some advantage. Canadians want fair punishment for truly bad actors.

According to a survey published by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, 71% of Canadians have refused to provide their personal information to an organization because of privacy concerns. In an earlier survey, this same percentage of Canadians said that their willingness to share their personal information would increase if they knew the organization would face financial consequences should their information be mishandled. Such consequences are clearly an important tool for enhancing privacy protection for Canadians and also for helping organizations comply with the law right from the start.

Government Orders

The consumer privacy protection act, or CPPA, will assist companies to get privacy right and the escalating enforcement approach will correct problems as they arise.

The new privacy law incentivizes organizations to step up and improve their privacy practices at the outset. The CPPA will also provide the Privacy Commissioner with a key role in helping them do so.

Under the CPPA, businesses will be able to ask the Privacy Commissioner to review the policies and practices that make up their privacy management program, which will assist them in complying with the law. The commissioner can also ask to review such programs. This is a very important step in the early detection and serves to correct problems at the outset.

Privacy management programs cover a wide range of privacy considerations: how companies manage service providers; how they respond to breaches; when to undertake privacy risk assessment; employee training; complaint handling; and so on. Under the CPPA, the Privacy Commissioner will be able to examine these policies and practices outside of an investigation. The goal is for the commissioner to give advice and make recommendations.

The CPPA will prevent the commissioner from using what he or she has learned in these reviews in any enforcement action unless the organization willfully disregards recommendations. We think this would be very rare, but if it happens, action can be taken.

The approach provides an appropriate space in which the commissioner can provide advice and companies can take proper action. At the same time, the commissioner will be able to gain insights on how the law is implemented in real-world situations, thereby being able to better advise organizations on the challenges they may face in the privacy space.

Essentially this approach builds on the Office of the Privacy Commissioner's current business advisory function, which has proven successful in encouraging compliance through engagement rather than enforcement. By allowing for the review of privacy management programs, the CPPA provides businesses with a safe place to seek and obtain advice and implement compliance solutions at the onset. We believe this will help prevent privacy issues before they have an impact on individuals.

We know Canadian companies will be very interested in this part of the new law, particularly smaller companies and start-ups, and I can probably think of a few in Hamilton Mountain.

The CPPA recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work for privacy. Some organizations deal with minimal amounts of personal information; for others, it is central to their business model. That is why the CPPA allows organizations to develop their privacy management programs according to the volume and sensitivity of the personal information that they handle, and why the commissioner must also take this and a company's revenues into consideration during the exercise of the role under the law.

• (1330)

Another important protection under the new act is the ability of the Privacy Commissioner to review the risk assessments and mitigation measures that organizations must do if they rely on a brand

new exception to consent for activities in which they have legitimate interest.

Under the CPPA, the Privacy Commissioner will continue to undertake research and publish guidance. It is a long-standing role and important in helping organizations meet their compliance obligations. It is a role that we wholeheartedly support.

The bill would ensure that organizations build privacy considerations into their products and services from the beginning. Working with organizations, giving guidance, this is a fundamental role of the Privacy Commissioner. We want to be proactive here. We want to prevent problems before they have a harmful impact on individuals.

However, there will be organizations that do not have the right practices. There will be others that have the right practices but still make mistakes. This law provides individuals with the right to complain about an organization's privacy policies when they appear to be offside with the law. The right to complain is considered to be a fundamental principle in all privacy statutes.

Under the CPPA, like PIPEDA, the Privacy Commissioner also retains the ability to initiate a complaint investigation when there are reasonable grounds to do so. This is an important role because filing a formal complaint is not always obvious. Maybe some people will not know there is a problem; maybe they do not have time to make a complaint. This is where the Privacy Commissioner should be able to take action when intelligence gathering from media reports and their own research indicate that there could be potential trouble.

CPPA encourages the early resolution of problems and provides for dispute resolution. Over the years, through its active early resolution approach, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner has successfully been able to resolve many complaints with limited formality.

The CPPA maintains such tools for the commissioner. For example, compliance agreements, introduced relatively recently under PIPEDA, remain in the CPPA. Pursuing these agreements allows companies to work out an acceptable resolution with the commissioner, without the commissioner resorting to more formal measures, like orders. However, resolution will not always be possible or desirable. Sometimes the commissioner will need or want to consider stronger measures.

Under CPPA, the commissioner will have the power to issue orders to compel an organization to take necessary actions to bring the organization into compliance. This is a new power and a key improvement over PIPEDA.

Prior to issuing such orders and to ensure fairness, the Privacy Commissioner's office will need to go through a new process, called an inquiry. Once the inquiry is completed, the commissioner will issue findings and a decision, and will make orders as necessary to an organization to change its privacy practices.

As part of this process, the Privacy Commissioner may also recommend administrative monetary penalties to a new tribunal for certain contraventions of the law. The possibility of significant fines for non-compliant organizations, fines of up to 5% of global revenue or \$25 million, whichever is greater, for the most serious offences, is another key improvement over PIPEDA.

A key part of the new enforcement regime, the personal information and data protection tribunal is being established to hear appeals of the commissioner's decisions. If required, it will also decide whether to issue a monetary penalty and, if so, the amount.

Industry stakeholders say that we need impartiality in enforcement decisions, given the different roles of the Privacy Commissioner. This was particularly the case for any proposals involving monetary penalties, which have the potential to significantly affect an organization.

The new privacy law will support additional due diligence in decisions to impose monetary penalties by introducing an inquiry phase before issuing orders, and by separating the imposition of penalties from the commissioner's other responsibilities.

We know that some organizations will challenge the commissioner's orders and recommendations, and we do not want to burden the courts. This is another reason for introducing a new tribunal. It is intended to be more accessible than the courts. It will ease access to justice for the individual and the organization.

After the previous version of this bill was tabled, stakeholders told us it needed more privacy expertise. We listened and this version of the CPPA has the necessary privacy expertise to ensure credibility.

• (1335)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the member has been participating in the debate today.

One of the questions that I have is, if this is really about protecting the personal privacy of individuals, why this bill has so many exemptions for businesses. It allows, in subsection 18(3), the legitimate interests of businesses to override the interests of an individu-

Government Orders

al. In subsection 15(5), it allows businesses to use implied consent, not real consent, to override the interests of personal privacy.

Why is it that personal privacy is not part of the purpose of the bill as a fundamental right?

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, this legislation needs to be flexible. As I mentioned in my speech, it applies not only to big corporations but to smaller companies and companies that use a lot of personal data as well as companies that use very little personal data. It has to be flexible. It has to be able to work in different situations. It has to be able to work in the future because, as we have seen, technology advances very quickly. We need legislation to be able to adapt regardless of the changes in technology that are happening before we can change the laws to accommodate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think my question will resonate with my colleague. Personal information protection and security are very important to me. I myself was recently a victim of credit card fraud. I bought a nice couch that I did not even shop for myself. Handy, right?

Anyway, as much as I recognize the importance of protecting personal information, I also recognize the importance of protecting victims of cyberviolence. We will be studying an online hate bill soon. My colleague and I may have to work on a way to identify offenders, individuals who attack people online and hide behind anonymity.

Does my colleague think the legislative measures in Bill C-27 could make it harder for us to adequately legislate online hate?

• (1340)

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, I do not think this bill is going to create any issues for the other bill that we are going to look at in committee. I think there are a number of measures that need to be put in place to deal with the problems of the digital world that we face today.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just have a question for the member. She brought up Google before, but I will quote Jim Balsillie again.

Government Orders

I want your response to his statement that “Canada’s federal government has repeatedly failed to take privacy seriously and construct a legal and regulatory framework that protects the rights of Canadians in the digital age.” How do you respond to that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not going to let him know how I am going to respond to it, but I will ask the member to respond to it.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, I have forgotten the question.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, the member across the way talked about Google. We have always known that there is a close relationship between Google, the Prime Minister and the Liberals.

However, a question comes up from Jim Balsillie's statement that “Canada’s federal government has repeatedly failed to take privacy seriously and construct a legal and regulatory framework that protects the rights of Canadians in the digital age.”

Would the member please respond to that?

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, I think this government takes privacy very seriously. That is why we have been working on this legislation since the last government and why we have improved this legislation, bringing it before the government a second time to include things like artificial intelligence and improve security for the privacy of young people on the Internet.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to Bill C-27 in the House today, a bill that deals with issues related to privacy, as well as the way that the government interacts with large corporations to protect, or not, the privacy of Canadians.

I want to say at the outset that I am deeply concerned by the fact that the government has clearly been captured by certain corporate interests. It is important to distinguish in this discussion between corporate interests and the idea of a free market. As Conservatives, we believe very much in the importance and value of a free market and a competitive market, a market that is legitimately a challenging and competitive place for businesses that have to compete with each other to have the best products, where some businesses come in to challenge and steal market share away from other businesses and so forth, where there are not gatekeepers preventing new entrants coming into business. We celebrate free markets and the competitive aspect of free markets rather than a situation in which a small group of large corporations is able to dominate and exercise undue and inappropriate power.

In this House, different parties have different dispositions when it comes to corporations. We have the NDP that generally takes kind of an anti-business approach in general, we have my party that champions the free competitive market and we have a government that is, sadly, captured by specific corporate interests, often at the expense of the free market, as well as at the expense of individual well-being. Paradoxically, the NDP, while it criticizes the government for that, is fundamentally complicit with the government in, on the one hand, criticizing its agenda as it relates to defending corporate interests, but, on the other hand, supporting the government

and providing it with the supply it needs to continue in its misguided approach.

What we see in terms of the government's relationship with large corporate interests at the expense of the free market and individual well-being is clear across a broad range of cases. We could talk, for instance, about the government's fondness for specific companies in terms of outsourcing and procurement, how it has repeatedly gone back to McKinsey to do work that in fact could have and should have been done within the public service, despite McKinsey's track record in so many different areas. We can talk about the fact that while the public service has grown, outsourcing under the government has expanded dramatically. We can talk about how it has pushed companies to implement forms of political discrimination, such as freezing people's bank accounts. We can talk about a number of the violations of individual privacy and liberty that happen through the government's close relationship with corporations.

I will say, in general, there is this emerging concept of woke capitalism or stakeholder capitalism that I think we need to be thoughtfully critical of, this idea that large corporations should be making definitive determinations and forcing those implementations on the country using their power and that governments can push corporations to push woke ideas or particular views of the common good that arise not through free democratic deliberation, but that come about because of pressure from corporate interests. We see the government's fondness for this kind of woke corporatism approach, where it tries to pressure companies to align with and push its views on various issues.

Again, Conservatives are very supportive of competitive marketplaces where businesses are doing business, not assuming a preferential position in social values debates, where businesses have to compete to survive, where new businesses are able to compete with old businesses and where we support the development of new small businesses so that we do not have a concentration of corporate power, but, rather, a well-functioning, effective market economy. That is the vision that Conservatives are defending.

Let me talk specifically about the issue of privacy and how we see the working out of the government's kind of approach to and relationship with big corporations in terms of their approach to privacy.

