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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 9, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

NOTRE-DAME-DE-GRÂCE—WESTMOUNT

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation:

[*English*]

Mr. Marc Garneau, member for the electoral district of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, by resignation effective Wednesday, March 8, 2023.

Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed a warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

DEPARTMENTAL PLANS, 2023-24

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, on behalf of 90 departments and agencies, the departmental plans for 2023-24.

* * *

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans entitled “Science at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans”.

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

I thank all the members of the committee for their input on this particular study and final report, and also thank the table staff, clerk, analyst and translation team for making our job much easier than it could be.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that the Conservative Party of Canada has appended a supplemental report to this report from the standing committee, which is on science issues. The title of the supplemental report is “Crisis of Trust in DFO Science”.

For eight years, Liberal fisheries ministers have failed to deliver on their mandates. They have not ensured decisions were based on science, facts and evidence. It is now common practice for the minister and her department to announce decisions without citing scientific reasons. This has directly undermined the trust that Canadians had in the Liberal fishery ministers and in DFO.

Canadians cannot wait any longer for the government to start making decisions to uphold the public's interest, and this includes conservation. I sincerely hope the minister will take this report to heart and take the actions necessary to restore the science required to inform her decisions and those of her department.

[*Translation*]

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, entitled “Small and Medium Enterprises in Canada: Charting a Competitive Future”.

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

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology and table, in both official languages, our dissenting report.

Routine Proceedings

After eight years of the Liberal government, Canadians are struggling to cope with 40-year-high inflation and the rising cost of living. The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology heard from 65 witnesses on the challenges impacting small businesses. We heard about high levels of pandemic debt, labour challenges and the fragile economic period.

We heard that only half of small businesses are seeing sales return to prepandemic levels. While we agree with many of the recommendations in the report, it fails to address key measures the government could take right now to help small businesses immediately, namely the suspension of the automatic annual increase of excise duty rates, freezing of CPP and EI increases for SMEs and workers, and that the Government of Canada immediately cancel the federal carbon tax.

This committee failed to recognize the struggles small businesses are facing. It is a struggle they refer to as a death by a thousand cuts.

* * *

• (1010)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-321, an act to amend the Criminal Code (assaults against health care professionals and first responders).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am heartened to see that the Minister of Public Safety is in the House to hear the first reading of this—

The Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members that they cannot refer to the presence of other members in the House. I just thought I would mention that.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I am heartened that the Minister of Public Safety is paying attention.

I am truly honoured and humbled to rise in the House to introduce this bill.

I thank my hon. friend and colleague from Chilliwack—Hope for seconding the bill.

Simply put, my bill will amend the Criminal Code to make assaults against health care workers an aggravating factor during sentencing.

If we have learned anything over the last couple of years, it is that true heroes do not wear capes. They wear shoulder flashes and badges that state they are a nurse, a paramedic, a firefighter, an EMT, an ambulance attendant or a mental health care worker. These are the people who keep our communities healthy and safe. They put our health and safety above and before their own. They are the ones who provide us with comfort and care in our time of need. They are our shelter in a storm. They bandage our cuts, mend our wounds and hold our hands when we draw our last breaths.

Unfortunately, our frontline heroes are facing unprecedented and growing rates of violence. They are being assaulted, belittled and are forced to confront a growing epidemic of violence against them. The statistics are alarming. Simply put, their workplaces are not safe: 61% of nurses reported a serious problem with violence over a

recent 12-month period; two-thirds feared for their lives and considered leaving their jobs as a result; nearly half of all nurses, 46%, reported exposure to physical assault 11 or more times; and 84% of pre-hospital paramedic and firefighters globally experienced workplace violence. A recent internal survey by the Peel Region Paramedics Services found that 97.5% of medics experienced verbal abuse, 86% experienced intimidation and 80% were physically assaulted. We are failing them, and this must change.

This is the second time I have had the privilege of introducing this important and vital legislation. I have heard directly from so many frontline personnel about how the status quo is failing them. It is not just a kick when responding to a patient or a punch when changing an IV, but it is a systemic and constant threat of violence that has a ripple effect. It contributes to burnout, compassion fatigue, depression and PTSD.

We should be doing everything in our power to ensure health care professionals and first responders are able to perform their jobs safely and return home to their families. Everyone has the right to a safe, secure and respectful work environment. Violence should never be part of the job description.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR A SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM ACT

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-322, An Act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the seconder of my bill, my colleague and friend from Madawaska—Restigouche, who is here with me this morning.

This bill provides for the development of a national framework to establish a school food program to ensure that all children in Canada have access to healthy food, be it breakfast, lunch or healthy snacks. Every child deserves to start their day off on the right foot and end it in good health.

[*English*]

Too many families in Canada cannot reliably obtain enough nutritious food.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

According to a study on the health behaviours of school-aged children, nearly one in five children say they go to school or to bed hungry. What is more, data from both Canada and abroad show that school meal programs act as social equalizers.

[English]

Canada is one of the few member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development without a national school food program in place. It is time we changed that.

• (1015)

[Translation]

I hope all my colleagues in the House will support this bill, which will improve the lives of children and families across Canada.

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

* * *

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-323, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (mental health services).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise here in the House. I thank my friend and colleague from Peterborough—Kawartha for seconding this bill. It is very important.

We know that 25% of Canadians have unmet mental health needs, and we know that one in three Canadians will suffer with mental health issues throughout their lifetime.

We also know the Liberal government has promised, many times, \$4.5 billion in transfers under the Canada mental health transfer, but sadly none of it has materialized. Therefore, we on this side of the House want to do something to operationalize the ability for Canadians to receive mental health help, which they so desperately need.

We know that with this bill, by removing the GST and HST portions from psychotherapists and mental health counsellors, it would allow Canadians to then have approximately one in eight sessions for free, as we might say. That is important.

It is very important that we are seen to be doing things in the House, that we actually are doing things and not just seen to be doing them. That is one thing that we know is very important for Conservatives on this side of the House.

As we move through this bill, it is going to be very important for Canadians. I know there are thousands of psychotherapists and mental health counsellors out there who would realize the importance of this bill and would get behind it. It is important for the mental health of Canadians, who we know are suffering during this time, certainly through the pandemic and at the current time.

It is an absolute pleasure to bring this bill forward and to be out there helping Canadians.

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

* * *

SPECIAL ECONOMIC MEASURES ACT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-324, An Act to amend the Special Economic Measures Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Calgary Rocky Ridge for seconding this bill.

The bill that I am bringing forward is about changing the name of the Special Economic Measures Act to the Sergei Magnitsky global sanctions act. As many in the House know, in 2015, Senator Raynell Andreychuk and I introduced, in the Senate and in the House, the Sergei Magnitsky law to sanction gross human rights violators and corrupt foreign officials.

Since it was passed in the House in 2017, it has only been used on 70 individuals. The first name on the list is the President of Venezuela, President Maduro. It is about making sure that we go after those who are creating the greatest crimes against their own citizens and enriching themselves through that process.

What we need to do is make sure that the Liberal government is always naming people who have committed human rights violations and who are destabilizing peace and security in the world by using the name Sergei Magnitsky. This is about the standardization of our nomenclature of our Canadian sanctions regime.

We have to remember that Sergei Magnitsky, who was a Russian lawyer and accountant, fought against corruption in Russia. He was arrested, falsely accused, tortured and killed while in detention and while he was defending Bill Browder. A lot of us know Bill Browder. He was a business person in Russia at the time and has been living in London, England, since then. He wrote a number of books, two of which are *Red Notice* and *Freezing Order*. I encourage everyone to read those books to understand how corrupt the Russian regime is under Vladimir Putin.

The Special Economic Measures Act has been used roughly 1,300 times against Russian individuals and entities. The majority of the people we are sanctioning now, because of the war in Ukraine and crimes committed against humanity, are Russian kleptocrats and Vladimir Putin himself. Therefore, let us make sure that we are consistent with our allies when we use sanctions and we say that we are using the Sergei Magnitsky sanctions to honour the legacy of Sergei Magnitsky. Let us make sure that his name is synonymous with standing up for human rights, for the rule of law, for democracy and for standing against corruption.

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

Routine Proceedings

● (1020)

PETITIONS

BENZODIAZEPINES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to present a petition that relates to a significant public health concern for Canadians. The petition is from Canadians who are concerned about the over-prescription and dangers associated with benzodiazepines, or benzos. Petitioners note that this class of drugs carries significant risks associated with both use and withdrawal. A recent study revealed that over half of people prescribed benzos reported suicidal thoughts or attempts, about 45% reported that their use of benzos caused a loss of employment and over 85% reported problems related to social interaction or recreation.

Dr. Samuel Hickcox, physician lead for addictions medicine with the Nova Scotia Health Authority, has identified an epidemic of benzodiazepine use among youth. Benzo use is also associated with a greater risk of deadly falls for elderly people.

The overpromotion and over-prescription of benzos without proper assessment of risk or the informed consent of patients follows a similar pattern to what we saw with the overpromotion and over-prescription of opioid drugs leading to the opioid crisis. Reports such as those from the Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service indicate that in a majority of opioid-related deaths, multidrug toxicity was a key factor, and benzos were involved as well.

Petitioners say that Canada must learn the lessons of the opioid crisis and not allow a repeat of the same mistake with benzos. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to work with provincial and territorial health authorities and physicians' groups to ensure proper awareness among physicians and patients of the potential risks associated with benzodiazepines and to put in place clear guidelines limiting their use.

FIREARMS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on behalf of my constituents.

The first is in regard to firearms and Bill C-21. Petitioners are outraged that the government would rather waste valuable time and resources on confiscating lawfully obtained firearms from citizens who have done no wrong than actually addressing rampant gun violence being committed by criminals and gangs in communities across our country. Canada has a long-standing history of hunting. For centuries, both indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians have hunted for sustenance and sport.

Bill C-21 would put unfairly severe restrictions on law-abiding Canadian hunters, and it would put their traditions at risk. My constituents are calling on the government to repeal and withdraw Bill C-21.

HEALTH

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I would like to table today is with respect to health care. Petitioners believe that the access to and quality of health care services and facilities in British Columbia

have been in rapid and continuous decline for decades, with no end in sight. Patients are receiving rushed and/or subpar care because of a lack of facilities and shortages of doctors and specialists. We are also lacking funding and real solutions that would work to solve our health care crisis of overcrowded, understaffed and antiquated facilities. Premiers from across Canada have repeatedly asked the federal government to immediately increase the health transfer. Indeed it did so, but these petitioners do not believe it was enough.

JUSTICE

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of Canadians to present a petition to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. The Supreme Court decision *R. v. Bissonnette* struck down section 745.51 of the Criminal Code, which allowed parole ineligibility periods to be applied consecutively for mass murderers. As a result of this decision, some of Canada's most heinous mass murderers will have their parole ineligibility period reduced to only 25 years.

It is an unjust decision that puts the interests of some of Canada's worst criminals ahead of the rights of their victims. These parole hearings can retraumatize families over and over again. The government has tools at its disposal, and these Canadians are asking for the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to invoke the notwithstanding clause on this decision.

● (1025)

SENIORS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today from many of my constituents. People from outside my riding have also raised this issue. I am sure other members have heard the concerns of seniors who are single about the differential treatment they receive. The treatment of single seniors is much less advantageous in the tax system. They cannot claim income splitting. Obviously, they have no one with whom to split the income. It is not as though the cost of living for a single senior were half that of a couple; it is approximately two-thirds. On death, they are not able to have any RRSP, RRIF or other tax-free savings accounts go to a surviving partner; it is just taxed at a high level.

There are about six million seniors in Canada, and about one-third are single. These petitioners ask the Government of Canada to review the tax benefits in order to equalize them such that single seniors will receive the same tax benefit. This would be achieved by reducing the income to be taxed by 30%. If a senior is single and has a taxable income of \$100,000, that would be reduced to \$70,000 for fairness. It would also mean allowing single seniors to have their various forms of retirement savings transferred to the beneficiary of their choice after death.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Canadian citizens to call on the House of Commons to pass Bill C-288.

Many Canadians purchase costly Internet services only to realize that they do not actually receive the quality and speed they expected. Advertised theoretical speeds and performance metrics for Internet services do not always reflect the actual Internet quality delivered to consumers. Bill C-288 would address the concerns these citizens have, and I support this petition.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of Canadians who are aware that the Liberal Party was elected on a promise to revoke charitable status for pregnancy counselling centres, and it is deeply disturbing to them. They indicate that Canadians actually want more pregnancy counselling centres, not fewer, and they have concerns for young women who are, perhaps, expecting their very first child and are apprehensive about that or have an unexpected pregnancy. Often, there is concern over their own safety. The petitioners indicate that these women are often seeking services from pregnancy counselling centres that are not available through other organizations, such as Planned Parenthood.

They call on members of Parliament to do everything in their power to prevent, block, organize and vote against any effort by the government to revoke the charitable status of pregnancy centres.

JUSTICE

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada from Canadians across the nation who are very concerned about the Supreme Court ruling of *R. v Bissonette* that struck down section 745.51 of the Criminal Code, which allowed parole ineligibility periods to be applied consecutively to mass murderers. Now, some of the worst mass murderers in the nation will have their parole ineligibility period reduced, so that they can have parole after 25 years. The petitioners feel that this is unjust. It puts the interests of Canada's worst criminals ahead of the rights of victims and Canadians.

[Translation]

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of more than 1,000 of my constituents in Louis-Hébert. Along with Pascal-André Charlebois, Danielle Gagné, Joseph Levasseur and Jean Piché, four motivated people of goodwill who are involved in the Development and Peace organization, they came to hand deliver this petition to me at my office. Basically, they are calling on the House of Commons to adopt human rights and environmental due diligence legislation that would require Canada's multinational corporations to be proactive in preventing adverse human rights impacts and environmental damage around the world. This legislation would also establish a legal right for people who have been harmed to seek justice in Canadian courts, which would be an important step for the petitioners. It is an honour for me to be their voice here in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

• (1030)

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ONLINE STREAMING ACT

The House resumed from March 8 consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, and of the amendment.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the last time I stood up to speak to Bill C-11, I said that I hoped it would be the last time, so that we could finally get to the final stage of this very important bill that has been long awaited by our broadcasters, our cultural industries.

A lot of water has gone under the bridge since the first version of this bill came to us in November 2020. At that time it was introduced by the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who was then the minister of heritage. As I like to say rather often, the first version of this bill looked like a document that someone threw on the table saying, “Here are some blank pages, we need to fill them up”. I also said that it was like a paint-by-numbers that someone had forgotten to colour in. A lot of hard work has been done since then, though.

Government Orders

Now that we are at the point of responding to the government's response to the Senate amendments, I would actually like to take this opportunity to recognize the members of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for their hard work and engagement, no matter their opinion or point of view. We had quite a few differences of opinion. Early on, before something happened that triggered all kinds of obstructive manoeuvres by the Conservatives, we had some pretty good chemistry and collaboration around the table. I want to applaud the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, my fellow vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage at the time, for his work. Our collaboration was excellent. Even though our Conservative colleagues had different views on all kinds of factors and topics, we were able to discuss cultural issues and move things forward anyway. It is really impressive how constructive our work was despite our differences of opinion. I want to recognize that.

Then there was the removal of what was then the proposed section 4.1. This unleashed the wrath of our Conservative friends, who officially withdrew their support, in as much as they ever supported this bill. Let us just say that the collaborative spirit at the time eroded a bit.

That being said, a lot of hard work has gone into this bill. I want to acknowledge the efforts of government representatives, the NDP and my Bloc colleagues who also took part in the study of this bill. They all worked for artists, for our cultural industries, and for our broadcasters in a spirit of co-operation and solidarity.

I often hear people say that this bill does not really meet the expectations of artists. We know that it is extremely important for the cultural industry, but is it true that this bill does not meet the expectations and needs of artists?

I completely disagree with that statement. Yesterday we heard the speech by the member for Lethbridge, who suggested that the unions were the ones who would benefit from this reform to the Broadcasting Act and that the artists would not come out ahead at all. That is completely untrue. I even went to the trouble—

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the member for a moment. There seems to be a problem with the audio.

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: It may be because there is a telephone too close to the microphone.

The hon. member for Drummond.

● (1035)

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, as I was just saying, when I heard the comments made by my colleague from Lethbridge suggesting that the artists would not benefit from the reform of the Broadcasting Act, I made a few phone calls. I contacted a few of my artist friends to ensure that the bill would benefit the cultural associations and businesses and not just the broadcasters. They all told me that artists and creators have been awaiting the bill just as eagerly as cultural businesses have.

In all humility, I have to say that I am not the most artistic member of the Bloc caucus. The member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Caroline Desbiens, had a brilliant career in television and theatre.

There is also the extraordinary artist we call “La Marsouine”, the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix. She is a songwriter whose work is well known among the international Francophonie. There are people in the Bloc Québécois caucus who know what they are talking about.

We were inspired by these people and we fought for this bill on behalf of our colleagues who were themselves part of the arts scene. They can tell us how regulating the broadcasting sector benefits our artists.

Here we find ourselves at another stage of Bill C-11. This may be the last step; we hope it is. As we have seen, our Conservative colleagues are once again trying to kill this bill.

After finding some particularly creative ways to delay its study in committee, yesterday they even brought forward an amendment to completely gut the bill. All this after accusing the Bloc Québécois of failing to stand up for the demands of the Quebec National Assembly.

Let us talk about the demands of the Quebec National Assembly. I found it quite rich to hear the Conservatives say that the National Assembly opposed the passage of Bill C-11 as is when, in June 2022, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution that stated the following:

Whereas the federal government is under pressure from multiple sources to ensure social media is not subject to Bill C-11, while many companies commercially stream musical and audiovisual content;

THAT the National Assembly recall that Québec's cultural production and its uniqueness are strongly disadvantaged by the lack of regulation of online streaming platforms and social media;

THAT it affirm that it is essential that all online streaming platforms, including social media, be subject to federal and provincial laws, such as C-11, so that all digital broadcasters, whether Canadian or foreign, contribute to the creation, production, broadcasting, promotion and discoverability of Québec content;

I will spare members a reading of the full text of the resolution. It concludes as follows:

THAT, lastly, it urge the federal government to include social media governance in Bill C-11 to amend the Broadcasting Act.

Obviously, that does not align with the Conservative position.

I want to talk about Quebec's Minister of Culture and Communications, Mathieu Lacombe, who did a bunch of interviews recently, answering journalists' questions about the mandate he took on last fall. When asked, “Should streaming platforms be forced to highlight homegrown content?”, he instantly replied “Yes, this is about Quebec's distinct culture”. Speaking to various media outlets, Minister Lacombe emphasized the importance of discoverability for francophone content from Quebec, meaning how easy it should be to access homegrown content on major digital platforms like Netflix and Spotify, for example. That is what Minister Lacombe said. The National Assembly is hoping for a speedy passage of Bill C-11.