Government Orders

• (1345)

I am very pleased the Conservative Party uses and has a member-driven policy document. On issues like this, if one would like to know where Conservatives stand, it is not just a matter of Conservative caucus discussion but it is also a matter of drawing from the work that hundreds of thousands of Conservative Party members do, deliberating at the riding level, having discussions, proposing ideas and bringing those to a convention that then leads to a standing policy document that helps to define and frame the values that Conservatives stand for. I know our Conservative Party is deeply committed to the idea of grassroots democracy and the role our members play in all aspects of decision-making.

That is very important, and in this particular context, we see that playing out in the area of the policy declaration. Our policy declaration recognizes the fundamental right people have to privacy. As a Conservative caucus, we are supportive in advancing and bringing to the House that view about fundamental rights, a fundamental right to data privacy that has come to us through the involvement of our members but that also reflects the widely held perspectives of Canadians beyond our membership, a fundamental right around the protection of data.

This bill, Bill C-27, could have mirrored the language from the Conservative Party policy declaration. It does not. It does not recognize the fundamental nature of rights around data privacy. Rather, it talks about kind of striking a balance between people wanting to have their privacy protected but also the fact there are certain corporate interests. There are interests of corporations the government is close to that might be negatively affected if we recognize the fundamental right to privacy of Canadians, so it effectively seeks to say there should be some balance between the idea of protecting people's rights and the fact there may be certain large corporations whose interests would be negatively affected by recognizing the privacy rights of Canadians.

In particular, although the bill speaks about a balance at a general level, it is so, to borrow a word from the member opposite, “flexible” that it creates space one could effectively drive a truck through, with so many different exceptions and exemptions that it is not really effectively protecting the privacy rights of Canadians.

A member opposite, in a speech just given, said that this is a flexible framework, that the bill is flexible. Well, flexibility is not always a virtue. In particular, it is flexible for who? Who is doing the flexing? Who is the one who is able to bend the bill back and forth to their own will and interests? I would suggest the flexing is not being done by the individual who is supposed to own their own data, the flexing is being done by these corporate interests the government is close to.

Even if one believes this should be a balanced approach, it is not a balanced approach. It is a highly “flexible” approach in which the bending and twisting is done by the particular interests the government has been and always I suspect will be close to until we are able to have a new government in this country that respects fundamental rights, respects privacy and believes in a free competitive market in which businesses compete instead of where particular corporate friends of the government are protected.

I want to draw the attention of members to specific sections in here that identify broad exceptions in the legislation. Subclause 18(3) would allow the organization or business to use a person's information if they have a legitimate reason for doing so. That is pretty flexible. If one wants flexible, we are going to say this data cannot be used in a certain way unless there is a reason to do so. I would submit most people who do things think they have a legitimate reason for them. Others might not think they have a legitimate reason, but to say people's data can be used as an exception if there is a legitimate reason, there likely could be no broader conceivable exception than that one.

However, there are more exceptions even, if that one were not enough. The legislation, for instance, in subclause 15(5), refers to “implied consent”, so apparently in the case of privacy legislation, consent is not so sacrosanct, because companies can interpret an implied consent in this context.

There are clear problems with this legislation in terms of the particulars, but we can understand broader than the particulars the motivation or the value set that is behind this bill, which is that the government is once again trying to defend corporate interests instead of defending privacy and a genuinely competitive free market.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is disappointing listening to Conservative after Conservative stand and say they do not like this. Now that member referred to some sort of concern of policy platform. We do not know, really, because we often question the lack of any sort of plan coming from the Conservative Party. What we know is that we have substantial legislation that would set the framework, protect the privacy of Canadians and enable penalties and fines to ensure there is a consequence when a company breaks its trust with Canadians. What do the Conservatives say? They say they do not care about this type of legislation because they have their own ideas.

Will the member and the Conservative Party acknowledge that it is okay to allow the legislation to go to committee where the member can continue to rant on the different ideas and maybe even do something positive, like suggest an amendment he feels would make the legislation better?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is quite a thing to be accused of ranting by the member for Winnipeg North. I am so sorry to have disappointed him with my speech. I recall in an earlier exchange he referred to me as a “mischievous little guy”. I framed that and put it on my wall. That is truly having a ride. The goal I set out from the beginning was to be thus recognized by the member.

He asks what changes to the bill I would like. I suggest he support changes that reflect what Conservative members, in their wisdom, have put forward through our policy declaration, which we, as a caucus, are strongly supporting. This is the idea that there is a right to digital privacy that comes before the corporate friends of that member and the government.

Statements by Members

• (1355)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am looking at Bill C-27 and wondering what we make of the fact, and I know he commented on this, that we have three different bills that are all put together and only one is really new. We have seen the privacy pieces and the repeal of PIPEDA in the former Parliament's Bill C-11. The bill before us relating to artificial intelligence and high-impact AI and regulating that is essentially an entirely different scheme of legislation. Would the Conservatives agree that they should be split so we can examine them separately? I think that is already their position. What does the hon. member say to that?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, some members will recall that way back in 2015, eight long years ago, in the lead-up to that election, the Liberal platform spoke about how the Liberals would end omnibus bills. That went the way of the dodo bird, as did many of their other election commitments.

It was such a sunny time, in the rhetoric of the Liberal caucus, and we see the government's management of its legislative calendar. It puts forward bills, then it prorogues Parliament; it puts forward bills again and calls an early election. Now it is putting forward bills again.

In contrast, my constituents are certainly hoping for an opportunity to weigh in on the government at some point soon, but I think the member's point is quite correct. We have seen immense hypocrisy from the government around omnibus bills, and I wonder if we are getting to a point where it will just try to put all aspects of its legislative agenda together at once. I think that is probably the direction some of the members want to go.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, to respond to the member across the way from Alberta, he, the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party say to just trust them on this. Does the member who just spoke think we should trust the government and the Prime Minister?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my short answer would be that, no, we should not trust the government.

My slightly longer answer would be that over the last few years, we have seen various actions through COVID and various other actions contemplated by the government. In all of these actions, there is a great deal of concern about people's privacy. Because of the way the government has acted in the past, there is concern and distrust any time the government says not to worry, that it is going to protect our information and that it will not use systems in such a way. The current government has undermined trust in government and institutions because it has not been worthy of that trust.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank are in Ottawa to mark the organization's 40-year mission to end world hunger. Since 1983, Foodgrains has provided over \$1 billion in food-related assis-

tance, working with over 100 international partners in over 70 countries around the globe.

As a partnership of 15 Canadian churches and church-based organizations, Foodgrains responds to emergency food needs arising from conflict, climate change and other causes of humanitarian crises while supporting long-term development. Its work centres on supporting sustainable farming practices, promoting gender equality and enabling communities to enhance their livelihoods and resiliency.

Congratulations to executive director Andy Harrington and the board of directors, staff, volunteers and member agencies that have contributed to Foodgrains' incredible impact over the last four decades. May they continue to stay the course and help drive meaningful change.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, after over two years of uncertainty and lockdown, small businesses are only starting to get back on their feet.

A small business in my riding received support through the Canada emergency business account. As an entertainment company, it was among the hardest hit during the lockdown. It originally qualified for the CEBA loan and depended on this loan to keep the lights on.

Now the business owner is shocked by the Liberals' claim that he, along with 50,000 others, was not eligible for the loan in the first place and is required to pay it back immediately and in full. With no recourse to appeal the decision, a simple error made on the application may now result in the complete loss of the business, and the owner is terrified.

The hypocrisy is astounding. While the Liberals shake down hard-working business owners for \$2 billion over clerical errors, they have no problem shelling out \$15 billion to high-priced consultants and friends who are wealthy enough to pay their own bonuses to executives.

Once again, the current government flaunts its inability to manage the hard-earned tax dollars of Canadians while abusing its power in intentionally choosing winners and losers.

• (1400)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, tomorrow, March 8, is International Women's Day. This is a day to honour women of the past and present and to celebrate the achievements of the women who came before us and fought so hard to get us to where we are today.

While we have come so far, there is still much for us to do to help future generations of women to live in a fairer world. Whether we are talking about under-representation right here in the House of Commons, the mega health research gap between men and women, femicide or gender-based violence, women still face barriers and obstacles that make it impossible to say that we live in an equitable society.

[*Translation*]

This year's theme for International Women's Day is "Embrace Equity." Let us do more than just pay it lip service. We need to think it, be it, do it, value it and truly embrace it.

We can all challenge gender stereotypes, speak out against discrimination, and seek inclusion in all areas. Everyone, not just women, should be fighting for gender equity. Allies are extremely important to women's social, economic, cultural and political advancement.

* * *

BLAINVILLE'S BID TO HOST THE QUEBEC GAMES

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, the City of Blainville has submitted a bid to host the 2026 Quebec Winter Games. Mayor Liza Poulin, who is also the first woman mayor of Blainville, has rallied the entire Blainville community behind this bid.

She successfully recruited none other than Mathieu Poirier, owner of Jardin Dion and a pillar of the community, as president of the committee. She can also count on a trio of excellent spokespersons: sports analyst Yanick Bouchard, athlete Myriam Boileau and former goalie Jean-Sébastien Giguère.

I would like to add my voice to theirs and throw my support behind the City of Blainville. It definitely has what it takes to host the 2026 Quebec Games. Go, Blainville, go.

* * *

[*English*]

IRISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on March 10, 2021, this House unanimously adopted Motion No. 18. It is the month of March, and that can only mean one thing: It is Irish Heritage Month.

As we celebrate the contributions the Irish have made to building our country, I encourage Canadians in every city and town to take a look in their own community to see that Irish fingerprints are everywhere. From contributing to our culture to building the foundations of our educational, religious and government institutions, the contributions are many. We need only look to the Rideau Canal or

Statements by Members

consider that three governors general came from Ireland. Stay tuned for Ambassador of Ireland Eamonn McKee's 50 Irish lives in Canada initiative to learn more.

Over 14% of Canadians claim Irish ancestry; this includes me, and I am very proud of that.

The bottom line is that this month is for all Canadians. I want to wish everybody in this House and across our country a very happy Irish Heritage Month.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to deny, duck, delay and distract is the track record of the Prime Minister over the last eight years every time he gets caught in a cover-up.

When the media reported that the Prime Minister knew Beijing was meddling in Canadian elections and did nothing about it, he denied it. He said that the media was wrong. When even more evidence came to light, the Prime Minister ducked for cover. He left the country to avoid questions. When even more evidence piled up, the Liberals deployed delay tactics, filibustering and stonewalling. Now they are deploying reviews and rapporteurs.

The Prime Minister is trying to distract Canadians, claiming that a secret committee that is conducting secret meetings, hearing secret evidence, writing a secret report, which the Prime Minister will edit, and that will finally get to the bottom of it.

We have had enough with the delaying, the denying, the ducking and the distracting. Canadians deserve to know the truth. It is time for a public inquiry to finally uncover the truth that the Prime Minister is so desperately trying to keep covered up.

* * *

• (1405)

LORNA MILNE

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that we commemorate the life and legacy of the former Brampton senator, the Hon. Lorna Milne, a remarkable woman who dedicated her life to serving her community.