Government Orders

Certainly, Quebec had demands, legitimate demands, such as being consulted on regulations that will impact broadcasting in Quebec and Quebec culture. The unanimous National Assembly motion that set tongues wagging recently reads as follows:

THAT the National Assembly acknowledge that the federal government could soon pass Bill C-11, which aims to amend the Broadcasting Act;

THAT it underline that this bill does not recognize the application of Québec laws regarding the status of artists;

- (1040)

THAT it recognize that this bill, as it is currently written, grants Québec no rights of inspection on the directions that will be given to the CRTC, and that those directions will have a significant impact on Québec's cultural community;

THAT it remind the federal government that Québec's linguistic specificity must be respected;

THAT it highlight for the federal government that as a nation, it is up to Québec to define its cultural orientations;

THAT it demand that Québec be officially consulted on the directions that will be given to the CRTC regarding the bill and that, for this purpose, a formal mechanism be added to the bill;

THAT it affirm that Québec will continue to apply, in its areas of jurisdiction, the laws democratically passed by the National Assembly;

THAT, lastly, the National Assembly inform the federal government that Québec will use all the tools at its disposal to continue protecting its language, culture and identity.

The minister has the means and the tools needed to respond to these demands from Quebec. The real question is whether he will do the right thing through ministerial directives to the CRTC. We will see over the next few days, but I really hope he does. We in the Bloc Québécois will continue to properly and faithfully stand up for Quebec's demands to ensure the protection of its culture and broadcasting sector.

Recently, my colleagues and I have all been getting a rather impressive number of emails from people who are opposed to Bill C-11. Oddly enough, they are not well-crafted emails written by an organization representative like the ones we received in previous weeks and months. They are very short emails that are more focused on the issue of censorship and control over what Quebecers and Canadians will be able to watch online once Bill C-11 is passed.

I have no qualms about saying that this is blatant misinformation. However, I want to talk about it a little and explain to the millions of Quebecers and Canadians who are watching right now what these scare tactics are all about. The word "censorship" is one that has been coming up a lot. People are talking about a law that is going to censor Quebecers and Canadians and undermine their freedom of speech.

If we stop for a second and think about this, we realize that a person would have to be totally disingenuous or a complete conspiracy theorist to believe that, here in Canada, in our current system, a government could impose censorship with impunity like they do in totalitarian states. Feeding that fear is an act of bad faith and intellectual dishonesty. I am not sure that that is very healthy. It may be politically advantageous, but that is another issue.

People wrote to us with concerns about the control the government will have over what we can see online and what it wants to ban from being seen online.

Bill C-11 does not say that the government will be able to force people to binge *Les filles de Caleb* on the weekend. Bill C-11 seeks to have content produced by creators from here, to showcase stories from here, that our culture and the talent of our creators have their place on streaming platforms. No one is saying that people have the right to watch or not watch this or that. No one is preventing any content from being streamed.

I have lost track of how many times I have heard about the manipulation of algorithms. Web giants talked about it at committee meetings. It was like we were asking those companies for the recipe to build a nuclear bomb. It was a bit excessive. I do not think that anyone at the CRTC is going to tell Spotify to open its code so they can mess with it. That is just silly.

However, we need to give the CRTC the latitude and the tools it needs to ensure that the objectives are met.

- (1045)

Traditional radio used what were known as logger tapes. For younger folks, such as the member for Thérèse-De Blainville, these were reels that turned at very slow speed and recorded 24-7. It was easy because radio programming was a continuous broadcast on a single frequency. Obviously, the same mechanism cannot be used with online platforms. However, it is important that the regulator responsible for verifying that the objectives are being met actually has the means to verify that they are, in fact, being met. Algorithm manipulation should therefore not be permitted. It is essential to keep the door open to allow future verifications, if this is how verifications must be done.

Then, there is the age-old issue of infringement on freedom of expression. I do not understand how anyone could believe that we could pass laws that literally infringe on freedom of expression. For some, any attempt to address disinformation and ensure that people have access to reliable, verified information amounts to an infringement on freedom of expression. We are certainly going to hear about it at length when we debate Bill C-18, but freedom of expression will not be violated by Bill C-11. In any case, a law passed by the government that would infringe on freedom of expression obviously would not stand up in court and would be quashed very quickly.

I do not see a problem with imposing discoverability obligations, obligations to promote Quebec, Canadian, French-language and indigenous content, and to showcase the distinct nature of the Quebec nation and of Canada on the online platforms of digital giants. I came up with what I thought was a useful analogy. For those opposed to regulating GAFAM, the major online broadcasting companies, I will present the following analogy.

Government Orders

Imagine if, instead of offering cultural content, these businesses were serving food. Would there be any objection to these food service companies being subject to the same health regulations that traditional restaurants are? I doubt it. I doubt there would be any objection if the rules set by MAPAQ, Quebec's department of agriculture, fisheries and food, which apply to restaurants, were also applied to any business that serves food. Even though we talk about a free market on the Internet, there are limits that must be applied there as well. I thought that was an interesting analogy for illustrating the importance or relevance of regulating online businesses as well.

I do not want to spend all day debating this. We have debated it extensively, and we are at the stage where we want to come to an agreement as quickly as possible and return this bill to the Senate so that it ultimately gets approval. Then we can move on to the much-anticipated implementation stage of this bill, which is eagerly awaited by the entire cultural community and by broadcasters. However, I am going to move an amendment in closing. It is an amendment to the amendment moved yesterday by the member for Lethbridge.

My amendment to the amendment is as follows: that the amendment by the member for Lethbridge be amended by replacing all the words after the word "that"; the motion be amended by adding to the last paragraph "further calls on the government to establish a process for consultation with the Quebec government so that Quebec's specificity and the unique reality of the francophone market are adequately considered by the CRTC" and recalls that the federal Status of the Artist Act respects Quebec's jurisdiction and is consistent with Quebec legislation on the status of the artist.

• (1050)

The Deputy Speaker: When a subamendment is moved in the House, it must relate to the content of the amendment. The subamendment moved by the hon. member for Drummond introduces a new measure that goes beyond the scope of the amendment. Therefore, the subamendment is not in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the speech by the member opposite on this very important bill, as well as his comments on freedom of expression.

[*English*]

I would outline that I have found that the bill explicitly states that all user-created content on social media platforms and streaming services is excluded from the purview of the bill, which means that the experience of creating, posting and interacting with other user-generated content would not be touched at all by this bill, which I think is important.

The question I have for the member opposite, and this is what I hear from creators in my riding, is whether the contrary is absolutely the case, as in this bill would actually promote the liberty of expression by virtue of creating more financial resources to support Canadian creators who are promoting that Canadian content in Quebec or in other parts of the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. I think there are a lot of things that are going to have to be uncovered as the act is implemented. I also think this legislation will open the door to more creation, and that includes new types of creation as well. I think digital creators are going to benefit in the long run.

I want to tell the digital creators who have expressed concerns to us about Bill C-11 to wait and see what happens when the law is implemented. We will make adjustments if necessary. I am confident that it will be fine, but if they still have concerns after these changes to the Broadcasting Act are in place, we will always be there to represent them and make the necessary adjustments.

In fact, the Bloc got sunset clauses added to Bill C-11, which means that the act will be reviewed every five years. That will ensure that we do not spend another 30 years with problems building up, as was the case with the last version of the act. Every five years, we will be able to do a review and correct the things that need to be corrected.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which was once again excellent.

I think that we need to come back to a basic understanding of what Bill C-11, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act, is all about. For years, cable companies like Rogers, Videotron and Bell have contributed to Quebec and Canadian cultural production. Meanwhile, digital broadcasters, the web giants, have been paying absolutely nothing. It is as though they have been getting a tax holiday for decades.

Aside from protecting the French language, there are very few things that are more important to Quebec's identity and culture than our television and film production, our songs and music, which tell our stories and show who we are.

What does my colleague think of the Conservatives' stand on support for Quebec artists and creators when they oppose Bill C-11?

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his great question.

I will even add that, once Bill C-11 is passed and the reform of the Broadcasting Act is implemented, it will enable certain TV and radio broadcasters with very specific missions that serve under-represented communities to survive and blossom.

As for my colleague's question about the Conservatives' stand, yesterday, I was very perplexed by the speech given by one of my Conservative colleagues, in which she talked about how much she loves artists in general, but especially digital artists. I am very perplexed that the Conservatives moved an amendment to do away with the bill, rather than trying to improve it. I think that says it all.

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• (1055)

[English]

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have sat beside my colleague at the heritage committee a number of times over the years, and I very much appreciate the discussion on artists.

I remember one time in the committee when the minister was there asking how many of us have memberships to the national gallery and the National Arts Centre. It seemed like I was the only one in the room who did. When they say they will do what they say by actually practising what they believe, I am not so sure.

I have been in Quebec City, and I have purchased art in Quebec City and Île d'Orléans that is on my wall and in my office. In my home, I have several pieces of art that I acquired in Quebec.

Why does he believe that they need social media to sustain Quebec artists, when I find that there are a lot of people there, a lot of people who buy this this fantastic art? Why does he believe that they need social media to support it?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my speech just now, I commented on how much I appreciated the collaborative atmosphere at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. To be clear, I was speaking directly to my colleague from Bow River, who is a big fan of culture. He was right at home on the heritage committee. I really enjoyed our conversations.

Now, visual arts—painters and that whole side of things—are holding their own. However, in today's world, a world where things are opening up and borders are disappearing, the digital world, social media and major broadcasting platforms have to be accessible. It is much harder for a small francophone market in an anglophone sea to gain access. That is why Quebec artists, francophone artists, our very own creators, need that support in order to be seen, to get their names out there. They do not want to force themselves on the rest of the world. They just want a way to be visible on those platforms. That is what this is really about.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to add my voice to that of my colleague from Drummond and salute the millions of people watching us on the parliamentary channel. I hope you were reassured. I am not referring to the Speaker when I say “you”, but to the millions of spectators.

I thank my colleague for his brilliant speech. He did not lead Drummond to victory in its rivalry with Saint-Hyacinthe, but he is making it more competitive. It is an old rivalry between two Quebec towns.

I believe it is clear to everyone that we need to support our artists and compel digital giants to obey the law and the regulations. In other words, they cannot be sovereign powers. When you establish yourself somewhere, you must respect the customs and the laws of that place, and you must protect the culture.

The stumbling block is the issue of freedom of expression. Many people are concerned and there has been a great deal of misinformation. For a long time there has been what is known as alternative media. In recent years, alternative media or media supported by

such powers as China, Russia and others have made their presence known. Their content may be questionable, but there should be no issue with access to it and the right to consume it.

Can my colleague from Drummond, who has studied the issue in depth, reassure us that the bill will in no way restrict access to alternative news online? I believe that is what people are concerned about.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, Drummond's troops are at the Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot border as we speak. I believe this dispute will be resolved.

The concern he mentioned is well founded, given that we are seeing interference of all kinds from foreign powers nowadays. There are media outlets putting out dubious propaganda originating from various countries. The CRTC took measures to block some of them, but this is clearly not a tool that is being used willy-nilly. I think that so-called alternative content will continue to be accessible, provided it is not subversive. That is clear.

• (1100)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his very fine speech. I really enjoy working with him at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

The Conservatives told the House that Bill C-11 would allow the government to track individuals on their cellphones. They also compared the bill to what is being done in North Korea. The last time I checked, North Korea had concentration camps, a terrible famine caused by the government, and executions of political opponents. The Conservatives are making all these claims, but when I look at Bill C-11, I do not see any reference to those things.

I would like to ask my colleague from Drummond if he sees what normal people see in the bill, or if he sees the things that the Conservatives see.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for his question. I too really enjoy working with him on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

No, I do not see those things. As I said earlier, misinformation is being used to fearmonger regarding issues like freedom of expression and the freedom to surf the web without impediment or constraints. I think this has more to do with bad faith and fearmongering, to serve their own interests. I guess it pays off politically. I confess that I do not resort to spreading disinformation, or at least as little as possible. If I do, it is truly accidental, and I apologize in advance.

No, I do not at all see what the Conservatives see in this bill.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak on Bill C-11, which, of course, the NDP supports.

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Sending the bill back to the Senate seems quite logical to us. Indeed, the Senate's motion is just common sense. The vast majority of amendments proposed by the Senate have been accepted, while some unnecessary or unamenable amendments to Bill C-11 were rejected. It seems to me, then, that the Senate, in good faith, should look at what we are passing as parliamentarians and then ensure the passage of Bill C-11.

What is the point of Bill C-11? As everyone has said, this is a necessary bill. We saw our artists' incomes collapse, particularly prior to the pandemic, but even more so after it. We saw resources available to our artists collapse. At the same time, we saw the alarming increase in big tech profits. There needs to be a balance. As my colleagues from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and Drummond just said, big tech must contribute to Canadian culture.

We did not just agree to Bill C-11 blindly. The NDP made more amendments than any other party. We ensured freedom of speech and transparency. The amendments that the NDP moved in committee were adopted in the House of Commons. We ensured that indigenous peoples would receive their fair share.

When we look at the Broadcasting Act, it is very clear that indigenous peoples have been left out for years. Now they need to be at the very centre of this cultural renaissance. By making these amendments, the NDP has ensured that indigenous peoples will be able to benefit from the resources that large foreign tech companies will finally pour into Canadian culture and Canadian artists. Racialized Canadians also benefited from the NDP's amendments. All of these things were intended to improve Bill C-11.

We are happy that the Bill C-11 that we worked on in committee and that passed third reading in the House is a marked improvement over the bill that was introduced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Do we need Bill C-11? Yes, we do. We are all aware of what our artists have been going through for years, especially since the pandemic began. Therefore, it is important that we put policies in place to ensure that the people who benefited the most during the pandemic are at least forced to contribute a little bit.

• (1105)

[*English*]

We will be supporting Bill C-11, like so many of the artist groups across the country. As I mentioned, the NDP brought a wide range of amendments, more than any other party, and succeeded in getting them adopted at committee and in having those same amendments adopted by the House of Commons. That is our role.

People often call NDP members the worker bees of Parliament, and we are proud of that. We are there working hard to get legislation improved. The need for Bill C-11 is very clear when we see how artists and creators across the country have seen their income collapse, and there is no other way to put it. This has happened particularly since the pandemic, but it was a trend we were seeing prior to the pandemic as well.

The companies, such as the big technology companies and the foreign technology companies, the giants that have benefited over the course of the last few years, have not contributed to Canadian

culture in any way. We saw the need for Bill C-11. We saw the need to improve Bill C-11, and we brought forward amendments that were very important for indigenous peoples to finally be recognized in the Broadcasting Act in a way that artists and creators in indigenous communities could actually benefit from, as well as racialized Canadians. This included increasing the transparency of Bill C-11 and ensuring freedom of expression at all times.

Those are all the amendments the NDP brought forward and successfully passed at committee and in the House. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you are very excited about this. I can see it on your face, that the NDP amendments made a real difference in how you perceive the bill as well. This is why I am so surprised and disappointed by the reaction from the Conservative Party.

This should not be surprising. Although, Mr. Speaker, you look young, I know you are a student of history and will recall, looking back to the 1970s, that Conservative MPs at that time sided with the massive American music industry and music giants, which were basically starving Canadian artists. There were no Canadian content rules, encouragement or policies, so the American music giants dumped whatever they wanted into the Canadian market. The reason why parliamentarians at that time, despite the opposition of the Conservatives, adopted putting into place these Canadian content rules was to ensure that Canadians could thrive in our cultural industries. They were being shut out. What we did, as a nation, was ensure that the door was open to Canadian content creators. What happened, as members know, was an unbelievable revolution of Canadian content right around the world.

I could literally filibuster this House for hours naming all the artists who have benefited from those Canadian content regulations. We can name any artist, singer or band in Canada. We had put in place a requirement that the American music giants had to consider Canadian content and that Canadian stations, often owned abroad, had to broadcast Canadian content. As a result, we saw the incredible talent of Canadian artists and creators and the unbelievable ability of Canadians to contribute. This was something that was opposed by the Conservatives. Quite frankly, they were wrong at that time, and they are wrong again now.

Some of their comments have been absolutely over the top. Bill C-11 would ensure that our creators get some of the massive pie that big tech makes in Canada and sucks out of the country like a vacuum hose, often without paying taxes, as members well know. Now we are saying they have to put some money back into the country. Instead of saying that this makes sense, the Conservatives are on this wacky tangent that is unbelievable. We have had Conservative members in the House stand up and say that Bill C-11 would mean that people can actually be followed by the government on their cell phones. It is unbelievable. Obviously, they did not read Bill C-11, but they stood up and made comments about it.

Where I come from, New Westminster—Burnaby, people expect me to actually read and know the legislation before I stand up and speak to it, and I know it is the same where you come from, Mr. Speaker. That is my humble advice to the Conservative members who are speaking to the bill, which includes the leader of the Conservative Party, to read the legislation first before they speak to it.

We have also had Conservatives stand up and compare Bill C-11 to North Korea. What is happening in North Korea is devastating. A totalitarian government has imprisoned its population and subjected it to forced starvation—

• (1110)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, the member keeps using the term “wacky” in his speeches when referring to Conservative members of the House. I think it is unparliamentary language to refer to members using such a term, and I would ask the Chair to look into that and make a ruling on it. In my humble opinion, it is extraordinarily unparliamentary.

The Deputy Speaker: I will have a look at the Hansards to see what context it was used in. I thank you for that.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, I never refer to any member in the House in a derogatory way, but I do criticize their comments. They were wacky comments and Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves for making those comments in this place without having read the legislation. All members are honourable. I never criticize Conservatives personally, but their comments have been beyond belief. They are wacky and Conservatives should retract them if they do not want me to call their comments “wacky”. Making a connection between Bill C-11 and the despicable, totalitarian government in North Korea that is killing its citizens is unbelievably wacky and crazy. Conservatives, instead of standing up on points of order trying to shut down my freedom to criticize their comments, should be standing up and apologizing to this House for having made the comments in the first place.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Apologize and resign.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I very rarely agree with the member for Winnipeg North, and I do not in this case either.

This is what we have had from the Conservatives in this debate. Their comments have been crazy. It is absolutely inappropriate that

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they made those comments in this place. I am hoping that if the member for Carleton comes forward, unlike what he did around the Conservatives' meeting with that despicable neo-Nazi, for which he never apologized, he will apologize for the comments the Conservatives have made in this House about Bill C-11.