Lorna was a trailblazer, a leader and a champion for Brampton. She served as a Liberal senator for over a decade, leading on important causes, such as women's rights and environmental protection. She received many awards and recognition for her contributions to Canada. She was a member of the Order of Canada and was awarded Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal for her public service. Her legacy will continue to inspire us.

I send my condolences to her husband, former Liberal member of the House, Ross Milne; her children Rob, Jeanne and Alec; family; friends; and loved ones.

*Statements by Members***BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout February, I participated in several Black History Month events.

At one such event, I was alongside the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister and colleagues from London West, Fleetwood—Port Kells and Steveston—Richmond East, and local leaders. It inspired dialogue and support for Black achievement. I also joined DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society's first annual Black in B.C. event which celebrated Black excellence.

Thanks to the leadership of CEO Neelam Sahota and COO Garrison Duke, this empowering event connected Black professionals, leaders and youth, alongside individual and organizational allies, in celebrating the achievements, cultures and contributions of Black Canadians.

I ask members to please join me in thanking Surrey's Black leaders and organizations for their dedication, passion and commitment to making our community a stronger community.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, the government is increasing the excise tax on alcohol, beer, spirits and wine by over 6%.

As if inflation is not hurting Canadians enough, now they have to dig deeper in their pockets to enjoy their favourite libation. It is expected that this would cost taxpayers, Canadians, consumers and businesses \$125 million more next year. It is enough to drive one to drink.

The excise tax affects all producers, big and small, including local breweries such as Quayle's Brewery in Oro-Medonte, and the entrepreneurs who are just starting out, who will now have to manage a higher cost.

Why does the government not just pause the tax hike, even for just a year, or cap it at a reasonable level when inflation is out of control? It needs to put a cork in the escalator, free the beer, and let Canadians enjoy their favourite spirits without having to dig deeper in their pockets.

What would Bob and Doug McKenzie have to say? They would say, "Stop hosing us, eh."

* * *

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, we welcome the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to Parliament Hill as it celebrates its 40-year anniversary.

In a world challenged with inequality, it has played a pivotal role toward ending global food insecurity. This includes funding 106 projects in 34 countries serving over 900,000 people, providing food assistance to earthquake victims in Turkey and Syria, and supplying relief to Ukrainian refugees.

Yesterday, I spoke on a panel to young Canadian Foodgrains Bank supporters from across Canada to discuss the value of Canadian aid and the critical work they continue to do. For the past 40 years, our government has been proud to call the Canadian Foodgrains Bank a partner and an ally.

Congratulations to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank on its 40-year anniversary, as we work together toward a hunger-free world, once and for all.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years of the Liberal government's catch-and-release policy, Canadians feel unsafe. Police are tired of arresting the same people day after day, week after week and month after month. The justice minister has an army of lawyers and an army of bureaucrats. Despite those resources, we have seen nothing on bail.

However, we as Conservatives have listened to the police, to the victims and to Canadians. I put forth Bill C-313 within a matter of weeks with no army of lawyers and no army of bureaucrats, but with just a Conservative team that is willing to act.

Premiers, police and Canadians asked for change. Crickets is what we heard. How many Canadians need to be victimized? How many police officers need to die? It is time for the lethargic Liberal government to get out of the way so we can clean up its mess on bail.

* * *

● (1410)

FREEDOMS IN CANADA

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians love watching YouTube, they love listening to music on Apple or Spotify and they sure enjoy bingeing on things like Netflix, Disney and Prime. They love it because they have control over what they watch and when they watch it.

Creators have never had it better. As long as they have access to the Internet, they can start a channel or make a presence online. As long as they are willing to work hard and put in the creative energy, they can achieve great success, not just in Canada but around the world.

Bill C-11, however, is about to change that. Bill C-11 would give the government the power to censor what Canadians can see and post online. Content creators from across Canada, along with consumer groups, have spoken out about the dangers of this bill. Legal experts have called it a grotesque overreach of government. When referencing this bill, Margaret Atwood did not mince her words in calling it “creeping totalitarianism”.

Today, we are calling on the government to kill Bill C-11.

* * *

PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as president of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, I would like to formally welcome the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, on her first official visit to Canada.

[Translation]

The Canada-EU relationship is the oldest formal relationship the EU has with any industrialized country. We are strategic partners and close friends bound by our history, our shared values, our close co-operation and the blood ties between our peoples.

[English]

In the last year, both Canada and the EU have wholeheartedly supported Ukraine and will continue to do so for as long as it takes.

[Translation]

We know that the Canada-EU relationship is vital to our safety, prosperity and security. That is why we stand together.

This visit is aimed at strengthening our bilateral ties, developing our trade, growing our economies and continuing to uphold the rule of law.

[English]

“*Welkom, welcome, bienvenue, benvenuta and bienvenida*”, to the President of the European Commission.

The Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members that statements are being made, so if they do not mind, they should listen in because there are some very interesting things being said.

The hon. member for Victoria.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, generations of indigenous people have experienced and continue to be impacted by violence at the hands of Canada's colonial systems.

Geraldine Glattstein is a constituent in my riding and an indigenous woman from Panama who has been using her platform as a filmmaker to shine a light on the ongoing genocide in Canada. Geraldine's “our missing sisters” initiative focuses on the Highway of Tears and aims to honour the lives of those who were murdered and those who have gone missing, but also to engage Canadians broadly in our collective responsibility.

Statements by Members

For too long, the work of reconciliation and fighting for indigenous rights has fallen to indigenous people. We must all take on this work. It is critical that the government step up and implement all the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. As we honour the lives of those we have lost, we must also take immediate action to stop the ongoing violence against indigenous people.

* * *

[Translation]

MAPLE SYRUP SEASON

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the men and women who are carrying on a very Quebecois tradition that is rooted in our history and our identity: making maple syrup.

Quebec produces 72% of the world's maple syrup, and the rest is clearly nothing more than table syrup, a pale imitation of the peerless original.

The Quebec maple syrup industry is investing in research, new technologies and development, resulting in half a billion dollars in exports.

I can say that every spring, in my riding, nothing can stop these men and women who are passionate perfectionists and who make us proud. Thanks to them, thousands of people come to our sugar shacks to indulge their sweet tooth with those they love.

It is no coincidence that Mirabel attracts visitors from around the world to enjoy this tradition, and that is due in part to Mirabel's tourism office and its executive director, Stéphane Michaud, who have worked exceptionally hard to showcase our national treasure.

I am going to show my bias today and officially, proudly and solemnly declare Mirabel to be the maple syrup capital of the world.

I wish everyone a happy maple syrup season.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after months of denying the possibility of foreign interference in this country, the Prime Minister finally declared yesterday that there would be an investigation. However, a so-called rapporteur, personally selected by the Prime Minister with secret hearings, secret evidence and secret conclusions all being drawn behind closed doors, is not exactly the open and transparent inquiry the Conservatives had in mind.

Speaker's Ruling

It is no surprise that the Prime Minister is looking to bury the truth from Canadians, as for five straight years, the Liberals have blatantly ignored recommendations from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. As a result, the government has failed to respond to threats posed by foreign states against Canada.

Enough is enough. An independent public inquiry must be established in order to openly and honestly understand how to eliminate foreign interference in this country.

* * *

CANADIAN FILM AND TELEVISION

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are good at saying sorry, but sorry, not sorry, because we are kicking bleep with our Canadian talent on the world stage. We are highlighting this week the Made Nous campaign. It is celebrating Canadian film and television right around the world.

As people are popping out the popcorn and snacks to watch the Oscar's this weekend, we will have an opportunity to celebrate some amazing Canadian-made films and films with Canadians in them, including *Turning Red* by Domee Shi, which I really liked; *Women Talking* by Sarah Polley; *The Sea Beast* by Chris Williams; and *Fire of Love* by Ina Fichman. There is so much more for people to check out.

We have great Canadian talent, and we are make a mark on the world stage. Let us keep celebrating Canadian talent.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDERUSE OF PROPER EQUIPMENT DURING VIDEO CONFERENCING—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair would like to make a statement regarding the use of headsets for members who wish to participate remotely in House proceedings, but that applies equally to other proceedings involving interpretation, be it in committee or elsewhere.

[English]

Order. I would like members' attention. I want to make sure everybody hears this, goes along with it and understands how to use their headsets.

[Translation]

On February 15, 2023, the member for Salaberry—Suroît sought guidance from the Chair on the technical requirements for remote participation, more precisely on the use of House-approved headsets. The member also enquired about the mechanism to ensure compliance regarding the use of the appropriate equipment.

Since the House began holding hybrid proceedings, members have been advised and continuously reminded that the effectiveness of remote participation is based in large part on the use of proper equipment. This ranges from an optimal Internet connection, the type of device used and to the need for adequate sound quality. Indeed, headsets with an integrated microphone ensure suitable audio quality while respecting the health and safety of interpreters.

[English]

I would ask everyone to pay attention so that when they are going to use their headsets, they will know what I just said and there will be no reason or excuse for not being heard.

The Chair has previously reminded members of this and the availability of the House administration to provide assistance as required. In a statement from November 26, 2021, the Chair stated at page 233 of the Debates:

Members are responsible for ensuring that their Internet connection and audio quality are strong to allow them to participate. A wired connection is more reliable than Wi-Fi, and using a computer provided by the House is a better option than using a tablet or cellphone. Using a headset with an integrated microphone will ensure the best sound quality, which is essential for allowing our interpreters to do their work safely. If you have not been provided a headset, please let our IT team know.

Proceedings of the House must be available in both official languages. The ability for members to be heard and to hear what other members are saying in the official language of their choice, through simultaneous interpretation, is vital to our parliamentary system. Thus, technology and the use of the appropriate equipment, currently available to everyone, play a fundamental role in ensuring members are heard and understood.

● (1420)

[Translation]

While technical staff and interpreters work tirelessly to resolve issues as they arise, using House-approved equipment is necessary not only to prevent interruptions, but to ensure workplace health and safety.

In this regard, the Labour Program of Employment and Social Development Canada has recently issued the following directive to the Translation Bureau:

...that, during meetings with simultaneous interpretation, the interpretation work [will be] done only when the virtual participants [are] wearing an ISO-compliant microphone.

[English]

Accordingly, the House has been informed by the Translation Bureau that its interpreters will be operating under this directive going forward. They will not be able to provide simultaneous interpretation if members, and also witnesses in the case of committees, participating remotely are not wearing the appropriate headsets. As an institution, the House continues supporting the ongoing efforts made by the Translation Bureau to ensure the safety of the interpreters.

[Translation]

Consequently, members received an official communiqué by email on February 17, 2023, and a reminder was also sent this morning, informing them that the use of House-approved headsets will be mandatory for remote participation in parliamentary proceedings. A list of other compliant devices was included in the communiqué. I would ask members to check the devices they have received in the past and compare them to the current list to ensure that their device is on the list. Members will find copies of the communiqué on each desk in the chamber as well as in the lobbies.

[English]

Over the past year, the House has supplied members with new ISO-compliant equipment. While the onus is on members to use the approved headsets when participating in proceedings, the Chair will also provide assistance to ensure all members are in compliance with technical requirements. In cases where the Chair is made aware of compliant equipment not being used, a member participating remotely will be interrupted and/or not recognized for debate.