There has been one comment that is less wacky but is nonetheless disinformation. That is the issue around saying that somehow Bill C-11 would take this untrammelled Internet and big technology companies that in no way provide any sort of guidance around algorithms, so it is a “what you see is what you get” kind of thing, and that it would in some way have an impact on those algorithms. This misconception that somehow algorithms are innocent needs to be questioned.

The whole issue around Bill C-11 is about having in place a transparent process that makes sense and that actually provides support for creators and artists who have been struggling to make a living, in the same way we did 50 years ago with the Broadcasting Act. It was a revolutionary idea that Conservatives opposed at the time, but that time has subsequently proven to have been the best possible decision for our artists and for the expansion of Canadian culture throughout the world. Back in the 1970s, the idea was to say to the big, American-owned music giants that they would have to start including Canadian content. They would have to take these great Canadian artists they had been shoving out and bring them in.

We saw an unbelievable renaissance of Canadian culture, as members know, literally dozens and hundreds of Canadian artists showing Canada and the world how skilled they were. All of them had a start because Canadian parliamentarians, back in the 1970s, actually took that step to ensure that Canadians could speak to Canadians, that Canadian content could actually be shown to Canadians. American music giants said, “No, no, we've given you a few; that's all we're going to give you”, kind of like big tech today. However, Canadian parliamentarians at that time had the maturity and the understanding that we had to move forward as a country. They put in place those Canadian content rules to ensure that Canadians would not be hidden anymore by foreign companies. We saw the results: Canadian music, Canadian films, Canadian television. We have seen the incredible ability of Canadians to show the world how effective, how incredibly imaginative and how wonderful our Canadian artists, actors, writers, directors, producers and all Canadians are when it comes to culture.

• (1115)

We now fast-forward to Bill C-11, and big tech has been doing the same thing, for those who somehow doubt that they would see big tech in the same way. I know Conservatives love big tech, big banks and big tax evaders; they love them all. They gave \$160 billion to banks 15 years ago. The Harper regime just poured on the spigot for big banks. As we know from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, we lost \$30 billion a year to overseas tax havens. For the big tax evaders, the Harper regime just opened the door.

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To our chagrin, and to the chagrin of Canadians, unfortunately, the Liberals have not closed that open door, so we are still losing \$30 billion a year. That is a conservative figure from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. I may well be, and I believe it to be, much higher than that. If we take that, over the last decade, that is \$300 billion. Over the last 15 years, since the Harper regime opened the spigot to give big tax evaders money, that is half a trillion dollars. It is unbelievable.

It is no surprise that they side with big tech when big tech says it is innocent and all it wants is to do business. The Wall Street Journal looked into algorithms to see if what big tech says is true, that big tech is innocent and that what it does is in the best interest of the community. The Wall Street Journal, in this case, analyzed Google, but this applies to all the big tech companies. Its findings “undercut one of Google’s core defences against global regulators worried about how it wields its immense power—that the company doesn’t exert editorial control over what it shows users. Regulators’ areas of concern include anticompetitive practices, political bias and online misinformation.”

The algorithms are already biased. They are already ensuring that fewer Canadians can actually benefit from the incredible talent and imagination they have, in the same way that 50 years ago we saw, unfortunately, American music giants say they were going to give us a couple of artists and then Canadians could just go into our corner and be quiet, because they were going to dump foreign artists on the Canadian market and it is their market. Parliamentarians, at that time, said no, and parliamentarians were right to say no. As a result of that, we have a culture that has thrived, until big tech started doing the same thing.

What has big tech been doing? Where are its bias and emphasis? I think it is important to note what we have seen from the District of Columbia’s top attorney and what he brought forward in the United States to the National Association of Attorneys General. In talking about big tech, he said they “host, facilitate and accept money from hate organizations and individuals who literally are spewing their toxic hate”. I am quoting from Politico, about the Washington D.C. attorney general Karl Racine: “Among the changes he’d like to see are...detail[s] [about] how much money they make from hate speech and more information on what is taken down and when.”

This is an issue that has been raised by the Stop Hate for Profit campaign in the United States, the Anti-Defamation League, the Southern Poverty Law Center and a whole range of other very credible organizations. They have all spoken out against algorithms that exist now in big tech that bring people into what has been described by those organizations as a “pipeline of hate”. The algorithms exist already. The algorithms have a bias, as The Wall Street Journal pointed out.

What this bill does, Bill C-11, is actually ensure that Canadians now have a way to get into big tech’s boycott of much Canadian talent. Conservatives might say that some Canadians still succeed despite all of this.

• (1120)

The reality is that more Canadians will succeed because of Bill C-11, in the same way that, 50 years ago, we had a Parliament that

was imaginative enough to understand that we had to stand up against the American music giants, that we had to stand up and ensure Canadian content, and by standing up, we had more Canadians benefit. This is really my message to my Conservative colleagues: More Canadians will benefit, more artists will benefit and more Canadian creation will happen as a result, which means more jobs in Canada.

I hope Conservatives will stand with every other member of Parliament here who understands that Bill C-11 essentially opens the door to more Canadians. It would ensure that all that money being vacuumed out of this country right now by big tech will actually be put back in to create jobs here in Canada.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my NDP colleague for his intervention today, and I could not agree more with the vast majority of what he said.

I reflect on the committee’s work. At one point, a member from The Tragically Hip, Gord Sinclair, came forward to the committee. Obviously, I am very biased, being from Kingston, about The Tragically Hip, but he specifically pointed to the Canadian content rules that the band emerged within and how that allowed them to flourish and become, in my biased opinion, Canada’s band. Gord Sinclair specifically talked about how we need to ensure that Canadian content continues to have access to our markets so that bands like The Tragically Hip can continue to be found, become known and have the exposure they need, especially when we are competing against a market that is 10 times the size, that of the United States.

I wonder if the member can comment on how he sees future opportunities for new artists, given the incredible requirements and the words that Gord Sinclair spoke at committee.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, yes, The Tragically Hip comes from Kingston, and I congratulate the member on that. The Tragically Hip embraced the entire country. It is really one of Canada’s bands and one of Canada’s musical giants.

As the member points out, there are so many musical giants that came as a result of Canadians standing up for themselves, with Canadians actually saying and Canadian parliamentarians saying, “You’re not going to stop Canadian musicians from broadcasting in Canada any more. You’re not going to dump foreign content in Canada to block Canadians from emerging.”

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We see with big tech, as I mentioned earlier, that the algorithms are not innocent. They have had a tendency not to favour Canadians. In fact, it is disturbing, as I pointed out from other organizations, what they do tend to favour, and Canada needs to stand up for itself. Canadian parliamentarians need to stand up for Canadian musicians. The impact is boundless in terms of the possibilities for Canadian artists, musicians and film directors that we actually take pride in Canada and take pride in the jobs that come from Canadian culture.

• (1125)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have some questions around the structure that seems to be a problem in the bill. It is complicated, and perhaps the member can help me understand what the Liberals are thinking here.

The trouble with it is that the digital libraries, like those on Netflix, cannot easily meet a percentage content requirement, and most TV networks are doing that with their sports and news programming. However, they could be made to invest a portion of their revenue in Canadian content, which was a requirement that our 2021 Conservative platform endorsed. The CRTC's definition of Canadian content would also need to change, since it often depends more on copyright ownership, which streaming services keep, rather than using Canadian staff, writers, actors and such. Netflix's major francophone film was made and written in Quebec, but it does not qualify as CanCon.

The Liberals have claimed that Bill C-11 would result in up to a billion dollars per year in investment in Canadian culture, but they have not explained it. Maybe they have explained to the NDP, as their partners, without explaining to Conservatives how and what streaming services would have to pay, which is what Canadians would want to know. I see in here in section 9 a very clear delegation of penalties. Why are they not clear here in what they are suggesting they would do in regards to these providers?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question. Hopefully this is a climb-down from where the Conservatives have been on this bill over the last few months, as wacky things have been said in connection with Bill C-11, with wacky comments that were absolutely inappropriate. I am hoping this means the Conservatives will take a more measured approach to this.

The member threw out what I think she meant as a dig, saying that maybe we have been told something they have not been told. The reality is that through the extensive committee hearings, all members of Parliament heard explanations from ministerial officials, the CRTC and the many witnesses who intervened on behalf of Bill C-11. The vast majority of witnesses over the months of hearings were in favour of Bill C-11.

There is a legislative component but also a regulatory component, as the member points out. I agree with her on that, and the government has been clear there, although I would suggest it needs to be more clear on the regulations. However, the important thing is to pass the bill, and I hope this represents a change in the Conservatives' opinion of the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby on his speech.

In his speech, he talked a bit about certain artists. I was also listening to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands talk about the Tragically Hip. We could talk about Rush, Bryan Adams, the Montreal band The Box, from the 1980s and 1990s. Goodness, there are tons of many Canadian artists who broke through and went on to have great careers.

Thanks to these pioneers who benefited from measures that were implemented to promote and highlight Canadian content and francophone content, especially in Quebec, an entire industry developed, and now it is flourishing and reaching audiences around the world.

Without the discoverability measures that were put in place in the traditional media to allow Quebec and francophone content to grow, it simply would not exist. I know that my colleague talked briefly about this earlier in his speech, but I would like his thoughts on the potential that this new bill holds for all creators, including digital creators from Quebec and Canada.

• (1130)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, we know how prolific and vast Quebec culture is. Earlier I talked about Canadian artists in general who have made their mark around the world. Artists from Quebec have also made a name for themselves in Europe, Africa and everywhere else. The problem is that big American companies did not want to give Quebec that space. They were not interested in creating space for francophone artists.

These regulations made it impossible to keep hiding Quebec artists, so they now have a presence in Quebec and Canadian media. Many Quebec artists go to Vancouver and are extremely popular in British Columbia and around the world. That is because we know we have to stand up for our artists and give them exposure by asking big corporations to make space for them, whether they are from Quebec, B.C. or anywhere in Canada.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I had an exchange yesterday with the member for Lethbridge, and I am hoping the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby can help me straighten out a misconception held by other members in this place.

In talking about the artists and creators who want Bill C-11 passed, I referred to the writers of this country represented through a group called The Writers' Union of Canada. I am a member. It is not a collective bargaining union. Its name is the Writers' Union of Canada, but it represents creators in this country, many of whom earn \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year.

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The response from the hon. member for Lethbridge, and I am paraphrasing, was basically that of course they want it: They are a big union, they will make money and they are not creators. I would love to take this opportunity to straighten that out. These are creators and these are writers. The Canadian Media Producers Association is for people who write screenplays and who are out of work until we get things balanced for Canadian producers with Bill C-11.

The hon. member from the New Democratic Party clearly knows unions. Would he think The Writers' Union of Canada is kind of like the writers' version of the CAW?

Mr. Peter Julian: No, Mr. Speaker. I think what is clear here is the Conservatives are siding with the gatekeepers, and the gatekeepers for them are the CEOs of big tech. They love gatekeepers. Big bankers, they love them. Big tax-evader gatekeepers, they love them. Big tech gatekeepers, they love them. They love gatekeepers, and they are choosing the gatekeepers of big tech, the CEOs of big tech corporations, over Canadian writers, who have come together to try to get some of the resources that have been cruelly denied to them, particularly over the last few years.

Musicians' revenues have fallen by 79% over the course of the last three years. In Canadian production, there is a decrease of 12.4%. In digital media, royalties paid to Canadian creators are three times lower than those in more traditional media. One in four people working in the cultural sector lost their job. At the same time, Netflix increased its profits by 22%, and the Conservatives have sided with Netflix gatekeepers over the interests of Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this important legislation, legislation that has been in the works for a number of years. The government has continued to persist in getting it through the House as quickly as we can even in recognition of the opposition we have received from the Conservative Party.

This is excellent legislation. It clearly demonstrates what the Prime Minister, different ministers and the Liberal Party have been advocating for legislation in general. When we bring forward legislation, the government is very much open to ways in which it can possibly be improved. I and my colleague from Kingston often talk about how important it is to get legislation to the committee stage. Bill C-11 is a good example of that.

After a healthy debate at second reading, we were finally able to get the bill to the committee stage, and we saw a number of amendments. Unlike the former Stephen Harper regime, this is a government that actually listens to what other members have to say, whether they are members of the Conservatives, the NDP, Green or members of the Liberal caucus. At committee, where ideas surface, a number of amendments were proposed and actually adopted, all with the thought of making the legislation stronger for Canadians. We were able to get the bill through the committee, then third reading and it went over to the Senate.

I really want to emphasize that I appreciate the degree to which the Senate its invested time, resources and energy into ensuring the bill was thoroughly reviewed. That is in good part why it has come back: There were a number of amendments that the Senate believed would enhance the legislation and make it that much stronger.

The minister responsible for Bill C-11 and the fine civil servants working with that minister were able to look at the amendments and, in most part, accepted of them. We do have some concerns with some of the amendments and we will not support those. I would invite members of the Senate or others, if they have some specific questions in regard to those amendments, even amendments that we are not passing, to reach out to the minister's office. At the end of the day, we have not seen a modernization of this legislation since the 1990s.

The other day, we were speaking to other digital-type legislation with respect to cybersecurity and so forth, and I drew a comparison of the past and the present. It is long overdue. This is an initiative that the government has now been working on for a number of years.

There have been thorough consultations in every region of the country. The department has done a fantastic job of bringing forward the legislation, responding to the requests, thoughts and expressions from the many different stakeholders. As I pointed out, it listened to what opposition members were saying and it adopted amendments from opposition members.

We have before us a returned Bill C-11, on which the minister has given a very clear indication of where we are as a government with respect to wanting to see the legislation pass, and it is time. There is no need to see a filibuster of any sort. Members on all sides have had ample opportunity to express their thoughts.

● (1135)

I share many of the concerns that the NDP and the Bloc member have raised. I, too, have received emails that paint a very clear picture of misinformation. There is an incredible amount of misinformation out there, and sadly there are political entities in the House that are promoting and encouraging that misinformation.

I had an email earlier today from someone who said that a vote for Bill C-11 would take away his rights. Politicians in the chamber who are trying to support that information are being intellectually dishonest. Nowhere in the legislation would the rights of an individual be taken away. Nowhere in the legislation would freedoms of expression be limited or taken away.

A select group within the Conservatives are espousing false information with respect to the content of Bill C-11, or they are at least supporting the misinformation that is being spread in our communities. Bill C-11 is all about putting an industry on a level playing field with another industry that has been there for many years. It in essence is saying that in the digital world, the big companies such as Crave, YouTube, Spotify and Netflix need to be put on the same playing field as CBC, CTV and others.

Government Orders

The CRTC plays a critical role in who we are as a nation and amplifies that. For many years, we have seen the CRTC and its decisions and actions that it has taken on behalf of governments of all political stripes enhance our heritage from coast to coast to coast. I think the promotions and the advancement of so many careers in the arts are a direct result of the promotion of Canadian content.

My colleague just made reference to a very famous band, and I am not really up on music, The Tragically Hip.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I will share some of those CDs with you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, he said he will share some of their music with me, and no doubt I will enjoy them.

Whether it is music or film, there are incredible talents in every region of our country. When I think of the Prairies and out west, I think of *Corner Gas*. We get a high sense of pride that it is a production that takes place in the province of Saskatchewan. *North of 60* took place both in Alberta and Manitoba. We can even go way back to something like *The Beachcombers*. All of those, in good part, had a type of advocacy because of Canadian content requirements.

When I think of today, I think of things like *Kim's Convenience*. A couple of years ago, *Schitt's Creek* received a number of Emmy Awards. I had no idea about it until it received all those awards. It is an incredible comedy.

● (1140)

The advancements of some of the actors, actresses and musicians who we have seen could be rooted back to Canadian content policies and the promotion of Canadian heritage. We underestimate that industry. It is a substantial industry in virtually every jurisdiction and all the different regions of Canada. It provides jobs and amazing opportunities for talent.

We can look at the city of Winnipeg and how it has benefited from the type of talent found there. We can go to many festivals, especially during the summertime but not only limited to the summertime. One I often make reference to is Folklorama. If members want to get a sense of the potential of that industry, they should tour some of the facilities and the pavilions of Folklorama. They will witness first-hand amateurs singing, performing all forms of dance and sharing amazing talents with thousands of people. Some of those who actually participate in Folklorama go on to participate at Rainbow Stage or other theatre-type operations.

There are so many opportunities if we think of the bigger, holistic picture of it. When there is a young person getting involved, for example, in a showpiece at a pavilion, it takes a great deal of time and energy throughout the year for that young person. It instills skill sets, discipline and so much more. The benefit of seeing that sort of growth at the ground level and how that ground level works its way to the top is important.

We should be supporting that, whether it is in Winnipeg, Montreal or in our smaller communities throughout the country. One of the ways we could do that is by supporting Bill C-11, legislation that would modernize our broadcasting. It would ensure that Canadian content is not only important to CBC but that it is important in the digital world also.

That is why we will find every member of Liberal caucus supporting Bill C-11 and voting for it. We recognize and value the industry, the jobs that it creates and the enhancement of our heritage to our country. It helps identify who we are as a nation. We get a sense of pride, much like we do when an athlete wins a gold medal for Canada, when we see an actor in a major movie production or in a sitcom. We can relate to that because it is in our community.

● (1145)

These are some of the reasons why Bill C-11 should be universally supported on all sides of the House. Sadly, that is not the case.

Briefly, the bill would bring online streaming services under the jurisdiction of the Broadcasting Act. It would require online streaming services that serve Canadian markets to contribute to the production of Canadian content and ensure online broadcasters showcase more Canadian content. In essence, it modernizes the outdated legislation.

What would the bill not do? I say this for my Conservative friends. The bill would not impose regulations on the content that everyday Canadians post on social media. It would not impose regulations on Canadian digital content creators, influencers or users. It would not censor content or mandate specific algorithms on streaming services or social media platforms. It would not limit Canadians' freedom of expression in any way, shape or form. This is so upsetting, and I made reference to it at the beginning.

What is interesting in the comments thus far is that the Bloc members, the NDP members and now myself have talked about the misinformation. It is one thing when, through the Internet and other forms of media, misinformation is being espoused and commented on.

● (1150)

However, as legislators, as leaders within our community, we have a responsibility to be more transparent and honest with Canadians in regard to legislation we are passing.

I find it despicable that there are those who are actually assisting in validating misinformation. To try to give the false impression that this legislation would be taking away the rights of people in Canada is just wrong.

To try to say that this would somehow be telling Canadians what it is that they can and cannot watch through the Internet, through streaming, is just wrong. To try to tell Canadians that this has something to do with their freedoms and rights is wrong.