Issues pertaining to the audio system and simultaneous interpretation should continue to be brought to the attention of the Chair. Considering the whips often know in advance who will be participating in the proceedings, the Chair will also be looking for their support to ensure the appropriate headsets are worn and that everyone is conforming to the new directive.

[Translation]

The IT Ambassadors remain available to help members prepare for their interventions in the House and in committees. Members should not hesitate reaching out to them to confirm their equipment compliance or to perform sound checks. In addition, members participating remotely are encouraged to avail themselves of the opportunity to participate in the sound checks for remote participants in advance of each committee meeting.

• (1425)

[English]

These actions can make an important impact in ensuring that meetings can unfold with fewer issues and help ensure we can respect our official languages commitments. As always, the health and safety of interpreters, other staff and members continues to be a priority for the House of Commons.

I want to thank the members for their attention. If they do not want to hear this long message again, please conform with the directives.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the dictatorship in Beijing has been helping the Prime Minister for 10 years. It started with a \$200,000 donation to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, and now it has helped Liberal candidates get elected in at least two elections.

Oral Questions

What does the Prime Minister want to do? He wants to set up a secret committee that will do a secret investigation with secret information. It is the Las Vegas rule: What happens in committee stays in committee.

What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have reassured Canadians quite a bit about the importance of countering foreign interference in elections. That is something my colleague cannot say.

He talked about a 10-year period. However, 13 years ago, intelligence agencies raised the importance of countering foreign interference in elections. At that time, my colleague was the minister responsible for democratic institutions and he did nothing.

That is the opposite of our government's record, and we will continue to do the right thing.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if they have known about it for 13 years, why have they never done anything about it?

Ten years ago, the dictatorship in Beijing gave the Trudeau Foundation \$200,000. It then interfered in two elections to help keep the Liberals in power. It even helped campaign for certain Liberal candidates.

What is the solution now? The Prime Minister proposes a secret committee that will do a secret investigation with secret outcomes. This committee will follow the rule of *Fight Club*. The first rule is that no one talks about the committee.

Why is the Prime Minister trying so hard to keep everything so secret?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition knows very well that our government has taken very robust measures to protect democratic institutions from foreign interference.

Last night, the Prime Minister announced additional measures that will reassure Canadians not only that our democratic institutions are protected from foreign interference, but that those who seek to interfere with these very institutions will be held to account.

That is something that the previous Conservative government did absolutely nothing about.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention that other than the secret committee that will see secret information and never actually publish any information, there will also be something called a rapporteur, a fake new position that the Liberals have invented. Does the rapporteur come with a costume, maybe a cape and a sword? Is this the best they can come up with, a fake position doing fake work?

Why are the Liberals trying to cover up the truth?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did not need another reason to see that the Leader of the Opposition has never taken this issue seriously.

In fact, yesterday, he said something that was shocking. When I pointed out to him that this had existed as a challenge to Canadian democratic institutions, including when he served as minister of democratic reform, he said that of course the previous Conservative government did nothing about it because it was not to its partisan advantage to do anything about it.

Let us think about that. Protecting our democracy is not a partisan issue; it is a Canadian issue.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why will the Prime Minister not stand up today and answer a question? Why is he hiding? Why will he not stand from his seat? What is he hiding from Canadians that he stands behind that substandard minister?

He has been hiding this for 10 years. Whatever it is that he is hiding, it must be bad. It must be really bad. How bad is it?

• (1430)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the height of irresponsibility, when talking about national security, to talk about the fact that national security should just be set aside and we should just open this up as if it could be done. It is not something that I think is being responsible.

Responsible leadership is saying that every single member of the House is totally and utterly committed to protecting Canadian democracy. The assertion that anything else is true is offensive and untrue. Playing games with national security is not appropriate.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister really were interested in protecting national security, he would not be hiding. He would stand up right now and answer the question. Instead, he hides behind those two stooges who protect him—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind hon. members of two things: one, please use parliamentary language and be judicious; and two, we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly in the House.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition, from the top, and I am sure he will use both principles in his questions.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was hiding yesterday from the House. He is hiding today from the House. He has been hiding for the last 10 years—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Once again, I want to remind hon. members that we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly. I do not want to have to move to the next question.

The hon. member can start from the beginning, and I am sure he will use parliamentary judgment.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been hiding this for the last 10 years. Ten years ago, he found out that the Trudeau Foundation got \$200,000. Over the last five years, he has had briefing after briefing, warning of interference by Beijing in our elections to support him. Now he is hiding the truth behind a secret committee that will not provide public information.

Whatever he is hiding, it must be bad. It must be really bad. How bad?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member across, the leader of the official opposition, would know well where the Prime Minister is today. He is meeting with the president of the European Commission to talk about national security issues—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind hon. members that one thing they cannot do is refer to either the presence or the absence of someone in the chamber.

I will let the hon. government House leader take it from the top, and I am sure he will be judicious in his words.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, of course that question was asked, despite you saying that it was unparliamentary several times. I want to put that as a matter of record.

Let me say this and be very clear. One of the things that we had as a long tradition in our country was to make sure that when we were dealing with national security, we did not use national security as a way to play partisan politics and to grind an axe on one other.

The reality is that this issue of foreign interference has been a serious issue since well before this government. It was a matter that the member across was responsible for as a minister. They did not take action. We have—

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at his news conference on Chinese interference yesterday, the Prime Minister once again made it clear that he just does not get it.

People want a public inquiry. He announced a secret committee. Secret is not public; it is secret. We wanted an independent inquiry.

The Prime Minister is going to appoint a special rapporteur himself. This person will report to him and submit their report to him. That is not independent in the least.

Why is the PM refusing to set up an independent public commission of inquiry?

• (1435)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was very clear yesterday.

Oral Questions

Since taking office, we have implemented robust, concrete measures to counter foreign interference in our elections. We also asked a special rapporteur to go over all these issues and, transparently, give the government recommendations for next steps. We will keep doing what needs to be done to reassure Canadians that our elections are free and democratic and that all members of Parliament were 100% elected by Canadians.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals do not understand is that this is not about opposing the government.

This is not about one party against another. It is about public trust in the electoral system. It is about ensuring a level playing field from the start. If we cannot address the issue of the integrity of our elections in a transparent manner, frankly, we are in trouble. We will start to look like a banana republic, with all due respect to bananas.

When will the Prime Minister create an independent public commission?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we share precisely that concern with my hon. colleague opposite.

To reassure Canadians, as we have been doing since we first formed government, our intelligence agencies and Canadian institutions are resilient, and we have introduced measures to counter interference in the Canadian electoral system.

Since we formed the government, we have further strengthened these measures. That is also exactly what the Prime Minister announced yesterday evening.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the allegations of foreign interference are disturbing and serious. That is why, at committee, we asked for a public inquiry. We asked for a process that is independent and public.

Why is the Prime Minister ignoring these two criteria?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question from the NDP leader.

We share his concerns, as should all members of the House of Commons, about the importance of strengthening our democratic institutions. That is exactly what we have done since coming to power.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced other additional measures to increase this protection. We understand that we need to be transparent and open with Canadians. That is exactly what we will continue to do.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister really wanted to restore the confidence of Canadians, he would call a public inquiry.

Here is the situation. We have a Conservative Party that only cares about playing political games with something so serious as our democracy. New Democrats understand that this is serious and it is not an opportunity to play political games. That is why we de-

manded a public inquiry at committee. There are two criteria we have: The process has to be independent and it has to be public.

Will the government confirm that its process will answer questions about what the Prime Minister knew, when he knew it and what he did about it?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague values transparency. So does this government. That is why yesterday, when we announced the imminent appointment of a special rapporteur, we said that we would abide by and respect any recommendation that that individual would put forward, including and up to a public inquiry.

Equally, I would remind all members of this chamber that we also announced that we would commence consultations on a foreign agent registry as well as the launch of a coordinator to fight against foreign interference. I sincerely hope this is something that all members of this chamber are united on.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the NDP are now openly working together to cover up the truth. Yesterday, the Prime Minister kicked the can down the road by announcing that a hand-picked rapporteur is going to look into maybe looking into the interference. He announced that a secret committee with secret hearings will hear secret evidence and then give the Prime Minister a secret conclusion.

When will he call a public inquiry and tell everybody what he is hiding?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members heard the government announce yesterday that it is our intention to appoint a special rapporteur who presents the qualifications, the experience and the knowledge to navigate and survey the options on the best next practical steps that we can take to protect our democratic institutions, including our elections.

Is this truly what the Conservatives have resorted to now, denigrating the very institutions that are there to protect our democracy? Is that all they have to offer, denigration? I sincerely hope not.

● (1440)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it sounds desperate. It is a special rapporteur. I get it. The Liberals are blocking a public inquiry, and the NDP is blocking a parliamentary inquiry. As a result, Canadians get a secret committee to look into interference by a foreign dictatorship in our democracy. It is shameful work by the cover-up coalition.

Will they commit to a truly independent and actually public inquiry to look into what the Prime Minister is hiding?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hon. colleague keeps referring to some secret committee. I think that would be very disparaging for the women and men who serve on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. We set up, in legislation, an oversight mechanism to look at these very issues, something the previous Conservative government refused to do. Members of her party serve on that committee.

Members of all political parties represented in this House and senators have done good work. We will continue to work with them on these important issues.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Beijing's foreign interference is a serious threat, a national threat. It threatens the integrity of democratic institutions, social cohesion, the economy, long-term prosperity and fundamental rights and freedoms, but the government has not treated this threat seriously. It has hidden behind all sorts of excuses and accusations, like anti-Asian racism. Now it is hiding behind a secret committee with secret hearings, secret evidence and secret conclusions, all controlled by the Prime Minister.

When is the government going to come clean with us and with Canadians about what exactly is going on?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows well that this government takes the work of fighting against foreign interference very seriously. That is why we introduced Bill C-59, which gave CSIS the threat reduction measure powers it needed to address and mitigate that risk. That is why we introduced Bill C-76, to crack down on foreign funding that could interfere with our elections, but with the corresponding transparency to create the NSICOP and NSIRA, all of which ensures that we can be upfront with Canadians so we can defend our democratic institutions.

The Conservatives should rise above the fray and see that this is not a partisan issue—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the government treated the threat seriously, it would listen to the advice of CSIS. CSIS has said that an effective way to counter foreign interference is through sunlight and transparency, to build resilience by informing Canadians about interference threat activities. The government has done the opposite. First it hid behind excuses and accusations, and then it hid behind a secret committee and a special rapporteur. The government has been anything but transparent about this. It is burying the truth in process. Why?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend likes to refer to what CSIS said. Let us talk about what it said in 2013, when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister responsible for democratic institutions. It specifically warned, 10 years ago, “When diaspora groups in Canada are subjected to clandestine and deceptive manipulation by a foreign power in order for it to garner support for its policies and values, these activities constitute a threat to the security of Canada.” What did the then Conservative government do for two years after that 2013 threat? It did absolutely nothing.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cover-up continues. As the media reports more and more information about the Prime Minister's inaction on the interference in our elections by the communist regime in Beijing, the Prime Minister wants to keep hiding.