Any member who has had the opportunity to participate and engage, whether by listening or standing up and speaking on the legislation, knows that. All political parties know that.

Government Orders

Those who are going out promoting and encouraging that misinformation, I believe, as the NDP House leader has said, should really reflect on what it is that they are doing and give serious consideration to apologizing for spreading such false information. There is a segment in society that is believing it, unfortunately.

As I have clearly indicated in my comments, I like to think that, at the end of the day, this legislation is all about ensuring a level playing field. It is all about an industry that is so critically important to Canada. It helps identify our identity, who we are. It ensures opportunities for people, for Canadians, into the future, in an area in which we know Canadians can excel. Our arts community is a community we need to support, as we have in the past. This is a continuation. It is a modernization of the legislation. That is what it is.

I would ask for all members not only to support it but also to do what they can in terms of dispelling the misinformation that is out in our communities.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about the misinformation that is being put out, and most of it is being put out by the members of the Liberal government. If we look to the actual facts of the matter, the fact of Bill C-11 is that it says that the Governor in Council, that is, the cabinet ministers, would determine the criteria by which the CRTC would decide who would be impacted by the legislation, so that it is the government telling the CRTC who would be under it. It has not revealed that information, although we have asked for it for a year.

The Senate has now brought amendments that would specifically exclude individual content. It would say that if one were not commercially involved, if one did not have a unique identifier, that one would not be subject to this legislation. The Liberal government, again, has refused to accept it.

Could the member tell me how this legislation is different from what happens in communist countries, where the government determines content and who is going to be able to see it?

• (1155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member is one of a number of Conservatives who continue to do a disservice to the people of Canada by trying to give some false impression. In no way whatsoever would this prevent or limit an individual from being able to upload what they are doing with their cat or dog, or whatever else they want to be able to upload.

This legislation would not be not infringing upon their freedoms or their rights. They would be able to watch what they would like to watch.

The Conservative Party needs to have more integrity on the honesty file, and I would suggest to us that, at the end of the day, what it is doing is spreading misinformation, which is creating a great deal of anxiety among a number of people. This cannot be justified.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I am happy to agree with him once again. It does not happen very often.

Bill C-11 is fundamental. This bill showcases and supports the cultural sector. One thing that must be stressed and which members of the House need to understand is that the cultural sector is a sector that needs to be supported and promoted.

We are not saying that we will provide for them. We are saying that we will help them become more visible so they can have more exposure, have higher incomes and become better known around the world. That is important.

I was listening to the discussion in the House. There is talk of misinformation. As MPs, we can have differences of opinion, but if there is anything that we have the duty not to do, it is repeating falsehoods.

I would like my colleague from Winnipeg North to explain to us how repeating something that is not true several times does not make it more true the next day.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is a fair comment. If one is a Conservative MP and continually says that it is an infringement on one's rights or that the government is trying to limit what one can watch on the Internet, one can repeat it a thousand times, as often as one likes. The reality is that this is not what the legislation says.

The Conservatives might want to use their rhetoric to raise money, to give false impressions or to try to be a disruptive and destructive force here on the floor of the House of Commons. The bottom line is that the legislation would not do what it is that the Conservatives have been espousing to Canadians.

In standing up, what I really want to emphasize is that the member recognizes, and the Bloc is good at recognizing the culture and the arts in the province of Quebec, which I know the Minister of Heritage often talks about, and the importance of the French language, being where it is in North America.

This is good legislation that would enhance the importance of Canada's languages.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a border MP, I am really concerned about the fact that if we do not stand up for Canadian artists, producers and culture I do not know who will.

During the debate, I could not help but think about the story of Freddie Freeman, with the World Baseball Classic taking place right now. He is a Canadian born in California, whose Canadian mother, Rosemary, passed away from melanoma when he was 10. He has chosen to play for Team Canada. He is a six-time all-star, a three-time Silver Slugger Award winner, as well as MVP winner and Gold Glove Award winner. This just brings up for me the choices we need to make in trying to fix this bill.

What does it say if we do not, in Parliament, stand up for our artists and our culture at this point when others are doing that?

Government Orders

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we recognize is that the Broadcasting Act, which was brought in many years ago, has done many wonders in advancing Canadian content. I would ultimately argue that many of the artists we have today owe their success to the government's role in ensuring a higher level of Canadian content.

Bill C-11 would update and modernize the act, whether that is the traditional CTV or the CBC being on a level playing field with the digital world, which we have seen explode over the last 20 years.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: I wish the CBC were on an even playing field.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Conservative Party will get his chance to speak. I know they are not a big fan of CBC, and I can appreciate that, but there are many artists today who are there and are as influential as they are today because of CBC. That is just another point on which I and the leader of the Conservative Party will disagree.

However, maybe he can apologize for the members who are trying to give the false impression that rights of Canadians would be taken away by this bill or that their freedom to watch what they want on the Internet would be taken away. It would be nice. I understand he might be up next to speak, and if he is, maybe he could apologize to Canadians for making those types of statements.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope my colleague does not hold his breath on that, because he will probably be let down. He brings up a really interesting point, though, and it is about the Conservative misinformation about this issue. It goes beyond being just about providing misinformation; it also has a lot to do with money and Conservative fundraising. The reality is that I tweeted something recently about this issue and my tweet ended up in a Conservative fundraising email. In that same email—

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Thank you.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, this is the best part. The Leader of the Opposition just said “thank you”, so we know they are doing this just for fundraising purposes. The email goes on to talk about censorship. It talks about the rights of freedom of expression being infringed upon. This is what they said. They know they are not telling the truth. That is a quote from the email. They then, of course, cap off the email by asking to help them kill the bill, and there is a big “donate now” button.

I am wondering if the parliamentary secretary can weigh in on why the Conservatives stand to gain, and what they stand to gain, from all of this misinformation they are spreading.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think that the member has a great deal of credibility on this particular issue, given his comments. I would suggest there is no doubt, at least in my mind and the minds of many, that one of the primary motivations for the Conservatives spreading these untruths is because they use it as a fundraising tool. By feeding this group of individuals' untruths, they are hoping to be able to generate more funds for the Conservative cause.

I would implore and suggest to the Conservative members, in particular the leader of the Conservative Party, to realize there is a great deal of harm being caused because of the Conservative Party's continuing to reinforce false information. It is wrong. This legislation would not take away freedoms and rights as the Conservative Party would have one believe.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once upon a time there was a group of candle makers who had concerns about the competition they were facing. They said, “We are suffering from the unfair competition of a foreign rival who apparently works under conditions so far superior to our own for the production of light that he is flooding the domestic market with it at an incredibly low price.”

Who was that competitor? It was the sun. The sun was firing beams right through the windows of homes. It was providing competition to the candle makers. Their solution was to call for a law that would force people to close “all windows, dormers, skylights, inside and outside shutters, curtains, casements, bull's-eyes, dead-lights, and blinds—in short, all openings, holes, chinks, and fissures through which the light of the sun is wont to enter houses”.

The candle makers' solution to too much competition was to ban windows to keep the sun out and force people to buy their products. That is exactly what we are getting from the large corporations that want more profit and less competition.

Since the inception of the Internet, the big companies that once dominated the news, the arts and other cultural industries have had to become more competitive because other people have been able to enter their field. Previously, this was impossible. An individual in a basement could not produce music and make it available to listeners, because it had to pass through a government-regulated broadcasting system. Now, competition is wide open and people can produce their own products without having to go through big companies like Bell, Corus, Rogers or CBC/Radio-Canada, which dominated the market when it was regulated by the CRTC.

We are now seeing an amazing reduction in the costs associated with culture and news. Usually, when industries say they are experiencing problems, it is because costs have increased, yet today, costs have decreased significantly, by almost 100%. It used to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to produce an ad for a movie. Now, a teenager with a small computer can produce the same movie ad at no cost.

Government Orders

This also applies to the news. We are hearing that the media is in trouble, but why is that? Production costs have dropped dramatically. Distribution costs are almost zero because there is no need for printing or for all the infrastructure required to physically distribute a publication. It is now automatic thanks to the Internet. The cost of marketing has plummeted because consumers can get the news or learn about a cultural product automatically, without any advertising, just by going on the Internet.

● (1205)

With costs having come down so much, news agencies should be celebrating, so why are they so angry at the status quo? It is not because their costs have gone up. It is because competition has increased.

The windows are open, and now sunlight is pouring into the houses. Fresh air can come in. It is not just a small group of privileged gatekeepers who get to control what Canadians and others see and hear. The people can decide for themselves.

We are hearing that the other parties are against the web giants. Bill C-11 does nothing about the web giants. Once this bill passes, all cultural products will still be offered by the web giants. They will not be affected. It is simply the type of products offered on those same platforms that will be affected.

Instead of algorithms giving the audience what they want to see, that audience will see what the government wants them to see. This is not about taking profits away from the web giants. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and the other platforms will continue to dominate. Instead, the rules by which these platforms operate will simply change to favour content chosen by the government.

Web giants are totally fine with that. They are happy. Now the big broadcasting and culture corporations will join them and reap the benefits. They will use their political weight to get preferential treatment in government-manipulated algorithms.

If we give that power to a government instead of leaving it in the hands of consumers, where it is now, what are the consequences of that? Those with political power will have more say over cultural and news content. Why? According to Bill C-11, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, a state body, will decide how the algorithms suggest content to Canadians.

Accordingly, people who influence this government agency will have a greater say over their Internet presence. Who are these people? The rich, obviously, the very rich, because poor people cannot hire lobbyists.

To be discovered on the Internet today, creators need to produce content that people want to see. Then, when people see it, the algorithm will recommend it to others. With Bill C-11, however, in order to get discovered, creators will need to have a lobbyist who can go to the CRTC to convince it to promote their content. A 14-year-old girl who plays guitar in her basement and makes fantastic music will not get discovered, because she does not have a lobbyist. She will not be able to get her content on every phone and computer in Canada because she has no influence over the CRTC. Her content,

by law, is not Canadian, because “Canadian” means being registered with interest groups recognized as Canadian productions.

Bill C-11 does not define Canadian content. The content produced by the girl playing the guitar in her basement will not be considered Canadian content. In contrast, CBC content that is copied and pasted from a CNN story in Washington focused exclusively on American politics and produced in the United States will be considered Canadian content, because the CBC, a large corporation, produced it.

● (1210)

Those with political power will have a greater voice on the Internet, which will obviously reduce diversity. The Internet has given us access to enormous diversity. Before the Internet, if artists wanted to sell their music, they had to have space in a store. That space was limited, and it was only accessible to the most popular groups in North America. Now physical space is no longer necessary, since the Internet is not a physical place. On the Internet, there is unlimited room for everyone.

Let us imagine we feel like listening to something unique, like klezmer, which is Jewish jazz. In any given city, there may be only about a hundred people who like klezmer. Before the Internet, this type of music was not popular enough to be available locally. Now it is available online.

What the government is proposing is a system in which public servants will determine what is Canadian enough, and, once again, that will be what comes out of large corporations that will have had the opportunity to lobby the government. That will reduce the diversity of voices and concentrate power among oligopolies. If members do not believe me when I say that lobbyists will take control, I will prove it.

When a government grows, more and more money is spent on lobbying. There is one thing I agree on with the New Democrats: businesses and corporations like to make money. When the government controls the economy, corporations invest in their ability to influence the government so they can benefit. I will give members a few figures.

Since this government took power, government spending has risen by 55%. That is a huge increase. What does this mean in terms of lobbying? There has been an increase of over 100% in lobbying-related communications.

According to a study done by a U.S. firm, the more the government in Washington spends, the more corporations spend on lobbying. If the money and economic power lie with the government, lobbyists are a good return on investment.

When companies realize that earning money on the Internet depends on CRTC support, there will be a huge increase in the number of lobbyists paid hundreds of dollars an hour to control what Canadians can watch and listen to. Politicians will set the criteria for what Canadians can watch and listen to. Decisions will be based on a consensus within the government. Instead of Canadians deciding what to watch and what to say, politicians and public servants will manipulate the algorithms to their advantage.

It is incredible that the Bloc Québécois supports giving this power to a federal agency in Ottawa. It is a woke agency, here in Ottawa, that will determine what Quebecers can watch and listen to. The Bloc Québécois is not a pro-independence party but a pro-dependence party. It is not a sovereigntist party, it is a centralist party.

We, the Conservatives, will never force Quebecers to listen to the words of a federal government in Ottawa or to submit to its dictates. We will give Quebecers the freedom to have their own voice. When I am prime minister, Quebecers will be masters in their own house by making their own cultural choices. We will never force Quebecers to listen to a woke bureaucracy in Ottawa, which knows nothing about Quebec culture or Quebecers.

● (1215)

We believe that freedom should be paramount. I will stand for the position of prime minister to ensure that Canada becomes the freest country in the world by giving back to Canadians, including artists, control over their lives. There can be no freedom without freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Our Conservative government will scrap this bill so that Canadians can choose their own path, guaranteeing that our system will be one of the freest in the world, instead of trying to replicate the Chinese dictatorship that the Prime Minister has said he admires so much.

We will continue to fight to prevent this bill from passing. The Conservative government will repeal it as soon as possible. The Conservative Party is the only party in the House of Commons to defend Canadians' freedoms and their culture by making it possible for them to create it. It will be the Conservative Party that will restore common sense in Canada.

● (1220)

[*English*]

Once upon a time there was a group of candle-makers who talked about a grave threat to their industry. They said we were "suffering from the ruinous competition of a rival who apparently works under conditions so far superior to our own for the production of light that he is flooding the domestic market with it at an incredibly low price", to quote Frederic Bastiat.

Who was that competitor? It was the sun. The sun was firing beams right through the windows of homes in French villages across the countryside, which was providing daytime competition to the candle-makers, who therefore did not have as much in profit as they would have otherwise had absent this competition. Their solution was to ban windows to keep the light out. That way they could sell more candles for use throughout the day with less competition coming in from the outside world.

Government Orders

That is exactly what we are getting from the large broadcasting and entertainment corporations, the oligopoly that dominated the voice of Canadians for far too long until the windows opened and we got the Internet. The Internet opened up competition. This is ironic because we hear today that the news media is in trouble. They are hemorrhaging jobs and opportunities. They say that the cultural sector is suffering. What do they say is the cause of the suffering? It is that the cost of marketing, production and distribution has plummeted. Colleagues heard that right. Because costs have gone down, the industry is suddenly suffering. Actually, it is not suffering.

News media has never been more vibrant and more alive than it is today, but it is not the establishment, oligopolistic media that dominates the voices around Parliament Hill. Those voices are suffering. They are losing audiences because Canadians have a choice, for a change. For the longest time, the oligopoly in this country, which is controlled by Bell, Rogers, Shaw, now Corus, and a few other powerful corporate players, was able to use its might with the regulator to ensure its dominance across the air waves and into the homes of Canadians. It was able to use a large moat. That is to say that the difficulty of getting into the market comes from the fact that they used to have to produce paper and ink to send their product into homes, but now all of those things have been knocked down. The windows have been opened.

People can enter the marketplace with very few barriers, so those powerful oligopolistic corporations are trying to reinstate the barriers. In other words, they are trying to block the windows to keep the light and the fresh air out so they can dominate the candle-making or, in their case, the news and culture-making business. They do not want more Canadian culture. What they want is more control over Canadian culture.

On one side are the corporations that want economic control over news and culture, and on the other side, the government wants political control over news and culture. Therefore, we have this alliance of big government and big business ganging up on the customer, forcing, through this legislation, the customer to consume content they would not otherwise be interested in.

Right now, the big tech platforms' interest is very simple. They are interested in making money. Let us be blunt about it. How do they do that? They feed people the content they want to see. That keeps people on the platform longer. When this bill passes, those platforms will still be interested in making money. They will make just as much money because nothing this bill does would shut down Netflix, YouTube, Facebook or anything else. They will still be the dominant platforms.

Government Orders

What would change is that instead of having algorithms that give people things they want to see, algorithms would give people things the government wants them to see. The government would operate through the CRTC, a large, woke government agency that would then manipulate algorithms to promote so-called Canadian content.

What is Canadian content? The government cannot tell us. It suggests, for example, that Canadian content is a CBC article that is plagiarized in Washington about American politics. That would be an American-made story about American politics, but it would be Canadian content because it would be provided by the state broadcaster in Canada.

A single mother who produces a video about raising funds for her kid's local sports team would not be Canadian content because it would not be on the approved list established by the CRTC. In other words, a local Canadian story by a Canadian about local Canadians would not be considered Canadian content because the mother is not a news agency or registered with any of these so-called cultural bodies. Therefore, she will be pushed down the algorithm and given a smaller voice while more powerful corporate voices gain predominance.

We know that this is public choice theory. Those with money turn that money into influence, which they turn into more money, more influence, and so on and so forth. If people do not believe me, look at the amount that companies are spending on lobbying right now. Government spending is up 55% since the government took office. That is correlated to a nearly 100% increase in the number of paid lobbying interactions that have happened here in Ottawa as recorded by the lobbyist registry.

A company out of the United States did a similar study in Washington showing that the bigger the government spending there, the more corporations spend on lobbying the U.S. capital; there is nearly a perfect correlation between those two things. Why is this the case? It is because if we have a bigger and more powerful government in the economy, then those seeking profit will invest in influencing that government in order to turn that influence into more money. That is exactly what would happen here.

A small group of broadcasting corporations would have all the influence, as they had in the writing of this bill. They would be in the CRTC office every day asking for the algorithm to be tweaked a little bit more so they can end up in the newsfeeds or YouTube streams of Canadians more than their competitors do. It would be a race for political power rather than a race for better cultural products.

In other words, instead of pleasing the audience, they would get ahead by pleasing politicians and bureaucrats. That is what happens. The privileged elite would have more control and a greater voice, and the people on the ground would have less control.

Ironically, this would run against everything that the parties across the way claim they want. They claim they are for diversity. "Diversity is our strength," says the Prime Minister. However, by giving a small oligopoly control over what Canadians see on the Internet, the bill would obviously mean less diversity because it would be only the programming that they favour.

Do members think the ethnocultural publications would get the same deal from the CRTC that the CBC, Bell Canada, Rogers and other telecommunications behemoths would get? Of course they would not. The small Punjabi paper in Surrey does not have a lobbyist in Ottawa that can work on the CRTC.

Those in a Jewish community may like klezmer, which is wonderful Jewish jazz music. Specialty cultural products like that might not have a big enough audience to generate political power at the CRTC. Under the current situation, at least through the tap of their thumb, they can get the music they want. However, that music would not be considered Canadian enough by the corporations who would generate the algorithm with the CRTC, and therefore, those more diverse and unique voices would be shut out and deprived of online oxygen. Thus, there would be less diversity.