Yesterday he announced that his big solution to this serious problem was a secret committee, with secret hearings, secret evidence and secret findings, that he could approve himself.

Today, his Liberal MPs at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs added another layer, blocking a motion from the three opposition parties calling for Katie Telford to appear before the committee.

Will he have the courage to allow his top adviser to speak?

● (1445)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague knows full well that we have been very transparent with the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Several ministers have been testifying for months. We have made available, as is appropriate, every senior official responsible for Canada's security and intelligence agencies.

I very much hope to have the great privilege of joining the Minister of Foreign Affairs and testifying before this committee, possibly two days from now, to answer our colleagues' questions, as we should be doing and as we have always done.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he can bring the Prime Minister's special adviser, Katie Telford, with him.

It will be a secret committee with secret meetings, secret testimony, secret witnesses selected by the Prime Minister's Office and secret findings. Who will decide which findings are made public? Guess what? It will be the Prime Minister and his office.

That is why we absolutely need to hear the testimony of his top adviser, Katie Telford. What is said to Katie Telford is said to the Prime Minister. Now, we want Katie Telford to come tell us about it in committee.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague likes to spark outrage, and that is his right, but I can say that, as always, we were transparent with all of the parliamentary committees.

Oral Questions

It is the ministers' responsibility to answer our parliamentary colleagues' questions in committee. That is exactly what we did. We also made available all the heads of the security and intelligence agencies, including deputy ministers, to answer members' questions. They will be pleased to return at the committee's request.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, foreign interference in our elections demands a transparent investigation. Let me say a little bit about what the Prime Minister's definition of transparency is.

Transparency for him means turning the investigation over to a national security committee, a committee whose members will not only be bound to secrecy, but to secrecy in perpetuity, a committee that will hold its meetings behind closed doors and whose proceedings neither the public nor parliamentarians will be allowed to follow, a committee that will not be able to say which witnesses it will meet or report their exact words, a committee whose report will inevitably be redacted.

Where is the transparency in that?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government increased the level of transparency by creating the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, or NSIRA.

Yesterday, we announced that we will appoint a special rapporteur to evaluate and monitor all options, and to make recommendations. The government will respect the special rapporteur's choice and recommendations.

That is how we will respect the values of transparency.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that gave me goosebumps.

We need an inquiry into foreign interference in our elections that is both transparent and independent.

Instead, the Prime Minister is appointing a special rapporteur who is supposedly independent, even though this person will be appointed by him. Then, this special rapporteur, appointed by the Prime Minister, will decide what the inquiry will and will not cover. This special rapporteur, appointed by the Prime Minister, will be the one to decide whether the Prime Minister should do more to counter foreign interference.

This rapporteur may well be special, but are we really supposed to believe they will be independent?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government will choose a special rapporteur who possesses the necessary skills and expertise to examine all the options and put forward a recommendation based on the best advice they can offer the government.

That is how we will uphold transparency and protect our democratic institutions and our elections.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am getting even more goosebumps.

Foreign interference in our elections requires a transparent, independent and public inquiry. We know it will not be transparent be-

cause it will be led by a committee that is legally bound to secrecy. It simply is not entitled to be transparent.

We also know that the inquiry will not be independent either, because the Prime Minister will personally select his rapporteur. Given that we know that the inquiry will not be transparent or independent, it will obviously not be public.

What is the Prime Minister trying to hide from the public?

● (1450)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague insists on repeating things about a secret committee. That must be the high-level committee that the Bloc is a member of, the committee that hears all the appropriate information about this and other national security issues and that tabled in Parliament reports that the government will act on.

The Bloc has fully participated in this process, and it is one of the processes that we set up to specifically address this issue.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of following the advice of CSIS to provide transparency and sunlight when it comes to Beijing's election interference, the Prime Minister announced what amounts to a cover-up: a secret committee with secret evidence and secret conclusions redacted by the PMO, all to bury the truth. There is no transparency, no sunlight and total secrecy. What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, honestly, I would have thought my colleague was paying attention to the announcement yesterday when we said we would be appointing a special rapporteur who would possess the expertise and the knowledge to put forward a recommendation, up to and including a public inquiry, so we could address the very serious allegations with regard to this matter. More important, this government has taken concrete action to combat foreign interference with the additional powers that we have given to our national security community, but with the additional transparency so we can be upfront with Canadians.

The Conservatives continue to descend into partisanship. Our government is focused on protecting our institutions and Canadians.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister announced yesterday is nothing more than a smokescreen with no transparency. Indeed, the only thing that is transparent is the transparent attempt by the Liberals to cover up what the Prime Minister knows about Beijing's election interference.

Oral Questions

Consistent with this, today at committee the Liberals are filibustering to block the Prime Minister's chief of staff from having to testify. Why? What is he so afraid of? What does he have to hide?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have every reason to believe that the member opposite, for the entirety of his life, has fought for Canadian democracy. I would believe that he knows that I have done the same. I believe that he would know every member in this House has done the same.

I believe the member opposite would also know that foreign interference is a threat to our democracy, and that the objective of any nation to interfere in our democracy is not a threat against a party or a government, but a threat against our democracy.

We are united in making sure that foreign interference is repelled. National security cannot be played with. We need to deal carefully and delicately—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is the Prime Minister does not want accountability on Beijing's election interference that helped the Liberals win; he wants a secret committee, with secret hearings, secret evidence and a secret conclusion, all controlled by him.

Canadians deserve far better than this. They deserve the truth. They deserve accountability. They deserve a true defence of our democracy.

We need transparency from the current government. If it cannot do it, it should get out of the way, because Conservatives will get it done.

When will the government call a public inquiry?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, it is elections and democratic process that decides who gets out of the way, not the members opposite.

Second, I would say that, back when Justice O'Connor and Justice Iacobucci issued their reports talking about the need for parliamentarians to be able to see into every corner of government, it was the Conservatives who opposed that idea.

The secret committee they are maligning and attacking is one on which their own members sit, where they are given the opportunity to see into every corner of government, where they are able to see every document that is protected by national security.

I hope that the party opposite is not suggesting that we should say to our Five Eyes partners that all of our national security information should be put on display.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the committee that these members on this side of the House sit on is banned by the Liberals from talking about what took place.

Today, I was at the procedure and House affairs committee, where the Liberals were engaged in one of their cover-up filibusters.

My question is for the chair of that committee to find out if she will resume the committee today at 3:30 p.m. so there can be a vote on having the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, testify on what she knew and when she knew about the foreign interference efforts.

If the chair will not stand, will the vice-chair of the committee stand and tell us if that committee will resume today?

● (1455)

The Speaker: One moment. I want to make sure all the rules are followed exactly correctly.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as vice-chair of the committee, I can confirm that, after three hours of Liberal filibustering this morning, when we called on the committee to have Katie Telford answer as to what the Prime Minister knew of Beijing's interference, the chair arbitrarily suspended the meeting.

I am pleased to report that the three opposition parties have agreed to provide the resources necessary to resume this meeting and finish this Liberal filibuster today.

As vice-chair of the committee, I am proud, able and willing to re-gavel the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. if the member for Waterloo will not. The question is: Will the Liberals show up or continue the cover-up?

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Tseshah First Nation has shared its partial research findings into the horrific deaths of children at the Alberni Indian Residential School, which operated on its lands, without consent, for almost 80 years. Seventeen suspected unmarked graves have been identified through ground-penetrating radar. The community also confirmed that at least 67 students died while at the school.

The nation has made calls for truth and justice, including funding to complete this research, the removal of the remaining building and replace it with a healing and cultural centre.

Will the Prime Minister honour the Tseshah calls for truth and justice?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's question is an important one, not only for all the survivors and families that were sent to this hideous institution but also for the communities that are going through a lot of pain and trauma trying to come to grips with that grim reality. This continues to shock the conscience of Canadians.

I have spoken to Chief Councillor Ken Watts on a number of occasions and have visited the community twice. I have undertaken to do all we can on behalf of Canada to make sure there is some measure of healing that is afforded to those survivors as well as to the community.

TAXATION

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian brewery workers are worried. Labour unions representing them, including Unifor and SEIU, are sounding the alarm because the federal government plans to increase beer taxes by 6.3% on April 1. This would be the largest federal beer tax increase in the last 40 years, and it is happening with no debate in Parliament.

Beer production costs are soaring and sales are declining. This tax will have a huge impact on jobs in Canada. Will this government help to protect brewery jobs by cancelling this unprecedented and automatic beer tax increase?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the work that brewers do in our country. Whether it is small craft brewers or the large producers, this is an important industry for our tourism sector but also for Canadians for recreational purposes.

We cannot comment on what is going to be in the budget. We have heard from the brewery industry and we are taking this matter under advisement.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the inherent rights of the Métis were confirmed in the Constitution Act of 1982, and 40 years ago today, the Métis National Council was officially formed. Since its inception, the MNC has been a fierce advocate for Métis across Canada.

Could the Minister of Northern Affairs please update the House on the federal government's partnership with the MNC and the important work we are doing together with Métis?

● (1500)

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, I thank the member for Yukon for all of his hard work on all these issues.

I congratulate the Métis National Council for 40 years of hard work for the rights of Métis across the homeland, building on the legacy of our ancestors. I commend Cassidy Caron for her stewardship of the council. I also commend and congratulate all the previous presidents of the Métis National Council over the last 40 years.

Our government is working hand-in-hand with MNC on issues such as reconciliation, housing and the environment. There is a lot of work to do, but we are making progress.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of Liberal failures, the Liberals continue to break records, just not ones many can celebrate. Not only are one in five Canadians skipping meals, but food bank usage is at a record high. A Mississauga food bank saw a 41% increase in usage,

Oral Questions

serving more than 13,000 people in January alone. That is the average attendance of an Ottawa Senators' game.

Why does the Prime Minister continue to brag and celebrate his failed policies that sent 1.5 million Canadians to a food bank, or was that his plan all along?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians are going through a hard time. There is an inflationary cycle that has gripped the world. The fact is that in our country, our inflation is lower than the average in the G7 and in the EU. It is not good enough for Canadians and that is why we have a robust set of affordability measures in place.

The other side provides no hope, no plan and no vision for the future. We do; that is our job. We have the backs of Canadians.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have the back pockets of Canadians, and we would never vote for policies that would make housing double. After eight years of their failures, rents and mortgages have doubled since 2015.

Random Liberal Bill Morneau said that the government overspent. That made the Bank of Canada jack up its rates to counter that. Now the CIBC is saying that 20% of its mortgages are at a point where monthly payments do not even cover interest anymore.

Therefore, will the most expensive housing minister in Canada's history stop patting himself on the back for a job well failed and admit that he broke housing in our country?

[Translation]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to erase everything that has happened in Canada and around the world over the past few years, including the pandemic. It is important to remember that the government has been there for the people who need it most.

It is also important to remember that after years under the Conservatives, when our government took office, we lifted two million people out of poverty and created more jobs in the last ten years than the Conservatives did when they were in power.

This government is doing more for Canadians than the Conservatives will ever do.

Oral Questions

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians are struggling.

Seniors are being pulled out of retirement and forced to re-enter the workforce to pay for food and housing costs. Grocery prices are out of control. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment across Canadian cities is \$2,000 per month, compared to \$1,200 per month in 2015.

Will the Prime Minister step aside and let the Conservatives fix what Liberals have broken?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really important to look at the facts.

The fact of the matter is that, when that party, the Conservative Party, was in power, the plan for seniors was to raise the age of retirement to 67. The first thing we did was to reverse that back to 65. We then enhanced the old age security and enhanced the guaranteed income supplement.

Every step of the way the party opposite has opposed measures to support Canadians and has stopped us from doing the work for seniors. We will not take any lessons from the Conservatives. We will continue to make sure we deliver for seniors.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year, Canadians will feel the brunt of the 4.25% increase in the Bank of Canada's base rate.

According to Statistics Canada, 35% of Canadian households reported that it was difficult for them to meet their financial needs in the previous 12 months. What is more, 44% of respondents said that they were very concerned with their household's ability to afford housing or rent.

Will the Prime Minister admit that his out-of-control spending caused inflation and created conditions that are impoverishing Canadian families?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, inflation was not caused by all of the support measures that we put in place to help people get through the pandemic, regardless of the Conservative Party's far-fetched economic theories. What we are not going to hear from the other side of the House is a plan.

The Conservatives do not have a plan for the economy. They do not have a plan for housing. They do not even believe in climate change, so they definitely do not have a plan for that.

On this side of the House, we believe in Canadians. We believe in having a plan and we are going to follow our plan to support Canadians.

• (1505)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs voted in favour of an independent public inquiry chaired by a commission member chosen with the agreement of all the parties represented in the House.

The Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservatives were able to set partisanship aside. What is important here is public confidence in our electoral system, not partisanship.

Does the government really believe it will restore public confidence with a secret committee and a rapporteur who reports directly to the Prime Minister?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, we share the concern of all our colleagues over the importance of strengthening our democratic institutions with respect to interference by foreign states, including China.

We have taken action on several fronts and put a number of measures in place. We will continue to further reinforce our democratic institutions, precisely as Canadians expect from a responsible and transparent government.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a democracy, candidates are not guaranteed to win an election, but they must be assured that the election is conducted by the book, without cheating, without money received on the sly, without people being bullied into voting, and without foreign interference. That is democracy.

These conditions make it possible to accept the results of elections. If the public loses confidence in the electoral system, democracy is weakened. That is why we need an independent public inquiry.

Why is the Prime Minister stubbornly refusing this inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my hon. colleague's concerns.

That is why we created two independent panels that verified that the 2019 and 2021 elections were free and fair. Now, we will follow a process managed by a special rapporteur. The rapporteur will table recommendations that the government will follow.

Yes, this is very important. We will continue to protect our democratic institutions.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CIBC is the first bank to show that, on 20% of its mortgages, the monthly payment does not cover interest and increases what the borrowers owe on top of their original mortgages. Does the Minister of Finance agree that, inevitably, these higher debts must be paid down?

That is something that borrowers cannot afford now, let alone at a higher cost later. If she believes that is true, why does she continue to relentlessly borrow and spend when it is not only inflationary but also a debt that Canadians cannot afford today, let alone tomorrow?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue on our prudent fiscal track that we laid down in the fall economic statement and in budget 2022.

It is intriguing that the Conservatives are having a little laugh fest today because—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister can take it from the top so we can hear the whole answer, please.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Perhaps we should go back to the past, Mr. Speaker, and talk about nine years of stagflation during the Harper government, when the Canadian economy did not grow more than 1% or maybe 1.2%. Which country in the world is positioned to lead the G7 in growth next year? It is Canada. Is that good enough for Canadians who are struggling with inflation? No. That is why we have affordability measures in place.

They voted against them. We are voting with Canadians. They can hem and haw. We are here for Canadians.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not buying the house of debt that the minister is selling.

Kelowna is now recognized as one of Canada's top-five highest rents, and it shows. The Minister of Housing has failed to house the homeless on the streets of Kelowna. With rentals and home prices doubling, there is no way that his policies can help them, let alone the middle class and those working to join it.

Does the minister understand that he has failed the people of Kelowna? If so, will he move out of his office today to make room for someone else, or is he waiting for an eviction notice from the Prime Minister?

• (1510)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really rich to hear rhetoric coming from the other side, when they have voted against every single measure that we have put in place to help Canadian renters. When we put together the Canada housing benefit, they voted against it. When we introduced a \$500 top-up payment that is going to almost two million Canadian renters, they not only voted against it, but they also played procedural games last fall in the House to delay payments that were going to almost two million Canadian renters to help them with the cost of rent.

Canadians can see through their rhetoric.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this Prime Minister, property and housing prices have skyrocketed.

Oral Questions

Interest rate hikes have dealt a major blow to homeowners. The average cost of a mortgage in Canada has more than doubled. It is now \$3,000 per month. As a result, young families cannot afford to buy a home, young adults are camping out in their parents' basements and students are staying in shelters.

When will this Prime Minister acknowledge the problems he has caused, show some compassion and finally help Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan in place to help first-time homebuyers access the dream of home ownership. We are building more supply by working with the municipalities and provinces to get more barriers out of the way and to build more housing across the housing spectrum. What do they do? They vote against all these measures.

In addition to that, it has been more than year since their leader took the helm of leadership, and they do not have a housing plan. They do not have a plan in place. They do not have the voting record. When they were in government, they spent meagre amounts of money. Every time that we try to put measures in place to help Canadians across the housing spectrum, they vote against them.

Canadians can see through that.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has made significant efforts to recognize historic wrongs and the criminalization of vulnerable communities across Canada.

Today, as part of those efforts, the government reaffirmed its commitment to all women and the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities by adding several offences to the list of those eligible for expungement.

Can the Minister of Public Safety inform the House of the positive impact this announcement will have on Canadians?

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

We need to recognize the historic injustices that wrongly targeted vulnerable communities. That is why we are making abortion-related, bawdy house and indecency-based offences eligible for expungement.

Oral Questions

This is about recognizing the legacy of discrimination suffered by women and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community while protecting their right to choose and access safe reproductive health care. This is one more step toward building a compassionate, inclusive and diverse country.

* * *

*[English]***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-11 is an unnecessary and grotesque overreach of government control. It censors what Canadians can see, hear and post online. The minister has said that this bill is about “support[ing] Canadian culture”, but that is actually not true. The bill stifles creators' voices. In fact, subject matter experts have said that it likens Canada to countries like China or North Korea.

Will the Prime Minister stop this damning overreach and kill Bill C-11?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives had options. They could have sided with Canadians. They could have sided with our music creators, film producers or actors. However, they decided to side with the tech giants by abandoning the cultural sector. This is a shame.

There is another thing: I do not think they understand the bill. I am not even sure they read it, even a year later, because if someone reads the bill, it is very clear. It is simply asking streamers to support our culture. They understand that. Everybody understands that but the Conservatives.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member opposite to listen to Canadians. When they came to the House of Commons and the Senate, they said the same thing over and over again. They said creators, content experts and Canadians at large do not want this bill. It stifles their voices, prevents Canadian culture from being furthered and likens us to places like North Korea and China. It is a terrible bill; it needs to be killed.

Will the minister concede to Canadian voices, give them the power and stop this terrible legislation?

• (1515)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to hand it to my colleague: She is very creative, which is good in the cultural sector. If we listen to people in the music sector and the film industry, they are all behind this bill. Streamers make a lot of money, which is fine. We are happy for them. However, the bill asks streamers to contribute to the creation of more music, film and television from here. It is good for Canadians but not for the Conservatives.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that this Liberal government likes to be in control. It clearly demonstrated that yesterday when it created a secret committee with secret hearings, secret evidence and secret findings. That is absolute control.

This government is showing that same need for control with the CRTC act. However, there is one thing that this government cannot control, and that is Quebec's desire to be heard.

Could the minister convene the parliamentary committee so that Quebec can explain its position?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is from Quebec. I think he is pretty great. We are from the same province.

Did he talk to the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo, ADISQ, which supports the bill? Did he talk to the Union des artistes, which also supports this bill?

People in music, film and television all support it. Even Quebec supports it. Why? Because it is good for Quebec culture and for culture in Canada.

The Conservatives do not like it because they do not care about culture. We care about culture. We are protecting it and we will always protect it.

* * *

*[English]***SENIORS**

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors around the world and in Canada were some of the hardest hit by the pandemic. Conscious of the lessons we have learned from the pandemic and given Canada's rapidly aging population, can the Minister of Seniors update the House on the work that she is doing with Canada's international partners to advance the rights and interests of older individuals, both here at home and abroad?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from St. John's East for that important question and for her ongoing advocacy for seniors. I am happy to inform the House that, this week, Canada joined the UN open-ended working group on aging. Canada will be using this opportunity to advance seniors' human rights and efforts to support seniors around the world. Canada is a global leader in supporting seniors, with a robust pension plan and universal health care system. We look forward to sharing our experience and working collaboratively to improve the lives of seniors both here and around the world.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Prince Rupert is home to one of North America's fastest-growing ports, but the City of Prince Rupert is struggling to maintain the basic infrastructure needed for a growing workforce. In December, the city declared a local state of emergency after several water main breaks, and now city officials fear the catastrophic failure of the city's water infrastructure. The B.C. government has already pledged support, and it has written to the minister of infrastructure to ask for federal help.

Why will the Liberal government not step up and help this city in crisis?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our hon. colleague for raising that important question. He and I have had a number of productive conversations about this important project. Officials of my department have spoken with the city as well. We understand, and his point is very accurate.

This is a critical piece of Canada's economic infrastructure, and yet a municipal water system is dependent on a community with a population that is necessarily much more limited than the economic impact of the larger port and its infrastructure. I have had conversations with the Government of British Columbia in this regard, and we hope to have good news soon.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for decades, women in the RCMP suffered a shocking amount of sexual harassment and discrimination. Now Veterans Affairs is clawing back their disability pensions. Months ago, following the Merlo Davidson lawsuit, the ombud recommended the clawbacks stop. However, the minister has done nothing. He is making these women who served their country suffer all over again. When will he fix this and make it right?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's concern. I also appreciate the ombud and her office for providing recommendations to the government.

The women who came forward and disclosed their experience in the Merlo Davidson lawsuit did so with incredible courage. We will have more to say on the recommendations made by the ombud shortly, and we thank her on behalf of the veterans and their families.

• (1520)

The Speaker: It being 3:20 p.m., pursuant to order made on Monday, March 6, and Standing Order 24(1), this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

(The House adjourned at 3:20 p.m.)

APPENDIX

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Address

of

Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen

President of the European Commission

to

Both Houses of Parliament

in the

House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa

on Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen was welcomed by the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable George J. Furey, Speaker of the Senate, and by the Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker of the House of Commons.