● (1225)

They claim they want to take power away from big corporations, and yet this bill would do precisely the opposite. It would concentrate power in the hands of a small number of broadcasting and telecommunications behemoths: the ones who have been lobbying so hard for so long to get this bill passed.

They claim that they want more artistic expression, and yet the artistic expression of people who are not part of the established cultural scene would be snuffed out altogether. Even great Canadian artists who have never been associated with conservatism have spoken up against this bill. Let us look at the words of Margaret Atwood, who actually said that this bill represents "creeping totalitarianism". That is exactly what it is.

When the government decides what the people can see and say, freedom of expression will not have long to live in this country. In this party, we believe in subsection 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms: "2(b), or not 2(b)? That is the question", and Conservatives have an answer. We will repeal this antispeech censorship law and restore freedom of expression on the Internet right across Canada.

Inherent in this bill is the same old elitist mentality of the ruling class, that they know better: If Canadians are left to their own devices, they will consume the wrong kind of culture. Our Liberal friends would tell us that Canadians are just not sophisticated enough to make their own decisions about what to see and hear. There is a smarter class of more cultured, cosmopolitan types who understand culture in a way that the 37 million Canadians who do the work of the nation do not; therefore, we should have this cultural elite embedded in our bureaucracy, interlinked with our large corporations who would decide on their behalf. The assumption is that somehow these elites are more virtuous. What is more virtuous about them? What makes them so special? If they are the ones watching over the system of culture, who watches the watchmen? Who controls the controllers? These rules are made for the rulers and not for the common people. Canadian culture comes from the bottom up, not the top down.

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To the suggestion that Canadians are not sophisticated or cultured enough to decide for themselves, what evidence is there that the groups of politicians in this chamber, bureaucrats over at the CRTC or lobbyists in the broadcasting corporations who would make the rules under this law are more sophisticated, culturally advanced and smarter?

I, for one, believe that if we want smarts and sophistication, we should look to the mechanic who can take apart and put back together an engine block; the electrician whose meticulous fingers send lightning through copper wires to illuminate our homes; or the farmer who is able to read the weather, soil and commodity prices to bring food from his field to our fork. Their minds are ever more advanced and capable of deciding what is and what is not good culture.

We in this House of Commons are servants and not masters. It is not our role to dictate from above what the people think, see and hear, but the contrary. They have the org chart upside-down. They think it is Prime Minister, then House of Commons and then the people on the bottom. Actually, it is the other way around. It is the people; then the members in this House; and then the Prime Minister, which means “first servant”. That is how our system was designed. Therefore, Conservatives will always stand for the common sense of the common people and united for our common home. Let us bring it home: their home, my home, our home. Let us bring home freedom of speech for all Canadians.

• (1230)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find the great depth and knowledge of the Leader of the Opposition's understanding of how algorithms work very interesting. I applaud him on that. I also find it very perplexing that he does not understand how a tag got into a YouTube video that affected those algorithms; nonetheless, I will not go down that road.

My question is specifically about the Conservative approach to this bill. What we do know is that Conservatives, in the committee process, put forward some amendments that would allow the CRTC to do censoring. Those amendments were not passed. Could the Leader of the Opposition comment on whether it is all forms of censoring or just the forms of censoring that Conservatives are against?

I say this notwithstanding the fact that I personally do not believe that this bill has any censoring in it from the outset.

• (1235)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we oppose all the censorship in the bill, 100% of it. I will repeal all of it. I will let the people decide what they want to see and say on the Internet.

One example is that the government claimed the bill would not affect “user-generated content”, or in plain language, the stuff that everyday people post on their Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other forms of content made by everybody we know in our neighbourhoods across this country. The Liberals said that it would not affect any of that and even put in an amendment originally in the bill that said worry not, user-generated content would be excluded. Then, in

the 11th hour, they reversed their decision because we know that is what they wanted all along.

This was never about protecting Canadian content. They admit that they do not even know what Canadian content is. The bill is about controlling the people. That is what the government is about, and that is why we will defeat the government and repeal the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, to build on the example given by the leader of the official opposition, it is true we cannot extinguish the sun, but we can still make safety glasses, parasols and sunscreen if the sun becomes unbearable. At least that was true the last time I checked.

The leader of the opposition gave a speech vaunting libertarianism in its most brutal form: the unregulated free market. His speech conflated Canadians with multinationals, which would be given sovereign powers. That would supposedly be where the freedom lay. Again, his speech conflated Canadians' freedom with that of multinationals. I would also point out that the digital giants regulate their algorithms.

If we listen to the leader of the opposition's speech, he wants no supply management, no cultural exceptions in trade agreements, no environmental laws and no competition laws, because real competition requires a legal framework.

My question is as follows. We know that the Conservatives have a history of making significant budget cuts in the cultural sector; what does the opposition leader have to say to representatives of Quebec's flourishing and dynamic cultural community, with its rich offerings of music, film and literature? I hope he does not suggest they invest in bitcoin.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, first of all, the hon. member is not entitled to talk about Quebec culture, because he wants Quebec culture to be controlled by the federal government in Ottawa. That is not a sovereigntist or separatist position. It is a centralizing position that the Bloc Québécois is supporting. The hon. member therefore is not entitled to talk about Quebec culture.

Second, he is not doing anything to stop the multinationals. YouTube, Twitter and Facebook will continue to control the platforms, even after the bill is passed. It is simply a question of determining what content will be available on these platforms. In his opinion, the content should be chosen by the federal government and its woke agency here in the nation's capital.

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Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have rarely heard so much drivel or so many conspiracy theories packed into 20 minutes. The leader of the official opposition must have no shame at all if he can call artists and artisans in the cultural sector an elite. Let him go tell that to the hair and makeup artists on television shows, or to the people who build the sets and the sound technicians on Quebec and Canadian film productions. He will see that they are not a cultural elite. They are workers who are proud of what they do.

When the Broadcasting Act was drafted, it was said that cable companies would invest in producing Canadian and Quebec cultural content. Digital broadcasters were not considered because they did not exist at the time. Why does the leader of the official opposition want to keep giving the Googles, Facebooks, YouTubes and Netflixes of the world tax gifts and exemptions?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party is the only party that supports our artists. Without freedom of expression, there can be no art. If there is no freedom of expression, there is no culture. If the other parties want to censor freedom of expression, it is because they want to censor artists.

With regard to profits, I repeat that the bill does nothing to rein in Google, Twitter or Facebook. Under this bill, these web giants will continue to dominate the digital world. If the hon. member wants to end that oligopoly, I would support that and I am ready to discuss it.

However, this bill does not do that. This bill takes power away from audiences and gives officials and politicians in Ottawa the power to control what Canadians see and hear online. That is censorship.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: You are the one giving Google an exemption, not to mention the tax gift to Netflix and YouTube.

• (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that he had a chance to ask a question and must listen to the answer. If he wants to ask more questions or make more comments, he must rise so he can be recognized.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to take us back to some fundamentals and ask if the leader of the official opposition can find anywhere in Bill C-11, in the fundamental principle of the Broadcasting Act, that the freedom of expression of Canadians is protected. Can he find or point to any place in the set of amendments to the Broadcasting Act where that fundamental principle is altered or repealed?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Yes, Madam Speaker, that is quite easy. In applying the Broadcasting Act to the Internet, which is obviously trying to put a square peg into a round hole, it gives the broadcasting regulator the power over what content appears on the Internet. That is the whole purpose of the bill.

I do not have enough time to list all the clauses in the bill that would give the bureaucracy the power to control what people see

and say on the Internet and, therefore, violate their freedom of expression rights found in the Charter of Rights, under section 2(b).

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the leader of the official opposition for his careful articulation and his commitment to killing Bill C-11.

He mentioned the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and how freedom of expression would be eroded by Bill C-11. On the Government of Canada's own website, it says, "The Supreme Court of Canada has maintained that the connection between freedom of expression and the political process is 'perhaps the linchpin' of section 2(b)... Free expression is valued above all as being instrumental to democratic governance."

My question to the Leader of the Opposition, who is committed to killing this bill, whether now or when he is prime minister, a day I look forward to happening very soon, is why would the Liberal Prime Minister actually want to bring in this type of censorship? Is it because he admires communist dictatorships?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I am going to let Margaret Atwood answer that question. This is what she said. She described the CRTC as "the shadowy body that lurks in the background... They're secret. How many of them are there, or what do they do actually?"

Furthermore, and directly to the member's question, she stated, commenting specifically on this bill, "All you have to do is read some biographies of writers writing in the Soviet Union and the degrees of censorship they had to go through—government bureaucrats. So it is creeping totalitarianism if governments are telling creators what to create."

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will share my time with my colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Bill C-11 is part of this government's efforts to advance Canadian interests through a forward-thinking digital policy agenda. It improves fairness in our broadcasting system. It creates stable funding for our cultural industries. It continues to support platforms where Canadian artists and creators can make their mark and enrich Canadians' lives.

Movies, TV shows and music create associations with times in the lives of young and old alike because we recognize ourselves in these works, and we are more likely to recognize ourselves in homegrown creations. That is why we have to strengthen our support for Canadian creators.

• (1245)

[*English*]

This bill would improve fairness in our broadcasting system.

This bill would address an important regulatory imbalance by requiring online audio and video broadcasting services to contribute to the achievement of important cultural policy objectives in the same way that traditional broadcasters always have.

[*Translation*]

As early as the 1990s, concerns were raised about the potential for online streaming to disrupt the broadcasting sector. Early on, a decision was made not to place requirements on online streaming services so as to avoid stifling innovation, given the relatively limited impact of those services at that time. We need to keep in mind that broadcasting regulation only applies where there is a material impact on the broadcasting sector. Today, the situation is untenable, and the rationale to exempt online broadcasters no longer stands.

Over the past decade, subscribers to online broadcasters have grown from 6% to 78% of Canadians. In the last few years alone, the revenues of online video services have seen fast and substantial growth, while over the same period of time traditional broadcasters have seen steadily shrinking revenues. The reason I bring this evidence to members' attention is to make it clear that the world of broadcasting has changed. We all know this. We regularly turn to online streaming services such as Netflix, Spotify, Crave, Club iLico and others to access our music and television. Times have changed. In the past 20 years, online streaming services have become the method through which a growing majority of Canadians access their content.

[*English*]

There has been a drastic shift in Canada's broadcasting sector that has directly impacted the level of support for Canadian programming and talent. Jobs are threatened. Continuing to treat online and traditional broadcasters differently is not fair, and it is not sustainable. It is putting the support system for Canadian stories and music at risk. The bill would create sustainable funding for our cultural industries.

To explain how modernizing the act would create sustainable funding for our cultural industries, it is important to look back at the proven track record of innovation in our cultural sector and recall how transformative digital disruption has been for broadcasting in Canada. This support system has cultivated Canadian cultural works and has supported innovation and talent in our audiovisual, music and sound recording sectors, and it is one we intentionally developed through policies, programs and legislation.

Let me remind members how things were in the beginning for Canadian broadcasting. Radio and TV channels, as well as cable and satellite distribution companies, had to be Canadian owned and hold licences. They were allowed, and still are of course, to show foreign programs or carry American channels. In return for participating in Canada's broadcasting system and accessing our domestic market, they were required to fund, acquire and broadcast Canadian programs.

[*Translation*]

They were also required to make programs accessible to Canadians and contribute to the creation of Canadian programming, including in French. Over time, the demand for Canadian programming has increased. The system was working as intended and do-

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mestic creative industries flourished. Thousands of Canadians found careers in broadcasting as producers, actors, screenwriters, directors, singers, lighting designers, makeup artists, set designers and so much more. The Canadian cultural industry became more skilled and sophisticated and we saw investments in production clusters. We became famous for our creative and technical talent.

Broadcasting plays a key role in supporting the Canadian creative industry and developing our cultural identity. The Canadian broadcasting, film, video, music and sound recording industries are also important economic drivers. They contribute about \$14 billion to Canada's GDP and accounted for more than 160,000 jobs in 2019.

[*English*]

These figures point to a sector we can be proud of and not one we can take for granted. We knew the day would come when the 1991 Broadcasting Act would no longer be sufficient. Unfortunately, that day has come and is long past.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

We are fighting for the recognition and support that the cultural sector needs, not only to survive, but to thrive. Time is running out.

The online streaming act is about ensuring the sustainability of the Canadian broadcasting system. It is also about ensuring our cultural sovereignty. Canada is a hotbed of continuous innovation and an incubator for emerging cultural talent. We must support our creators and our creative industries. This requires that all broadcasters in Canada compete on a level playing field.

We need to integrate online broadcasting services into regulation. Because of outdated legislation, online broadcasters are not required to support Canadian music and content, or any other important broadcasting objective. As revenues for traditional broadcasters stagnate and decline, the level of support for Canadian music and content, and the creative professionals who create it, will also decline.

The implications for the broadcasting system are serious. Canadian broadcasters have responded by cutting costs, which has had a real impact on the service they provide to Canadians, their contribution to Canadian culture, and middle-class jobs.

[*English*]

As Canadians, we will be the poorer for not seeing homegrown talent supported and having more diversity on screen and in song.

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Previous generations enjoyed Canadian programs knowing that others across the country were sharing a similar experience. These experiences are important for our culture and our cultural industries.

What matters most and what matters now is that Canadian voices, perspectives and stories remain relevant, heard and ground-breaking.

The online streaming act is needed to achieve greater diversity in the broadcasting system and ensure the long-term viability of our broadcasting sector.

[*Translation*]

As a proud Quebecker, I know that Bill C-11 will strengthen Quebec's cultural sector. French is a minority language in the greater North American landscape and we are taking measures to protect and promote francophone creators and artists.

These measures are part of the framework of broader commitments by the Government of Canada to ensure the vitality of French-language and minority-language communities in the country. Thanks to this bill, there will be more Quebec and francophone content on online streaming platforms. We can be proud of that.

In conclusion, this bill seeks to ensure that the creative sector continues to grow. Regardless of how Canadians access their content, they should be able to recognize themselves in the stories and music that reflect their experience and their community.

The Broadcasting Act of 1991 has brought us to this point. The online streaming act will bring us further. We cannot wait any longer. We must act now.

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think back to many years ago when, in Red Deer, we used to have a CBC station and a CTV station. Quite frankly, they abandoned us, they left, and we now have to depend on some great people who do broadcasting and so on, but they are using online platforms. When we look at the bill we are presenting now, how it is going to affect them, I think, is a critical part. That is why we look at it and say it is time that we completely throw this bill out and recognize the true people who are producing content here for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, this is what the bill does: it brings online streaming services under the jurisdiction of the Broadcasting Act; it requires having Canadian content; it prioritizes and supports creators from francophone, first nations, LGBTQ2+ and racialized communities and those who advance equity; it modernizes outdated legislation to bring our system into the 21st century.

• (1255)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not know whether my colleague is as tired as I am of all this disinformation.

What the Conservatives are doing is taking bits of information out of context and trying to scare people with them. It reminds me

of the documentary on Robert Charlebois in Paris called *À soir on fait peur au monde*, which translates to “tonight we scare people”. I feel like that is what the Conservatives have been doing for months, or years, I should say.

This is the party that made all sorts of cuts to culture. Are they just trying to find an excuse to promote their political agenda of taking a laissez-faire approach and giving digital multinationals absolute power?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, it is true. Disinformation is all we have been hearing from the Conservatives since we began debating this bill.

As I said in my speech, it is time to make room for Canadian content, to make sure that Canadian content has a place, to stand in solidarity with our artists and creators and provide them with the support they need so much after two tough years. This bill shows our willingness to stand behind them and with them.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, initially, the Broadcasting Act told cable companies that they owned the pipeline, but that they would have to participate in funding the thing that goes in the pipeline, the thing that allows them to make money and profits, in other words the content. What we call content is what goes in the pipeline. I am talking about Quebec and Canadian cultural productions.

At the time, digital broadcasters did not exist. What the Conservatives refuse to understand is that in order to make the market more equal, the new digital broadcasters also need to take part in funding the content that goes in the pipeline.

I would like to know why my colleague thinks that the Conservatives do not want the web giants to pay their share.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, earlier, following the speech by the opposition leader, we noted that he was clearly pandering to a certain demographic, certain people, just as he did during his election campaign by spreading a lot of disinformation and using algorithms to redirect certain text messages and so on.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to hear my colleague talk about how Bill C-11 will support the creation of groups across the country who had difficulty receiving help in the past.

Has there been any reaction from stakeholders in the creative industries on how Bill C-11 will help them?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, certainly, a number of associations and groups, including the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expression or CDCE, La Guilde and the Union des artistes, are all in favour of Bill C-11, on the assumption that a vast majority of the Senate amendments would be accepted.

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[English]

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to rise in support of Bill C-11, the online streaming act. I spent 20 years as a broadcaster, following a short career as a newspaper reporter. I saw first-hand the impact on Canadian storytellers once online streaming companies entered the fray and altered the way we and people around the world consume news and entertainment. I am so thrilled that now, as a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, I can play a role in helping level the playing field for Canadian content creators, with the passage of Bill C-11, an update to the Broadcasting Act.

This was the first big piece of legislation that I had the privilege to work on.

The Broadcasting Act, as we have heard, was introduced in 1991.

[Translation]

That was before I was a journalist, when I had just come back to Canada after spending a year in France. I had started studying political science at the University of Calgary. It was a different time. Times have changed.

[English]

Throughout the study of Bill C-11, the heritage committee heard from artists, creators and broadcasters about how much the Broadcasting Act has helped Canadians appreciate our own unique culture.

We heard from Gord Sinclair, of The Tragically Hip, that the little band from Kingston would not have been able to reach across the country from coast to coast to coast, and have such an impact on so many Canadians with their music, if it had not been for the Broadcasting Act, which has ensured that Canadian artists are heard, seen and appreciated by Canadians all across the country, that our artists do not have to go overseas or across the border in order to have successful careers. This is about seeing Canadian artists and creators succeed, and be supported and appreciated right here at home.

For decades, broadcasters in Canada have given us incredible Canadian content on our televisions and radios. We made a conscious decision to support our fellow Canadians, to help them share their talents and their stories with the rest of world. As a condition of their licences, TV and radio broadcasters have had to invest in our culture and our artists. It is why we have all the Canadian content we love. Whenever we are watching *Schitt's Creek* or *Orphan Black*, or listening to Hamilton's own Arkells or a classic like Stompin' Tom Connors, it makes us proud to be Canadian, to support and encourage our Canadian talent.

Our culture is who we are. It is our past, our present and our future. Now that Canadians consume their media from a bigger variety of platforms, it is time to update the Broadcasting Act and protect our culture for generations to come.

I remember 1991, when we were listening to local radio to learn about the newest music and artists. When we found something good, we would head to the mall and buy the cassette tape at the music store. Today, most Canadians get their music on YouTube.

We want to make sure they can still find and identify Canadian content from their streaming services.

Bill C-11 ensures that big players like YouTube and TikTok start contributing to the system, like our traditional broadcasters have been doing for decades now. Back in 1991, we knew which TV shows played on which night and we made plans to get home in time so we would not miss anything. If we wanted to watch a movie, our options were either a Blockbuster rental or the theatre.

Today our streaming services have usurped cable services. I still have cable, I still like to watch my local news, but I understand that today, most Canadians stream their content. People can stream pretty much anywhere they can get a signal, through their TV, phone or car. The technological advances many of us in this room have lived through since the 90s are extraordinary.

How wonderful and amazing to be able to watch our favourite shows and movies whenever and wherever we want. We can even binge an entire season of say, Canada's Drag Race and not have to wait with anxious anticipation week after week to find out what happens at the end.

However, streaming platforms like Amazon Prime and YouTube broadcast to Canadians without the same requirements that traditional broadcasters adhere to, including supports to the industry and its players that helped build Canada's culture. These companies absolutely invest in our economy in other ways, and we are fortunate to have such a bounty of entertainment to consume. We can proudly point to many productions made on our shores and in our streets, with our people telling our stories.

Streaming services do not have to produce and share content that reflects our Canadian story and shared identity. They do not have to protect Canadian rights of content ownership. They do not have to pay into the system that nurtures young talent and gives it space to grow and be seen and heard. Until Bill C-11 is passed into law, our culture will be in danger of being lost in the noise of all the content available to Canadians online.

• (1300)

Asking the streaming companies to make Canadian content more fundable does not in any way limit Canadians' ability to watch what they want, or produce the content they want or post the content they produce. All regulatory requirements and obligations in the online streaming act only affect the broadcaster and the platforms, never the user or the creator.

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This bill does not limit Canadian freedom of expression in any way, shape or form. We are not telling streamers how to do their business or construct their algorithms. We are just saying that they benefit from our country and our stories and our creators. They have to contribute. They have to let Canadians see through the clutter and identify their own music and artists, storytellers and other creators.

This legislation will provide real opportunities for Canadians, including community media, local news, French-language productions, racialized communities, third-language programming and so much more. This legislation is incredibly important to ensure space within our broadcasting system for indigenous storytelling and indigenous languages.

When it comes to Canadian stories and storytelling, I would be remiss if I did not mention the news, community news and hard-working journalists. The broadcasting landscape has changed since I was in journalism, with bigger players impacting the Canadian news market. We need to ensure that our broadcasters can keep up and are protected, and that Canadian journalists continue to tell the stories of our Canadian communities.

The 1991 Broadcasting Act has run its course. It is now undeniably out of date, but its principles of fairness to Canadian creators remain crucial to this country. We need this legislation now so that we can better support our Canadian broadcasting sector. Canadian organizations and creators will continue to lose ground if this bill does not pass. We must all work together to see this come to fruition.

I would like to express my thanks to the Senate for its exhaustive study of this bill, which included the longest clause-by-clause consideration of a bill in Senate history. This has been about teamwork, about getting this bill to its best form. Although the Conservatives have been working against the team, spouting misinformation and raising unfounded fears on what this bill is really about, spending more time filibustering than working collaboratively, we got there.

We agree with many of the Senate amendments. As my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, mentioned yesterday, this government is fully supporting 18 of the 26 amendments brought about in the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-11. We also accept another two amendments with modifications, so all of the changes that adhere to the spirit of the legislation. This is another testament to the truly collaborative work that has gone on.

It is time that we pass this bill, that we show our support to Canadian artists and creators. I truly hope that all my colleagues will join me in supporting Bill C-11. It is time to bring our broadcasting system into the 21st century and do what is right for this country and our culture.

• (1305)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, if this bill does not affect what Canadians will post, why did the government choose to remove the amendment that would have explicitly said that? We, the Conservative members, have been accused repeatedly throughout the debate, of misinformation, and yet

they have refused to explicitly exclude content posted by Canadians. Why?

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, the only amendments this government did not accept were amendments that created loopholes that would have allowed streaming companies to get out of their obligations. This is all about supporting Canadian culture and Canadian artists.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier, we heard the Leader of the Opposition say that the Conservatives, once in power, would repeal this legislation, that it would be the end of this legislation stemming from Bill C-11.

Personally, I think that he should favour a more rational approach and perhaps leave the door open a bit and say that, if ever there were no censoring or control of online content, he would keep this legislation.

I think that I can say, without betraying my Bloc colleagues too much, that, on our side, if we see that there are real changes in terms of online behaviour and freedom of expression online, we will be the first to say that we need to go back to the drawing board. We will be the first to say that we might have missed something and that we need to go back to the drawing board.

Does the Liberal Party agree on that?

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree that this bill protects our culture. At the same time, it does not compromise our freedom of expression.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech. I appreciated the distinction she made between traditional broadcasters that are involved in the system producing Canadian content and digital broadcasters, which have been excluded for far too long.

Under this bill, more money from these large private corporations will be injected to produce Quebec, Canadian, francophone and, thanks to an NDP amendment, indigenous cultural content.

I wonder if she could talk a little more about the impact of these web giants being forced to contribute, and how this will enhance and increase local and regional francophone and indigenous production.

• (1310)

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, we heard that creators need this bill to support them.

[English]

It would give them some support in their communities. Streamers pay into this system. We have programs that support young artists. We appreciate the contributions from the Province of Quebec, and we would not have as much access to all the Canadian content we have now if it were not for the 1991 Broadcasting Act. Our artists today need that same lift that artists in 1991 got with the original Broadcasting Act.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very interested to hear the impassioned and thoughtful speech by my colleague, especially given her previous history in journalism.

I would like to know what the reaction is from local stakeholders and stakeholders from across the country. Is Bill C-11 something that they are looking forward to seeing?

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Madam Speaker, we heard from many broadcasters that they will not be able to continue, that they will not exist much longer, if the playing field is not levelled. They cannot compete with these streamers the way things are now. If we do not bring in this legislation as soon as possible, we will lose more Canadian companies that are producing Canadian content.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, can members imagine going to a restaurant and ordering a burger, but instead of a burger, they are served a salad, and when the server is asked why a salad was received, they say it is because of a new government rule that salads need to account for a certain percentage of meals eaten in Canada? That would be ridiculous, one might say, and if one wants a burger, one should get a burger. Nobody would accept something like this when they went to a restaurant, so why would they accept it when they browse the Internet?

That is the essence of Bill C-11, a solution looking for a problem that does not exist and the latest attempt from the Liberals to stick their nose in where it does not belong to limit the freedoms of Canadians.

Madam Speaker, I hope the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent would share a burger with me because I will be sharing my time with him.

Right now, Canadians get to pick the things they see online through their very own viewing habits, searches and choices. If Bill C-11 passes, the videos they watch on YouTube, the movies they stream on Netflix and the podcasts they listen to on Spotify would all be subject to government regulations requiring the promotion of certain content. It would deem the content we can and cannot watch. Of course, the government cannot explain what that content is. It has not answered that question.

By putting the rules for what this bill is calling “Canadian content” in the hands of government and unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats, the Liberals would be free to amplify the voices they like and silence the ones they do not like. Do we know why this would be? It is because they appoint the body that does that and the head of the CRTC, and they do so without telling us what kind of content, of course.

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Let us face that Bill C-11 is just another attempt to drastically expand the size and scope of government, to control what Canadians think and to limit their fundamental rights and freedoms of what they get to see online. No government should ever be given the additional powers to censor and regulate what Canadians say and see, especially of the entire, infinite and unending Internet.

The bill states that any content that generates revenue, yes, even cat videos, would be subject to regulation that would be under the control of the CRTC. It lays out the very path for hiring the Internet czar who would do that, who would give the purview of that to somebody else, an unelected bureaucrat appointed, of course, by a government that wants the control.

This is a debate about amendments, specifically on the issue of censoring user-generated content. That is what regular people put online. The government was really never going to consider that amendment because it took it out of the bill to begin with. I will tell the House why.

Here is the response to trying to get user-generated content out of the mix. It is in amendment 3, and it is part of what we are discussing here. The government states it:

...respectfully disagrees with amendment 3 because this would affect the Governor in Council's ability to publicly consult on, and issue, a policy direction to the CRTC to appropriately scope the regulation of social media services with respect to their distribution of commercial programs, as well as prevent the broadcasting system from adapting to technological changes over time....

That is the government's response. The rationale behind the rejection for content creators finally says the quiet part out loud. It finally said it. It is right here. For a government that claims user-generated content was never going to be part of the bill, it took out that amendment and then rejected the fact that the amendment would have been put back in the bill. It says the opposite right in the rationale. The government wants the power to direct the CRTC on user content today, and it wants the power to do it in the future.

Regulatory power over user content is confirmed in that explanation. It covers YouTube videos, podcasts and any other content on platforms we do not even know exist yet, because that is what “adapting to technological changes” means. The government has regulated something that does not even exist yet.

There we have it. A statement we heard from the minister on this point is the exact opposite of his response in the House, his response in committee and his response on television, which makes it the opposite of the truth. He will also ensure that we are the only country, the only democratic country in the world, where this is a thing. We are the only country to engage in this form of regulation of things we would put on the Internet. It leaves absolutely no doubt in the minds of anybody who has read this legislation. For people like Margaret Atwood, Senator David Adams Richards and purveyors of cat videos from coast to coast, there is absolutely no doubt that this is the government's plan. The government just said the quiet part out loud: Platforms are in, and user-generated content is in. Anything else is simply untrue.

Government Orders

• (1315)

We have so many philosophical issues with this bill. I could stand here all day talking about them, but I want to touch on some very practical ones, such as the mandate of the CRTC. There are 2.5 quintillion bytes of data added to the Internet every single day. Do people really believe that the Liberal government or that any bureaucracy, especially a bureaucracy within the government, could handle the responsibility of regulating that? The Liberals cannot get us passports in a reasonable amount of time. They cannot do what they are saying they can do.

What about the idea that the government needs to save the industry? Of course, that is ludicrous. The minister says that the investments in Canadian production that would further our culture are somehow in need of his rescue. Again, that is the opposite of an actual fact. My colleagues will tell me that I am engaging in disinformation, but that is just not true.

Huge investments are being made, and if we looked a little further than traditional broadcasters, or where they have traditionally been made, or if we talked to anyone else other than the unions that will lose control over that funding, we would know that statement is not true.

The Motion Picture Association of Canada told a committee in the Senate that it spent over \$5 billion in 2021 on investments in just one year. That is more than the \$1 billion the minister is talking about when he talks about what Bill C-11 would bring in. That \$5 billion is more than \$1 billion, and that is in a single year by a single industry association.

What about the fact that Canadian creators have not asked for this? In fact, many of them have spoken out against it. Those are the ones that have had tremendous success, the ones that will be held back by this bill. Creators in this country who, without the government, have reached unimaginable heights, both within Canada and especially outside of Canada. They have been ignored.

It is not about culture, and it certainly is not about funding. It is about control. It is about doing anything possible to increase the size of the Canadian government and reduce the freedoms of what we see online, of what ordinary Canadians see and put online. These are ordinary Canadian citizens, and the government will stop at nothing to do more of that no matter how much the facts do not line up, how much it cannot answer questions about what Canadian content is and who will regulate it, or how it simply misleads the House in telling us that the CRTC has no role in this.

The Liberals jammed this bill through the House of Commons once already, but the Senate found so many issues with it that it conducted the longest committee study ever on a piece of legislation and proposed 26 amendments. That is, of course, after the Liberals took out the amendment that would leave out user-generated content, while telling the Canadian public that was not true.

Just like putting lipstick on a pig, it leaves us with a pig. Putting amendments into Bill C-11 just leaves us with Bill C-11, a bill that, at its core, restricts, infringes and penalizes. It is a bill that can only be fixed by voting it down and making sure that it never sees the light of day. A Conservative government in this country would

have never introduced it, and if members of the House make the mistake of passing it, we will repeal it.

We do not need a government deciding what we can and cannot watch. We do not need a government to pick the winners and the losers. We do not need a government to get more involved in the lives of Canadians. It is involved enough, and we see how that is going in this country. We need a small government that makes room for bigger citizens where government is the servant and we, Canadians, are the masters.

We are upholding the heritage that Canadians have given the world, that successful creators have put out there. We are here today to stand against Bill C-11, a bill that goes against the principles of freedom, the values that have been the bedrock of our country for 150 years, and the heritage that the heritage minister should be protecting.

Freedom is the very opposite of this bill. He should not be focusing on arbitrary roles. If he did, he should be able to at least explain them in the House, in committee or on television. He should instead be focused on growing the power of people right here in Canada and letting them decide what they can see on the Internet.

• (1320)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is absolutely nothing within this legislation that takes away a person's freedoms or their rights. They can choose to watch whatever they want on the Internet. The sad reality is that the Conservatives know that, but they do not have a problem spreading misinformation.

Will the Conservative Party of Canada be honest with Canadians today? Given what it is saying about Bill C-11, is its intention to withdraw the Broadcasting Act? After all, the very same principles have been applied, in good part, through the Broadcasting Act for decades now.

The Conservative Party does not support Canadian content. It has made that abundantly clear. Are the Conservatives going to get rid of the Broadcasting Act? Are they going to get rid of CBC? Is that what their real intentions are?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to again remind members, if they have questions and comments, to wait until they are recognized.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, yes to CBC and yes to Bill C-11. I would invite the member opposite to tell me what he thinks Canadian content is, why he will not define it in the bill and why he is misleading Canadians, to say that the CRTC, the Chair of which is appointed by him, will not regulate what Canadians see and hear on the Internet. He is misleading the House, and he knows it.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not know whether I am going to have enough time to address all of the nonsense that was said in the past 10 minutes. The most scandalous thing my colleague said was that this bill is not about culture. It makes absolutely no sense to say such a thing.

For those who may not know, I am an actor. Before I got into politics, I worked in the film and television industry. I recently played a role in a series that was released a few days ago called *Désobéir: le choix de Chantale Daigle* about a precedent-setting case in Canada on abortion. It is a truly wonderful and remarkable series. I would encourage the members of the Quebec caucus of the Conservative Party to record it and send it to all of their Conservative caucus colleagues. It could prove useful to them. Until we pass Bill C-11, we will certainly not have the chance to watch this series.

When this show first aired two days ago, I met with producers, screenwriters, artists and actors. They all asked me what we were waiting for to pass Bill C-11.

What are we waiting for? When will we pass this bill?

I would like to remind my Conservative friends that 80% of the members of the Union des artistes au Québec still earn less than \$20,000 a year. We need to pass Bill C-11 now.

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, for those who are watching this debate in my neck of the woods in Ontario and in all provinces outside of Quebec, I want to make it clear that a member of the Bloc Québécois, a party devoted to the sovereignty of Quebec, is allowing the federal government and the Liberals to decide which content they get to see. They have chosen the federalist option to decide what people see on the Internet. I want to make that clear for everybody who is watching outside of Quebec.

• (1325)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, over the course of the pandemic, the independent music sector has seen its revenue decline by \$233 million, and musicians' revenues have fallen by 79%. Canadian production saw an average decrease of 12.4% per year between January 2017 and December 2020. In digital media, royalties paid to Canadian creators were three times lower than those for traditional media uses.

In 2020, one in four working in the cultural sector lost his or her job, but Netflix revenues increased by over 22% in the same year. Netflix and web giants like Disney+ hardly pay any Canadian taxes.

Why do the Conservatives always stand on the side of giant corporations instead of people like creators and artists in Canada?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, the facts are clear. We have had massive amounts of investment in Canadian culture. The member opposite, who cannot define Canadian culture and who has not even asked her coalition partners to define it for her, is talking about web giants. We are happy to have the conversation about the Googles and Netflix, but the bill before us would do nothing on that. It absolutely would not affect the idea that they would still continue

to make money. I know the NDP does not want anybody to make money in our country, but she can at least talk about what is in front of us today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind members, because they are either having side conversations or trying to interject into the response, that this is not proper. They need to wait until I recognize them for questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to take part in this debate about how the Liberal government is taking excessive control over Canadians' choices.

Let us not fool ourselves. This bill gives way, way too much power to the federal government, which wants to impose its vision on the choices Canadians make when they use the Internet to watch movies and documentaries and enjoy Canadian culture.

The government wants to direct Canadians' choices by issuing orders to the CRTC. That is why we are fiercely opposed to this bill, which is a direct attack on people's freedom to choose whatever they want to see on digital platforms. We are not the only ones concerned about this. Many people who work in the industry are sounding the alarm. I will say more about that in a bit.

For now, let us concentrate on what has happened in recent years. We have been talking about this bill for years. Some people keep saying that this needs to get done fast, it is urgent, people want this bill and it is taking too long to pass it. We have been accused of filibustering.

The reality is that this bill has been delayed the most by the Liberal government itself. Previously, this bill was known as Bill C-10, and it was introduced before the unnecessary election that cost \$620 million in taxpayers' money. We had to carry out the study all over again.

I am prepared to listen to the comments of those accusing us of talking for the sake of talking and other such things. That is political rhetoric. However, the reality is that those who have delayed the debate and passage of this bill the most are not the Conservative members. It is the Liberal government, which triggered an election and even prorogued Parliament to avoid the WE Charity scandal. The election essentially changed nothing. The government spent \$620 million of public money to change absolutely nothing, and this delayed debate of the bill, which, at the time, was known as Bill C-10, and which is now Bill C-11.

Government Orders

We are not the only ones in Quebec to have reservations about this bill. Indeed, the Quebec government wants to have its say on the bill. This is nothing new. Almost 11 months ago, on April 24, the Quebec government sent a letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage informing him of Quebec's major concern about the unprecedented power that the federal government was giving itself under clause 7. This clause gives the executive branch, meaning government and cabinet, the power to give the CRTC directions to dictate what Canadians will be able to watch, by creating algorithms for browsing online platforms.

That is why the Quebec minister of culture and communications, Mathieu Lacombe, repeated that on February 4 in a letter in which he stated that it was “essential...that Quebec's cultural specificity and the unique reality of the French language market be adequately considered”, that “Quebec was the homeland of the French language and francophone culture in the Americas”, it was essential that it be heard. He also said that it was essential “to ensure that Quebec's legislative powers were recognized but that these conditions have not yet been met”.