Hon. Anthony Rota (Speaker of the House of Commons): Your Excellency President von der Leyen, Prime Minister, Speaker Furey, party leaders, parliamentarians and honoured guests, let me welcome you to this extraordinary event.

[*English*]

It is a day marked by firsts: the first official visit by President von der Leyen to Canada; Her Excellency's first address to Canada's Parliament; and, on the eve of International Women's Day, an address by the first woman president of the European Commission. As Speaker of the House of Commons, I have had the great honour, Madam President, to be among the first to welcome you to Canada's Parliament.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to invite the Right Honourable Prime Minister to speak.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, parliamentarians, dear friends and colleagues, thank you for being here this evening for this very special moment in time.

[*English*]

It is my honour to welcome the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to address our Parliament.

Almost a year ago, I addressed the European Parliament in Brussels, and it is our profound privilege to host you here at the seat of our government in Ottawa tonight. It is a testament to how deep and strong the bonds between Canada and Europe have become.

[Translation]

In March of last year, I addressed the European Parliament. It was a few weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine, disrupting international stability.

Vladimir Putin started a war in Europe on a scale not seen since the end of the Second World War. He thought the world was divided. He thought his invasion would weaken the European Union, NATO and ties among the world's democratic friends and allies. A year on, we can see just how wrong he was.

[English]

President von der Leyen, you are here as an inspirational leader who has been central to galvanizing support for Ukraine and its people, not only across Europe but around the world. You are a defender of democracy, of freedom and of peace. You are dedicated to helping the most vulnerable. You embody the values we cherish as Canadians, and our government and all Canadians are proud to call you a friend.

As the Speaker pointed out, tomorrow is International Women's Day. It bears pointing out that President von der Leyen is only the sixth woman to address Canadian Parliament like this and the first woman elected to be President of the European Commission. She is one of many women around the world who have become the face of resistance to autocracy. These are women like Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who just yesterday was sentenced in exile to 15 years in prison, or the women of Iran, from schoolgirls to grandmothers, who took to the streets demanding to live their lives free of persecution. They started a movement that has resonated around the world, with the rallying cry of “*Zan, Zendeji, Azadi*”, or “Women, Life, Liberty”.

With women around the world facing threats to their right to choose, it is more important than ever that their voices ring loudly from every corner of society, because when women have strong voices and hold positions of leadership, it makes our democracies stronger. The world is facing challenges, and we need strong, principled and responsible leadership from people of all backgrounds, so thank you, Ursula, not just for being a strong example of that leadership, but also for putting forward policies, decisions and solutions that are empowering important voices across Europe and around the world.

• (1835)

[Translation]

Together, we will build a better future and grow a resilient economy that is focused on the well-being of all Canadians and Europeans. We will build a future fuelled by clean energy and clean growth, a future where Canada's critical minerals provide the foundation for clean technologies around the world, a future where we fight climate change and create good jobs for the middle class on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 2017, it was here in the House of Commons that the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement was ratified. In just five years, trade between Canada and the European Union has gone up by two-thirds.

[English]

The partnership between Canada and the EU is stronger than ever. It is built on our shared belief in gender equality, in human rights, in international law, in a strong and growing middle class and in growth that creates opportunities for everyone. Fundamentally, it is built on a belief in strong and lasting democratic institutions like the one we are in today.

Without further delay, I am pleased and honoured to welcome President von der Leyen for her joint address to Parliament.

Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen (President of the European Commission): Prime Minister, dear Justin; Mr. Speaker of the Senate; Mr. Speaker of the House; Excellencies; senators; members of the House of Commons; distinguished guests; people of Canada, thank you very much for welcoming me to the heart of Canada, the home of Canadian democracy.

They say that hard times reveal true friends. This is what the European Union and Canada are, true friends. The histories of our democracies are tied together. So many Canadians have their family roots in Europe. Many of your parents and grandparents fought in Europe during two world wars. They were sent to faraway places on the other side of the ocean. Tens of thousands of them lost their lives in the trenches of Belgium, in the heat of Sicily and on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day.

I am a European of German nationality. It was German Nazism and fascism that brought death and destruction upon Europe and the world, but it was allied forces who brought liberty back to all of us. The united democracies freed us from dictatorship. Thus, we owe our democracy also to you, the people of Canada, and we will be forever grateful for the sacrifices your parents and grandparents made and for the invaluable gift of freedom.

Today, almost 80 years after the end of World War II, the values of freedom and democracy are still a strong bridge between the two shores of the Atlantic. You, the people of Canada, have built this country as a community that is open to all, beyond ethnicity, language or religion, a true community of values. It is the same spirit that brings us Europeans together: 27 proud countries and 24 official languages in one union of almost half a billion people, the European Union. Today, we are a community of values and together we are a community of destiny.

The more painful it is that the very values that unite us are challenged today like never before. One year ago, Russia sent tanks, drones and missiles over the borders and against a sovereign and peaceful country. Since then, countless lives have been shattered and countless families separated. Hundreds of thousands of young Ukrainians had to kiss their loved ones goodbye as they left to go to the front to fight for freedom. Millions more had to leave not only their homes but also their dreams behind.

All of this is because President Putin refuses to recognize their freedom and their independence. This we can simply not accept. We will never accept that a military power with fantasies of empire rolls its tanks across an international border.

● (1840)

We will never accept that Putin denies the very existence of Ukraine as a state and as a nation. We will never accept this threat to European security and to the very foundation of our international community. I know that Canada's commitment is just as adamant as ours.

Canada and the European Union will uphold the UN Charter. We will stand up for Ukraine to be the master of their own future. Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine. We will keep supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes.

Canada has a very special connection to Ukraine. Many proud Canadians are also very proud of their Ukrainian heritage. You understood the gravity of events in Ukraine before many others, including many Europeans.

In 2014, Putin invaded Ukraine for the first time. Already back then, Canada decided to set up a training mission for the Ukrainian military. Operation Unifier has trained over 35,000 Ukrainian soldiers. This has proven to be vital in the hours that followed the full scale Russian invasion of last year.

Putin believed that he would get Kyiv within three days. What a strategic mistake. Ukraine's resistance has stunned the world. That was primarily, of course, because of the courage of the Ukrainian people, but it was also, and crucially, because of the professionalism of the Ukrainian soldiers, many trained by Canada. I cannot overstate this: Canada saved Ukraine in the first days. I want to thank everyone involved in Operation Unifier for your amazing service.

Canada's response to the war in Ukraine has gone above and beyond the call of duty. I am so grateful, dear Justin, for your constant, close co-operation during this year. Everything we did for Ukraine, we did it together, because we believe that Ukraine and the values that it strives for must prevail in this war.

First, we believe that Ukraine deserves our steadfast military and economic support. The support package that Europe has put together, worth almost \$100 billion Canadian, is unprecedented in living memory. Canada is also contributing well beyond its fair share. Now European military trainers are working side by side with Canadian trainers.

Second, we believe that Russia must pay for its crime of aggression. Our sanctions have been closely aligned since day one of the invasion, and now, because of our common price cap on oil, Russian proceeds from crude oil and petroleum products have plunged by 48% in February from a year ago.

● (1845)

Third, we believe that Ukrainians must be the masters of their own future. They have a right to choose their association, and Ukraine has made its choice. They want to be a member of the European Union, but Putin wants to force Ukraine to be part of Russia.

He has achieved exactly the opposite. Today, Ukraine is a candidate country to join the European Union, and Europe is leading the effort to help Ukraine rebuild the country. Canada is a key partner for this, focusing not only on infrastructure but also on healing the physical and mental wounds of Ukrainian victims. We cannot ease their pain and suffering, but we can ease their healing, and I thank you for that.

This is what it means, that Europe and Canada are like-minded partners. We share the same purpose, the same belief, and this is true not only for our governments but also for our people.

Think about the way Canadians and Europeans welcomed Ukrainian refugees. When Ukrainian refugees knocked on our door, Europeans and Canadians did not hesitate for one moment. Today, four million Ukrainians live and work inside our union. The people of Europe have opened their hearts and their homes and the same is true for the people of Canada. You are now hosting more than 165,000 Ukrainians, an incredible amount for a country on the other side of the ocean.

Beyond the numbers are the stories, your stories, stories of heart-wrenching separation, dangerous flights to safety and, finally, a warm embrace here in Canada. I know that some of you are with us today in the gallery, so please join me in honouring all of them, all of the Canadians who make this country a country of solidarity and hope.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

Ladies and gentlemen, the war has also brought Canada and Europe closer for another reason. Before the invasion, Europe was heavily dependent on Russian gas, something which Putin tried to use to blackmail us.

Russia cut its gas supply to Europe by 80% in eight months, sending energy prices in Europe soaring. Last summer, our energy bills rose by 300%.

However, Putin's blackmail was unsuccessful. We replaced the shortfall in Russian gas by increasing imports from reliable suppliers. Canada played an important role by increasing its liquefied natural gas production.

We have since increased our energy efficiency, reducing our consumption by 20%. Most important of all, we have invested massively in renewables. These are clean, generated locally and offer us independence.

However, our work does not end there. As renewable energy is the future, our partnership with Canada is crucial for speeding up the transition to clean energy. Canada and Europe are world leaders in the fight against climate change. We have written our climate targets into law. We have set carbon prices, and we have proven that it is possible to grow the economy and reduce emissions.

New challenges await us, however. The global race for clean technology is on. There is growing competition to attract investment and to control the most important links in key supply chains. In this more competitive environment, Canada and Europe must be on the same side. These vital chains must not be controlled by autocratic regimes.

We Europeans learned this the hard way. Democracies must work together to keep risks at bay. It is a matter of national security but also of being true to our values. Take raw materials. Canada is a natural partner for us due to the minerals you exploit and also because of how you exploit them. Environmental protection, workers' rights—these are important to us Europeans. We want local, indigenous communities to benefit from our investments, and this is exactly what is happening in Canada.

When it comes to values, Canada and Europe speak the same language. Let us therefore join forces for the climate, for our economies and to end our dangerous dependencies.

• (1855)

[English]

Ladies and gentlemen, after the two world wars, the world declared that all human beings are entitled to equal and inalienable rights, but today some powers are explicitly trying to destroy this basic principle.

I was in Bucha right after its liberation by Ukraine's army. I saw the body bags lined up by the side of the street. I heard the stories of rape, of executions in cold blood carried out by Russian troops, and Russia continues to commit atrocities, bombing civilians, striking the most vulnerable. The United Nations says Russia is using rape and sexual violence as part of its military strategy in Ukraine. This is not only a war on Ukraine; it is also a war on human rights, and it is a war on women's rights.

But Ukrainian women are fighting back. They have been fighting back ever since 2014. When the first Russian invasion happened, women were not allowed to carry out combat duties, but they did not care and they started joining the army.

Let me quote Lieutenant-Colonel Melanie Lake of the Canadian Armed Forces, who led Operation Unifier and is with us here today. She said, "Ukrainian women did not wait for doors to be open for them to serve in all capacities. They broke the doors down". These women also smashed a glass ceiling right over the head of the Russian invaders.