The Quebec government raised its concerns last April. Following that letter, the National Assembly adopted a unanimous motion asking the federal government to let the Quebec government have its say in committee. The federal government did absolutely nothing. The minister received the letter and could barely be bothered to send an acknowledgment of receipt. After that, as I said last week in the House, he stuck it on his bedside table, under a pile of other papers, and did nothing about it for an entire year.

On February 4, 2023, Minister Lacombe got angry and sent the federal government another request, saying that time was up and that the Quebec government demanded to be heard. The Minister of Canadian Heritage did absolutely nothing.

It is not for lack of trying on our part. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, our political lieutenant for Quebec, and I asked not two, not three, not four, but 20 questions to make it clear that Quebec wanted to be heard on the matter of this bill.

• (1330)

We asked 20 questions, and what did the Minister of Canadian Heritage do each time? He resorted to theatrics. He bragged and blustered, he gave a grandstanding response, but he offered nothing for Quebec.

It is scarcely surprising that the centralizing Liberal government should take this approach. I could spend days and days reminiscing about how this government and all previous Liberal governments were eager to commandeer the provinces' political powers. In fact, we are currently seeing how the government has made a specialty of sticking its big fat nose into provincial jurisdictions, where it does not belong.

It is not surprising that the government is doing that. However, it is disappointing to see the Bloc Québécois abetting this usurpation of ministerial responsibility and especially of Quebec's jurisdictions. These people get elected by saying that they speak for Quebec in the House of Commons and that they express the unanimous opinion of Quebecers. They play up how important that is.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: When it benefits them.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, when it benefits them, as my colleague so aptly pointed out.

What is really going on? While we, the Conservatives, stood up 20 times to ask the government to accommodate Quebec's request, the Bloc Québécois maintained radio silence. It is a fitting metaphor, since we are talking about the CRTC. It was radio silence, not a word. They were missing in action, nowhere to be found.

Where is the Bloc when it is time to defend Quebec and speak for Quebec's National Assembly? They drop out of sight.

Speaking of the Quebec National Assembly, do members know that, about a month ago, on February 5 and 6, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted three motions condemning the federal government's action? Do members know that those three motions were directly related to positions defended by the Bloc Québécois in the House on Bill C-5, Bill C-11 and the immigrants at Roxham Road? The last motion severely condemned the use of the term “all-inclusive”, which was said in the House by a member of the Bloc Québécois. We know that Bloc members recognized that it was not the best idea. They said it in the House. The Quebec National Assembly did not like that and adopted a motion condemning that statement.

I was a member of the Quebec National Assembly. I, too, have had occasion, several times, to vote in favour of motions unanimously condemning an act of the federal government. This time, there were three motions in 20 hours, over two days, unanimously condemning the action taken by the federal government with the support of the Bloc Québécois. When the Bloc Québécois says that it is there to defend Quebec, defend the Quebec consensus and speak on behalf of the Quebec National Assembly in the House, it is not true.

That is why we keep saying that it is very important to know how to protect the choice of jurisdictions. Why does Quebec stand up and want to be heard on this bill? This is essential in our debate: Clause 7 states that the government grants itself the power to give directives to the CRTC, which in turn will be responsible for the government's directives to then rework and give directives on the algorithms that will have to be processed by the public. This has many people concerned.

That is why the Financial Post said in an editorial that if the government's bureaucrats were given the right to decide what content is imposed on Canadians there is a real risk that the government will be tempted to use its screening power to silence its critics. That is not good.

Former CRTC chair Ian Scott said that he did not want to manipulate the algorithms. Rather, he wanted the platforms to do that so as to “produce particular outcomes”. That is how an expert sees it. A former head of the CRTC said that.

That is why, as long as this government wants to give itself excessive powers to control what Quebecers and Canadians have access to, we will be against this bill.

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• (1335)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was surprised by the deputy leader of the Conservative Party when she clearly indicated that the Conservatives would get rid of CBC. Does my colleague across the way believe that it is in Canada's best interests to defund, in any way, CBC Radio?

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I would remind the House that I myself worked at Radio-Canada. Our party's objective is not to take money away from the CBC, because it is important to us that the CBC have the means to continue doing what it does, which includes disseminating the French fact throughout Canada.

What concerns us about this is that the government wants to exert control. We can see how it already wants to control everything that goes on. Just imagine what will happen when it gives itself the power to control what the CRTC tells broadcasters. Again, I am not the one saying this. Professor Michael Geist said, and I quote, "No other country in the world seeks to regulate user content in this way, and it should be removed from the bill because it doesn't belong in the Broadcasting Act."

Will you remove this offensive clause that gives you all the power?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address his comments through the Chair and not directly to the government.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will begin by expressing my disappointment. I am disappointed because I really do value my colleague who just spoke. I think he is a man of great intelligence and exemplary quick thinking, as he has often demonstrated. Unfortunately, this morning, he seems to be embarking on a global disinformation campaign on behalf of his pan-Canadian, pro-oil, pro-pipelines-in-Quebec political party, by telling lies, by saying that Bill C-11, will, for one, control the content that people will be able to view on the Internet. That is not true. He should reread the bill. There is nothing in the bill that does that. What the bill will do is promote Quebec content. I will never believe that my colleague disagrees with promoting Quebec content, without imposing anything, without imposing a menu choice, but by making it visible on the platforms. That is the essence of what the bill does.

If my colleague is such an ardent champion of Quebec, the day his party wants to ram an oil pipeline down Quebec's throat, will he stand up and support Quebecers?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, it is really incredible to see that a representative of a political party that was taken to task three times in 20 hours by unanimous motions of the Quebec National Assembly actually has the nerve to lecture those of us who did our utmost to defend Quebec's desire to be heard by a parliamentary committee. Why did the member and his party not rise to ask exactly what we, the Conservatives, asked, that Quebec be heard in committee?

That is why we are in the House. That is our primary duty. Our sacred duty is to be able to call those who so wish to appear before a parliamentary committee, particularly when we are talking about the Government of Quebec. We, the Conservatives, want to hear from the Government of Quebec, but the Bloc Québécois does not. That is shameful.

• (1340)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague is very familiar with the system. At the time, the Broadcasting Act struck a balance. Cable companies were the pipe and content was put into the pipe. Since they were making money from the content, they had to help fund it. Digital broadcasters were excluded because they did not exist. Right now, the Conservatives and my colleague are saying that Videotron, Bell and Shaw must continue to pay but that Google, Netflix, Facebook and YouTube can continue not paying. How can he explain that?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague. I worked with him previously, as we were both journalists. He worked for TVA and I worked for TQS. He had fewer viewers than I did, in Quebec of course. I should not have mentioned it because my friends at TVA will be upset with me, but we were number one when I worked at TQS.

What the member said is quite true. However, I would like to remind him why we are so dead set against Bill C-11. It is because the federal government is giving itself all the power to dictate to the CRTC what will be allowed in the algorithms of digital platforms. We cannot accept that. I know that the member is a proud nationalist, that he is proud of Quebec. How can he accept such a blatant abuse of power by the federal government with respect to Quebec?

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Chilliwack—Hope. I want to indicate that I will be sharing my time with the member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

What we have seen throughout the debate today is the concept of what the government is trying to do through Bill C-11. The Liberals are trying to give more control to the government and its well-connected friends and provide less freedom for Canadians.

We saw this in how the debate on Bill C-11 unfolded in the House. The government, with its enablers in the NDP, rammed this bill through the House by invoking time allocation and limiting the ability of the representatives of the Canadian people to speak to this bill. The Liberals shut down debate throughout the entire process to ram this bill through the House.

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It is kind of indicative of their approach with Internet regulation. They want fewer people who disagree with them to have the freedom to express themselves. They want to control the House of Commons and they want to control the message that comes out of the House of Commons by shutting down Conservative members who want to speak.

We saw that mainly at the committee as well. We had dozens and dozens of content creators from across the country come to appear before a House of Commons committee for the first time because they were alarmed at what this bill proposed to do and the limits it would place on their ability to get their messages out to their consumers, which is anyone who can access the Internet. The government's problem is that it did not have control. It could not get between those content creators and their audiences. That is what the government wants to do here. It is what the members of the government are insisting upon doing here with Bill C-11. They need that control. They crave that control and now they are going to try to force that control through this law.

Those were individuals who had never engaged in the political process before, including YouTubers and TikTokers, people who post videos and have become popular in their own right not because the government has done anything for them, but because they actually produce content that Canadians and others around the world want to watch. However, that is not good enough for the government members. They need to get in between and ensure consumers are consuming the right content. Even if it is from Canadians, if it does not go through a particular process, then it does not count as being Canadian content.

Creators from across the country who had never lobbied the government, had never been members of a political party and had never come to a parliamentary committee tried to have their voices heard at that committee, but the government could not control them so it shut that down too. There were dozens of witnesses who applied and wanted to come and share their experiences. It was not just Bell, Rogers, Shaw and Corus. Those were always heard. Those have highly paid lawyers and lobbyists who have privileged access to the Prime Minister's Office and every member of the Liberal cabinet.

They were heard, but the content creators who came to Ottawa to be part of that process were shut down by the Liberals and their NDP enablers. They shut down that process and they shut down the process as well when amendments were proposed when we consulted with those content creators. Hundreds of amendments were not even allowed to be raised at the House committee. They were simply voted on without debate and without context because the government could not control that process, so the Liberals shut it down.

Then, after they shut down debate in the House at second reading, shut down debate at the House committee and shut down debate at third reading, the bill went to the Senate where the government does not have control. It had a very lengthy review, the most comprehensive legislative review ever conducted by the Senate.

What happened when the Senate, led by Senator Housakos, Senator Manning, Senator Batters and others, stood up to the government and stood up for Canadian content creators? The Senate came back to the House with amendments from Liberal appointees who

said that the government claims that this does not affect user-generated content and that it is just for the big companies. Liberal-appointed senators put forward amendments that were accepted by the Senate, which said that, if that is what the government said, it would take it at its word.

● (1345)

That was a huge mistake, by the way, but they said they would take the government at its word and would narrowly focus an amendment that excludes user-generated content from the bill. The Senate was taking the government at its word that it was not intended for them.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Liberal government have rejected that Liberal amendment because it would take away their ability to control. The government could not abide even Liberal amendments that would have focused this bill on what it said it was supposed to be focused on.

Michael Geist is a professor whom the Liberals used to like to quote when they were in opposition. Now, I am sure, they wish did not have his words being read in the House, though they are about to be. He said:

...the Senate passed compromise language to ensure that platforms such as YouTube would be caught by the legislation consistent with the government's stated objective, but that user content would not. Last night, [the Minister of Canadian Heritage] rejected the compromise amendment, turning his back on digital creators and a Senate process lauded as one of the most comprehensive ever. In doing so, he has left no doubt about the government's true intent with Bill C-11: retain power and flexibility to regulate user content.

That is what this is all about. The government has left no doubt it wants to regulate that user content.

Michael Geist, when he appeared at the House committee, said, "To be clear, the risk with these rules is not that the government will restrict the ability for Canadians to speak, but rather that the bill could impact their ability to be heard."

That is exactly what the government is insisting on. It is insisting on the fact that it has the power, that it retains the power, to direct the CRTC to determine what Canadians can or cannot see, to filter it, to adjust the algorithm, to direct people away from the content they want to see to the content the government wants them to see.

Every single time the government has had an opportunity to do the right thing, which is to let content creators thrive, to let them reach out to their audiences without interference from the government, it has not been able to handle the lack of control. The loss of control is just too much for it, which is why it has rejected the Senate amendments.

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The Senate amendments, by the way, only made a bad bill slightly less bad. Let us be clear that the amendments were an improvement to a terrible piece of legislation. That is why, quite clearly, the Leader of the Opposition has made it clear that a future Conservative government would kill Bill C-11, would repeal it, because we believe in content creators. We believe in the ability of Canadian content creators to engage, not only with Canadians but with the world. The government simply needs to get out of the way and let them do what they are already doing so successfully.

We do not need the Liberal government acting as an intermediary and putting its fingers on the scales of the Internet, putting its fingers on the algorithm to direct Canadians to viewing things that they want to see. They are already doing that quite successfully. They do not want this bill. In fact, they have said that the rejection of the amendment to exempt user-generated content from this bill is like being spit in the face. These are people, again, who are not professional lobbyists. They do not have great connections inside the PMO. They do not have expensive lawyers to make their case and buy the Liberals fancy dinners. They do not have that ability.

They simply are creating the content, doing the things that make them happy and doing the things, quite frankly, that make them money. They are allowed to do this. They do this without any interference from the government, but now the government is set to interfere, to affect their livelihoods. Again, they engaged in that process in good faith. They engaged in the Senate process in good faith. They believed, after they had convinced the Senate to do the work that the government refused to do, that there was hope, that they would be exempted from this bill. The government just could not handle it. Conservatives reject the government's rejection of these amendments. We reject Bill C-11, and a Conservative government would repeal it.

• (1350)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member and the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent before him said that this bill would give the government the right to dictate algorithms to streaming services, but proposed subsection 9.1(8) of the bill says very clearly, “The Commission shall not make an order under paragraph (1)(e) that would require the use of a specific computer algorithm or source code.” It is here in black and white.

Why is the member engaging in a kind of relativism? No, it is not relativism, it is fantasy. Why is he engaging in fantasy about what is in this bill?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I am sorry that the member does not like what his government has done, but it does not change the fact that it is there in black and white. Experts, again, have made it very clear.

[The minister]'s statement suggests that somehow removing digital creators from the ambit of the legislation creates a loophole. From a substantive perspective, this is disinformation.

That is what Michael Geist said.

He went on to say:

The narrowly crafted amendment by two [Liberal]-appointed Senators is specifically designed to meet [the government]'s stated objectives. The Internet platforms will still be brought into the Broadcasting Act as the use case [the minister] often

cites...would be met. The only change is to ensure that user content would be excluded...

That is what the Senate amendment would have done. The government could not handle it because it would lose control over the ability to manipulate the algorithm and impact user-generated content.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am really not sure that I actually have a question for my colleague who just spoke.

I would simply like to say that all parties have been working for a long time on this bill to preserve and strengthen our culture and improve the circumstances of artists. As an MP for my riding, I have been inundated with misleading emails that are simply false and attempt to vilify this bill. It is one thing to be for or against the bill. However, what I deplore the most is that false information is being used inappropriately. That is not befitting of our parliamentary work.

• (1355)

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, the misinformation that I have heard is from the government that says that this bill would not impact user-generated content. The proof that is not true is that it will not accept amendments. It did not accept amendments in the House from the Conservatives and it has not accepted Senate amendments that would have specifically excluded user-generated content from the bill.

The fact that the government will not clarify, the fact that it will not confirm that it does not want to control user-generated content proves to us that is exactly what it wants to do. It wants to impact the ability of creators to connect with their customers, with the people who watch their channels. It wants to get in the way, and a Conservative government will get Bill C-11 out of the way.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, every single day in this House the Conservatives are playing defence for megacorporations that seek to dodge the payments that Canadians deserve. This bill would level the playing field for indigenous, Black and other minority groups in Canada that need to ensure the productions they create, whether they are stories, art or music, can actually have a chance to succeed in this country.

Conservatives continue to defend Netflix, Disney+ and these megacorporations that would seek to take money out of our economy to ensure these companies have the ability to continue to flood our market. Why do they continue to play defence for them every single day?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is playing defence for Bell, for Rogers, for Shaw and for the big telcos that want to ensure that user-generated content comes under the control of the CRTC. That is what the government wants.

The NDP can stand up for Rogers, Shaw and Bell all it wants. Conservatives will stand up for individuals who are creating the content that Canadians watch, and they do not need the government to do anything to get their content out. They are already succeeding. They just need the government to get out of their way.

Statements by Members

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the bill would allow the CRTC, by direction of the government, to create regulations that would affect what we see on the Internet. Here we have the CRTC, which is already the regulator for telecommunications, that even after well over a year, is not able to set up a suicide hotline of 988. What kind of confidence does the member have in the CRTC being able to take on this giant new mandate?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I have none, and I think that is a great point.

The CRTC, when tasked with urgent tasks, is unable to do it. I would not want to give it this complex task. It is too bad that the government is insisting that it has the power to direct what the CRTC does, which, under this government, is to regulate and restrict user-generated content from getting to Canadians and to the world.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HAMILTON MOUNTAIN

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in awe of the generous, warm, creative people in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. On Family Day, my staff and I hosted a winter warm-up event at T.B. McQuesten Park. Constituents were treated to delicious poutine and hot chocolate courtesy of Hamilton Mountain-based business, The Dirty South Food Truck and scrumptious kebabs and sweets from our famous Eastern Food Market.

More than 200 residents showed up. Collectively, they brought a truckload of donations, sorely needed by the 3,500 people in Hamilton Mountain who get support from the neighbour-to-neighbour food bank every month.

The temperature was cold but we are all warmed by the bright sun and the enthusiasm of a community that showed up for one another. It is this spirit of generosity that keeps me motivated as the member of Parliament for Hamilton Mountain. I am so grateful that I have the opportunity to share the warmth of my remarkable community with this House.

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MARISSA ST. AMAND

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life of Marissa St. Amand, who passed away last month following a heroic battle with cancer. Marissa was the only House of Commons page selected during the 2017-18 academic year from Saskatchewan. She loved her job. Her family remembers her laughing when she realized the former Speaker could recognize her and her fellow pages by the backs of their heads.

After working as a page, Marissa became involved in student politics at the University of Ottawa. For two years, Marissa served as an executive of the International Political & Policy Studies Student Association. In her fourth year she was elected to the Universi-

ty of Ottawa student union as the commissioner for francophone affairs, a francophone from Saskatchewan.

Despite being a quiet, private person, Marissa was always one to help people and to stand up for what she thought was right. In March of 2022, while completing her university studies from home in Saskatoon, Marissa was diagnosed with a very rare type of cancer. She passed away last month at the age of 23.

I know that all members of the House will want to offer Marissa's family their sincerest condolences on her passing. May God grant them solace during this very difficult time.

● (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind members as they make their way into the House here to please keep conversations very low. There is a buzz starting and some of these statements are very heartwarming. I just want to make sure that everybody's statements are well understood.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

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UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À RIMOUSKI

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, for the fourth time since 2011, my alma mater, the Université du Québec à Rimouski, or UQAR, has earned the distinction of ranking first among research universities in its class in Canada.

This distinction is a testament to the quality and relevance of the scientific work of UQAR professors and students. It sends a clear signal to the best researchers that they can thrive and succeed in our region.