Since the start of the war, the number of women serving in the military has more than doubled. However, it is not just about women in the army. Millions of Ukrainian women are standing up for their children's future and freedom. One Ukrainian woman above all has become a global symbol: the First Lady of Ukraine, Olena Zelenska. She stayed in Kyiv in the darkest hours. Together with

her husband, she is emblematic of the courage of the Ukrainian people. I saw her in action on the global stage as an advocate for her people, especially those most vulnerable; she was an unbreakable force for good.

These women are an inspiration for all of us. I want to honour them on the eve of International Women's Day.

At war or in peace, we need all our talents to live up to the big challenges of our time. Canada knows this well. Eight years ago, when asked why he appointed a gender-equal cabinet, Prime Minister Trudeau replied, "Because it is 2015." As simple as that.

I am proud to lead the first gender-balanced college in the history of the European Commission. Before the end of my mandate, 50% of all managers of the European Commission will be women. Like Canada, Europe knows that men and women bring different perspectives. Diversity leads to better decisions and better societies.

Gender equality does not just happen, not even because it is 2023. It requires day-to-day attention and commitment to ensure that women and girls can be free from violence, to ensure that women earn as much as their male colleagues because they deserve it, to ensure that women as well as men can have a career and a family and to ensure that women can reach the very top levels because they are qualified. We have a duty to set an example to society and the economy of what a world of fair chances looks like, and this duty counts every day, not just on International Women's Day.

My dear friends in this august House, no democracy is perfect, but all democracies are perfectible. This is our mission, and this is what brings us together. It is the mission that has moved generation upon generation of great Canadians and Europeans.

• (1900)

They had the audacity to look beyond the imperfection of what is and to see the beauty of what could be, the generations that brought Europe together after two world wars and after the fall of the Soviet Union and the generations that made Canada the inclusive and welcoming country it is today, a country that is proud of its heritage and open to the future, the home of indigenous people, as well as newcomers, a place of traditions and innovation, where it does not matter who you are, how you pray and who you love, Canada, where you can make the most of your life and the best of your community.

This is also my vision of Europe. This is what I work for every single day, so Canada and Europe, let us walk this path together.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

• (1905)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Madam President.

[English]

Now I invite the Hon. George Furey, Speaker of the Senate, to say a few words.

Hon. George J. Furey (Speaker of the Senate): President von der Leyen, Prime Minister Trudeau, Speaker Rota, fellow parliamentarians, members of the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests, and ladies and gentlemen.

[Translation]

On behalf of all parliamentarians and invited guests in the House, it is my honour, Your Excellency, to thank you for your visit and your address to the Parliament of Canada. Your remarks made it clear that you are a great friend of Canada.

[English]

It is fitting that you are here today, Madam President, following President Zelensky's address to this House a little under one year ago. Your words today remind us of the depth of our shared values and of the importance of defending them.

With war tragically having returned to Europe following Russia's barbaric and illegal invasion of Ukraine, protecting the values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law is now more important than ever. They are the values that we must never take for granted. They are the values that Ukrainians have found themselves fighting for each and every day.

In recent years, the world has witnessed a rise in protectionism and populism that threatens to undermine the rule-based world order and indeed erodes the fundamental values of democracy itself.

Madam President, I know I speak on behalf of all Canadians when I say that we value your strong leadership and your outspoken support of Ukraine as it defends itself against Russian aggression. You have demonstrated that your response to this crisis has been guided by the principles of democracy and respect for human rights. Madam President, we applaud your efforts in every way in this regard.

Indeed, it is these very principles that make Canada and Europe an integral part of the global family of democracies. Canada and the European Union have a common vision for meeting our collective long-term challenges, and we stand together in defending peace, territorial integrity and the rule of law. And though these are troubling times, these are also times when people look to great leaders, such as you, Madam President, for your hope and for your courage.

In your state of the union address to the European Parliament last fall, you invoked the inspiring words of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II when she said, at the height of the pandemic, "We will succeed—and that success will belong to every one of us". Reflecting on those words, you added a very thoughtful insight when you said, "our future is built on new ideas and founded in our oldest values." Your words resonate now, Madam President, more than ever before.

As well, on this eve of International Women's Day, I wish to take a moment to acknowledge the vital role that women play in shaping our societies and our economies. Canada and Europe must continue to lead the way in promoting gender equality by ensuring access to education, health care and economic opportunities.

In closing, I would once again highlight the importance of the Canada-Europe partnership and reaffirm our shared commitment to peace and prosperity around the world.

Thank you, Madam President, for sharing with us your vision for the road ahead. Please be assured of the solidarity of the people of Canada as you continue on this most important journey.

• (1910)

[Translation]

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker Rota: Thank you, Speaker Furey.

Madam President, thank you for your address. Your leadership inspires us all. Throughout your remarkable career, you have worked tirelessly to defend human rights, to ensure equal opportunities and to strengthen peace, international security, democracy and the rule of law.

These efforts have further enhanced the European Union's reputation as a beacon of hope for stability and equality.

[English]

These values which Canada shares provide the foundation for dynamic economic growth that will steadily move the European Union and Canada towards a better future for our nations and our planet.

The European Union and Canada have a long history of friendship, and for many of us, including me, family ties that bring us even closer together. In a world where differences lead to conflict, Canada and the European Union stand together on common ground; together in support for Ukraine; together our efforts to build a better, more prosperous future; and together always to defend and strengthen democracy.

[Translation]

As I said, it is a remarkable achievement to be the pioneer that you are, Madam President. I have no doubt that your words and actions throughout your career will be an inspiration to those who follow in your footsteps.

[*English*]

Thank you for being here today and thank you for your address. Thank you also to all the parliamentarians and distinguished guests who attended this historic address to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Many thanks to you all.

[*Applause*]

CONTENTS

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Mr. Schiefke 12011

Public Safety and National Security

Mr. McKinnon 12011

Industry and Technology

Mr. Lightbound 12011

Motion for concurrence 12011

Division deemed demanded and deferred 12011

Petitions

Indigenous Affairs

Mr. Duguid 12011

Environmental Protection

Ms. Damoff 12011

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 12011

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Digital Charter Implementation Act, 2022

Bill C-27. Second reading 12012

Mr. Green 12012

Ms. Hepfner 12013

Mr. Perkins 12013

Mr. Morrice 12014

Mrs. Vignola 12014

Mr. Boulerice 12014

Mr. Williams 12016

Ms. Pauzé 12016

Mr. Lamoureux 12016

Mr. Lamoureux 12016

Mr. Redekopp 12019

Ms. Pauzé 12019

Mr. Green 12019

Mr. Arya 12019

Mr. Perkins 12020

Mrs. Vignola 12020

Mr. Redekopp 12020

Ms. Hepfner 12022

Mr. Champoux 12023

Ms. Collins (Victoria) 12023

Mr. Perkins 12023

Mr. Aboultaif 12023

Mr. Lamoureux 12025

Ms. Pauzé 12025

Ms. Collins (Victoria) 12025

Mr. Morrice 12025

Mr. Zimmer 12026

Ms. Hepfner 12027

Mr. Masse 12027

Mrs. Vignola 12028

Mr. Perkins 12028

Mr. Patzer 12028

Mr. Lamoureux 12030

Mr. Champoux 12030

Mr. Masse 12030

Mrs. Desbiens 12031

Mr. Cormier 12032

Mr. Carrie 12032

Mr. Desjarlais 12033

Mr. Kelly 12033

Mr. Lamoureux 12034

Mr. Villemure 12035

Mr. Masse 12035

Mr. McLean 12035

Mr. Hardie 12036

Mr. Champoux 12037

Ms. Collins (Victoria) 12037

Mr. Arya 12037

Mr. Perkins 12038

Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné 12039

Mr. Masse 12039

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12039

Mr. Vis 12039

Mr. Lamoureux 12041

Mrs. Vignola 12041

Mr. Masse 12041

Ms. Hepfner 12041

Mr. Perkins 12043

Mr. Champoux 12043

Mr. Zimmer 12043

Mr. Genuis 12044

Mr. Lamoureux 12045

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12046

Mr. Zimmer 12046

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

Mr. Chen 12046

Small Business

Mrs. Wagantall 12046

International Women's Day

Ms. Lambropoulos 12047

Blainville's Bid to Host the Quebec Games

Ms. Chabot 12047

Irish Heritage Month

Mr. Maloney 12047

Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Warkentin	12047
Lorna Milne	
Ms. Sidhu (Brampton South)	12047
Black History Month	
Mr. Dhaliwal	12048
Taxation	
Mr. Chambers	12048
Canadian Foodgrains Bank	
Ms. Khalid	12048
Public Safety	
Mr. Caputo	12048
Freedoms in Canada	
Mrs. Thomas	12048
President of the European Commission	
Mr. Sorbara	12049
Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	12049
Maple Syrup Season	
Mr. Garon	12049
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Brock	12049
Canadian Film and Television	
Ms. Dabrusin	12050
Points of Order	
Use of Proper Equipment During Video Conferencing —Speaker's Ruling	
The Speaker	12050

ORAL QUESTIONS

Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Poilievre	12051
Mr. LeBlanc	12051
Mr. Poilievre	12051
Mr. LeBlanc	12051
Mr. Poilievre	12051
Mr. LeBlanc	12052
Mr. Poilievre	12052
Mr. Holland	12052
Mr. Poilievre	12052
Mr. Holland	12052
Mr. Therrien	12052
Mr. LeBlanc	12052
Mr. Therrien	12053
Mr. LeBlanc	12053
Mr. Singh	12053
Mr. LeBlanc	12053
Mr. Singh	12053
Mr. Mendicino	12053
Ms. Lantsman	12053

Mr. Mendicino	12053
Ms. Lantsman	12053
Mr. LeBlanc	12054
Mr. Chong	12054
Mr. Mendicino	12054
Mr. Chong	12054
Mr. LeBlanc	12054
Mr. Berthold	12054
Mr. LeBlanc	12054
Mr. Berthold	12054
Mr. LeBlanc	12054
Mr. Villemure	12055
Mr. Mendicino	12055
Mr. Villemure	12055
Mr. Mendicino	12055
Mr. Villemure	12055
Mr. LeBlanc	12055
Mr. Cooper	12055
Mr. Mendicino	12055
Mr. Cooper	12055
Mr. Holland	12056
Ms. Dancho	12056
Mr. Holland	12056
Mr. Barrett	12056
Mr. Nater	12056
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Johns	12056
Mr. Miller	12056
Taxation	
Ms. Mathysen	12057
Mr. Boissonnault	12057
Indigenous Affairs	
Mr. Hanley	12057
Mr. Vandal	12057
The Economy	
Mr. Hallan	12057
Mr. Boissonnault	12057
Housing	
Mr. Hallan	12057
Mrs. St-Onge	12057
The Economy	
Mrs. Roberts	12058
Ms. Khera	12058
Mr. Paul-Hus	12058
Mr. Boissonnault	12058
Democratic Institutions	
Ms. Gaudreau	12058
Mr. LeBlanc	12058
Ms. Gaudreau	12058
Mr. Mendicino	12058
Housing	
Mr. Albas	12058
Mr. Boissonnault	12059
Mr. Albas	12059

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>