Through its three areas of excellence—marine science, regional development and nordicity—the UQAR is making an outstanding contribution to advancing knowledge in these areas and establishing itself as an effective long-term partner for regional development in Quebec.

As we say back home, the UQAR is a small but great university whose strength lies in close ties among students, researchers and professors. I congratulate the UQAR's scientific and academic community, which we are all proud of.

Statements by Members

[English]

● (1405)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, International Women's Day provides the international community a unique opportunity to assess the progress made in promoting the rights, security and well-being of women across the globe. Regrettably, over the past year we have witnessed considerable backsliding on the fundamental rights of women to determine their own fate around the world. Undoubtedly, such developments should concern us all.

In the last year, women in Ukraine, Iran and Afghanistan have been subjected to troubling atrocities. In Iran and Afghanistan, we watched despicable regimes systematically silence and sideline women. In Ukraine, women are the victims not only of an illegal and barbaric invasion, but also of a host of important crimes committed by their eastern neighbour.

Despite such challenges, women in all three of these countries have demonstrated what can only be described as awe-inspiring courage, exemplary bravery and unflinching resolve to fight back. Women in each of these countries have proven steadfast. Their indomitable spirit should remind us all of our responsibilities, not only at home but abroad as well.

The Speaker: I want to remind members that statements are being given. If we could have some courtesy, members could listen in. The statements are important to the individual members; they are about what is going on in their ridings and in their lives, and the members would like us to hear about that.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Bourassa.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the sixth consecutive year, I am celebrating International Women's Day in the riding of Bourassa by honouring eight women for the commendable things they do every single day.

This Sunday I will have the honour of awarding the Bourassa MP's medal to Gail Bernstein, Cassandra Exumé, Sheila Fortuné, Guida Petruccelli, Denise Landry, Kawthar Ouarrak, Diane Tardy and Marie-Clothilde Théard. They are dedicated women who, each in their own sphere of activity, fight to end violence against women and the social isolation of seniors, or fight to promote equal opportunities, inclusion and academic success.

Family and friends are invited to the ceremony, which will take place in Montreal North, in the riding of Bourassa.

I call on my colleagues to join me in congratulating these eight exceptional women.

[English]

HAMILTON BULLDOGS

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute honour to rise in the House today to share some very exciting news: The Hamilton Bulldogs, the OHL 2018 and 2022 champions, are coming to my hometown and will become the Brantford Bulldogs.

I stand before members proudly wearing their new jersey to recognize and commend Mayor Kevin Davis, Brantford council and city staff. Their enthusiasm and quick response made this possible. I thank the Bulldogs organization for choosing "hockey town", the home of the great one, as its home away from home.

New memories are waiting to be made for all of us. Join me in making the Brantford Bulldogs' fan base even larger than it is. Season ticket deposit sales have gone through the roof, with over 2,400 seats sold to date. To avoid missing the chance to join the growing number of hockey fans, one can visit the Bulldogs' website for more information or to become a season ticket holder.

We will see them at the arena. Go, Bulldogs, go.

The Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members to check out the rule book to find out what a prop is.

The hon. member for St. John's East.

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ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, theatre has the power to challenge our assumptions about the world and about ourselves. It allows us to connect with each other through stories of love, hate and forgiveness. One such story belongs to Scott Jones, who was paralyzed from the waist down in 2013 as the result of a violent homophobic attack.

Scott's story caught national attention when he publicly forgave his attacker just months after the event. *I Forgive You*, a verbatim theatre piece, is co-written by Robert Chafe and Scott Jones and features a children's choir conducted by Scott himself. The celebrated Newfoundland and Labrador theatre company Artistic Fraud has brought *I Forgive You* to Ottawa, where it is playing this week at the National Arts Centre.

This story of resilience and recovery dares to share what often goes unshared: that forgiveness is not a static moment, but rather, a non-linear journey.

*Statements by Members***TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Invest Ottawa's Nepean-based Area X.O is the first integrated test facility of its kind in North America, featuring technologies for connected and autonomous vehicles, 5G-enabled smart mobility and advanced connectivity applications to help Canadian entrepreneurs fast-track product design, testing, research and development to commercialize products and reach global markets.

I am proud that a federal government investment of \$7 million was instrumental in the creation of Area X.O. I am pleased to state that, last month, we announced new funding of \$5.4 million to expand Area X.O.

I will continue to work hard to ensure Canada remains relevant and competitive in the new technology-based economic order so our future generations continue to have the same prosperity and standard of living we have today.

* * *

JOHN MACDONELL

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all members of the House depend on family to support us in our public service: our family at home and our political family here in Ottawa. It is with great sadness that I rise to talk about the passing of an important member of the Conservative political family.

John MacDonell was an incredible volunteer and adviser. He was my chief of staff during the Conservative government, and for seven years, he was chief of staff to the hon. Peter MacKay, including during the Afghanistan war.

We would have no modern Conservative Party but for John MacDonell's tireless work as the national councillor for Nova Scotia.

A proud lawyer and graduate from Dalhousie law school, he encouraged me to go to law school, and I worked under his tutelage for a summer at Stewart McKelvey.

A bursary in his name is being established at Dalhousie law school.

I want to say that John will be missed. The pride of John's life was his son, Jack, who was the apple of his eye. We are sending Jack love from John's political family.

A lawyer, a Tory and a patriot, John MacDonell will be missed. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

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● (1410)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, March 8, marked International Women's Day.

Last week, I had the privilege of hosting York Region women to gather, celebrate and listen to the words of several women.

Our York Region Liberal caucus joined together to recognize the importance of International Women's Day not only in celebrating

women but also in recognizing the need for ongoing efforts to reach gender equity.

I could not emphasize how powerful it was to sit in here and listen to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth and the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development. We also had three guest speakers: Anastasia Dieieva, a powerful woman from Ukraine, spoke of the challenges facing women in her home country; Lily Pourzand, a gender equality specialist and Iranian Canadian, addressed the heroic efforts of women in Iran; and Malika Khimji, a young woman who lives in our riding, shared her thoughts on the challenges and opportunities young women experience.

International Women's Day is one day a year, a very important one with a long history. We must continue to observe it, to remember the work that has been done and continues to be done. Moreover, every day, we must all work toward gender equity. We still have a long way to go.

Worldwide, only 24% of parliamentarians are women. In Canada, just over 30% are. Of course, women from marginalized communities are even less proportionally represented. We are doing a disservice to our country by not fully engaging all the talent we have in positions of leadership.

I want to end with a quote from Nellie McClung, a well-known Canadian suffragist and early member of the Alberta legislature: "Never Apologize. Never retract. Never explain. Get the thing done and let them howl."

* * *

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, my constituent, 20-something-year-old Anton came into my office asking for access to medical assistance in dying. He was a strong, strapping, articulate young man. He was obviously suffering mentally, as he wanted to die.

Shockingly, he had never seen a doctor or received any psychological counselling. We talked for hours, and I encouraged Anton not to give up and to get the mental help that he needed.

The problem is that many Canadians are just not getting the mental help they need. My Conservative colleagues and I do not believe that medical assistance in dying is an acceptable solution to mental illness and psychological suffering.

The Conservatives wish to put vulnerable Canadians back in control of their lives. We want to see them get the help that they need and provide them with the needed social and mental health supports. We must never give up on anyone.

* * *

FREEDOMS IN CANADA

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “Whoever controls the media, controls the mind” is a quote from musician Jim Morrison. Bill C-11 aims to do exactly that. This far-overreaching bill gives control to the government to decide what online media is and is not shown to Canadians.

Famed Canadian author Margaret Atwood said it best, “All you have to do is read some biographies of writers writing in the Soviet Union and the degrees of censorship they had to go through - government bureaucrats.... So it is creeping totalitarianism if governments are telling creators what to create.”

Art is subjective. The Liberal government will stop at nothing to control what Canadians see online.

If Bill C-11 passes, it kicks open the door to government censorship, empowering the Liberals to strengthen voices they deem good and silence those they deem bad.

Conservatives trust Canadians to choose what they want to watch online.

Enough is enough. Let us stop with the controlling legislation and kill Bill C-11.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL MICROCREDIT DAY

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 11, Quebec will celebrate its Journée nationale du microcrédit, or national microcredit day.

MicroEntreprendre is a group of 20 organizations that promote economic and social development, particularly for low-income women, immigrants or people with disabilities. Through their guidance and support, they help make the dreams of thousands of entrepreneurs come true. So far, more than 6,384 businesses have been created and maintained.

In Hochelaga, the Nabou Beauty hair salon was financed by Microcredit Montréal. Ms. Dieynaba Samb is proud to have created a mini Senegal where her community can, for the length of time it takes to get their hair cut, reminisce about their country.

For 32 years, Microcredit Montréal has been fighting poverty and exclusion by providing small loans for people who do not have access to the traditional financing system. The five-year survival rate among these businesses is twice the Quebec average and the repayment rate exceeds 90%.

The secret to this success is proximity, trust, guidance, a Quebec-style microcredit approach that means community credit.

Statements by Members

• (1415)

[English]

The Speaker: I would like to remind members that there are statements going on.

We will continue statements with the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

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UKRAINE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my gratitude to members of the Canadian Ukrainian Logistics Division. This is a group of Londoner volunteers who use their experience in military and policing to organize and deliver aid directly to Ukrainians.

Steve Longer, Rafal Schubert, Scott McCallum and Peter Kwiatkowski first travelled to Ukraine last may to track London community donations and deliver supplies. On the one-year anniversary of Putin's illegal war, three of their members were again at the front lines in Ukraine to deliver support. They saw first-hand the homes and communities destroyed by Putin and the resilience of brave Ukrainian women and men fighting for democracy. With their assistance, London has been able to collect and ship over 100 tonnes of aid, including enough purification devices for 20 million litres of water.

I ask all members to join me in thanking these brave volunteers for bringing London's spirit of solidarity to Ukraine.

* * *

[Translation]

HÉLÈNE DORION

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge in the House the great honour that Quebec writer Hélène Dorion just received.

Throughout her prolific career she has already earned honours as prestigious as the Order of Canada and the Ordre national du Québec, and will now have her work *Mes forêts* studied as part of the university curriculum for poetry in France. She is not only the first Quebecker to receive such an honour, but she is the first woman of any nationality to see her work become part of the curriculum in her lifetime.

Thousands of French students will dive into the words of the Hélène Dorion, become steeped in her poetry and share her wonderment at nature, an eternal source of inspiration for her, as evidenced by this passage from *Mes forêts*:

my forests are ghost-filled attics
they are the masts of stationary journeys
a wind garden where collide the fruit
of a season past
heading back toward tomorrow

Congratulations, Hélène Dorion.

*Oral Questions***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only are Canadians worried about foreign interference in our elections, but they are also shocked at the Liberal government's inability to take this crisis seriously. It is clear that this Prime Minister is more concerned about polling numbers than about Canadians' safety.

For example, instead of agreeing to the proposal put forward by all the opposition parties to launch an independent public inquiry, he opted for a secret process involving a secret committee and secret hearings, where the evidence will be kept secret and the truth of what happened will never be revealed to Canadians.

Furthermore, we learned this morning that the RCMP is actively investigating two Chinese-run police stations in Brossard and Montreal. This is not a partisan game. This is about Canada's public safety. We want to make sure Canadians continue to have confidence in our democratic electoral system and that communities across Canada are not being harassed by the communist regime in Beijing.

The Prime Minister needs to be honest. Canadians deserve answers and an independent public inquiry. If the Liberal government does not agree to our requests, Canadians will be happy to get themselves a new prime minister.

* * *

[English]

WORLD KIDNEY DAY

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March 9 is World Kidney Day. World Kidney Day promotes preventative education and advanced screening to improve kidney health around the world.

After a year of serving my constituents locally, in person and virtually in Parliament, this week also marks my in-person return to Parliament.

Hybrid Parliament played a crucial role in my health journey. It allowed me to fulfill all responsibilities as the MP for Steveston—Richmond East and protect my health at the same time. I was able to serve my community while I received dialysis treatment and recover from a kidney transplant I received last summer.

In closing, I want to thank BC Renal, the Kidney Transplant Clinic, the health and dialysis teams at Vancouver General Hospital and the Richmond Community Dialysis Unit, my colleagues across all aisles, and my family. Without them, my recovery and the honour of serving my community would not be possible.

For overall health, we must protect our kidneys, get screened and stay informed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the RCMP is investigating two alleged Chinese police stations, this time in Quebec.

The Prime Minister has known about Beijing's interference for the past 10 years, when Beijing gave the Trudeau Foundation \$200,000. He has known about these threats for years. He has had plenty of time to consult.

I want a date, please. When will we have a foreign influence registry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when foreign agents attempt to influence, monitor, intimidate or threaten Canadians, it is unacceptable.

The RCMP has said it is actively investigating these alleged police stations. As they have done in the past, they will not hesitate to act again. Everyone should feel safe in this country. We will spare no effort to protect Canadians from the unacceptable actions of hostile authoritarian states.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was on what date the Prime Minister will bring in a foreign influence registry. This is something his own top public servant has suggested and something he has discussed with the Australian Prime Minister, an idea he has known about for years and could have consulted on all of that time. One has to register if one wants to lobby on behalf of the food bank, but one does not have to register if one wants to manipulate our democracy on behalf of a foreign dictatorship. That is the case after eight years of the current Prime Minister.

Eight years is long enough. There has been enough talk. On what date will we have a foreign influence registry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take no lessons from a former minister of democratic institutions whose shining achievement was actually making it harder for Canadians to vote in elections. Over the past eight years, we have done more than any previous government to ensure that we have mechanisms, tools and ways to prevent and counter foreign interference and reassure Canadians that everything is being done. We will continue to do even more, including a foreign agent registry. We know how important it is to do everything to keep Canadians and our institutions safe.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked a second time for the date for a foreign influence registry, and he refuses to answer the question.

Oral Questions

Here is another question. The Prime Minister's department prepared a briefing that said there was a "large clandestine transfer of funds earmarked for the federal election from the PRC Consulate in Toronto". Will the Prime Minister commit to returning any of the funds the Liberal Party, its local associations, his leadership campaign or any Liberal nomination contestants received from the PRC?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have long known that politicians across political parties, across levels of government and around the world are targeted by foreign interference. This is a fact. Just yesterday, the 2023 annual threat assessment of the U.S. intelligence community spoke of China's "willingness to meddle in select election races that involved perceived anti-China politicians", so this is not a threat that Canada faces alone. We continue to work with our partners around the world.

At the same time, let me be clear that any suggestion that any member on either side of this House is not loyal to their constituents, but a foreign government, not only is dangerous but undermines our democracy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was whether the Prime Minister will commit to the Liberal Party, his leadership campaign or any other branches of his party returning any funds they received from this "large clandestine transfer". This information was in a briefing note that he received from his own department. He has known about this for months.

Once again, will the Prime Minister commit to returning any money that his party, his leadership campaign or any other branch of the Liberal Party got from the PRC?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the efforts of the Leader of the Opposition, Canadians know that foreign interference is not, and should never be, a partisan issue. That is why we will be appointing an independent expert to identify any gaps in our system. They will make public recommendations, which could include a formal inquiry or some other independent review process, and we will abide by those recommendations. We also have two national security bodies that will undertake independent reviews of foreign interference in our elections, and we are also taking further immediate action to bolster our institutions, better coordinate government efforts to combat foreign interference and more.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so he will not commit to giving back any money that his party got from this "large clandestine transfer". Instead, he delays, as he has been doing. He has known about this for seven years, and now he has these processes that have no time frame. They could go on for years without us getting answers or action.

He knowingly allowed this to go ahead in two successive elections, and now he is delaying. What is to stop it from happening again in the next election if we do not get answers before that election happens?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich for the former minister of democratic institutions,

who did nothing to counter foreign interference when he was in charge of our elections. All he did was make it harder for marginalized Canadians to vote in those elections.

What we actually did, starting eight years ago, was bring in a plan to protect democracy, which includes notifying Canadians in the event our ability to have a free and fair election is threatened, by including a panel of senior public servants informed by national security agencies and reviewed after every election. That is where Canadians can have confidence in our institutions and in our elections. We brought in rapid response mechanisms, digital citizen initiatives, NSICOP and other institutions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are reports of two so-called police stations working for the Chinese regime in Quebec, yet the Prime Minister wants to be the one to choose who investigates. We know that the Prime Minister has had reports from the intelligence services for years, yet he has done nothing. He wants to act alone. He wants to act in secret.

Was it through negligence or ignorance that the Prime Minister failed to disqualify himself for the role?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to be very clear about the different issues. Obviously, we are going to appoint an independent expert to look at the matter of interference in our political systems. I think that is important.

With regard to the police stations that we are seeing across the country and in Montreal, which are very worrisome, I can say that the RCMP and CSIS are already taking meaningful action and will continue to do their job to protect Canadians, particularly Canadians born outside Canada.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the best case scenario, the Prime Minister is always three, four or five steps behind. However, he is going to have to do something. He is going to have to appoint someone. He can call that person a rapporteur if he wants. It does not really matter. What matters is that the person in question is independent, at complete arm's length from him.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that this sort of appointment would be best left to the House?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tremendous confidence in the parliamentarians working and looking after our security institutions. That is why we created the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which includes members from all parties who have received sufficient security clearance to be able to fully investigate everything our security and intelligence services are doing. That is how parliamentarians are aware of everything that is happening in our intelligence systems. That is why we believe in Parliament, unlike the Conservatives.

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● (1430)

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the NDP forced the CEOs of three major grocery chains to finally explain themselves. However, instead of giving clear answers, the big bosses served up platitudes to justify filling their pockets on the backs of families. They never committed to transparency. Worse, they now want to adopt a code of conduct to regulate prices in their stores themselves. The fox is in charge of the henhouse.

When will the Liberals strengthen the powers of the Competition Bureau to ensure that people are not fleeced by these greedy billionaires?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians are very concerned about the price of groceries. That is why the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry wrote to the Competition Bureau a few months ago to ensure that all available tools are used. We are very pleased that the committee studied this matter yesterday, and I am very proud of our Liberal team, which is continuing its efforts to defend the interests of Canadians who are struggling to pay for groceries.

We will always be there, whether it is with a GST rebate, support for dental care or support for low-income renters. As the government, we are there to help Canadians get through these difficult times.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's non-answer is just more proof that the government is working for big grocers and not Canadian families.

If it were not for the New Democrats, the government would never hold grocery CEOs accountable. These are the grocers who fixed the price of bread while Canadians went hungry.

Canadians and the NDP do not trust grocers and their CEOs to write their own rules to regulate themselves, but apparently the Liberal government does.

Will the government commit today to strengthen the Competition Bureau and fight back against the food cartels so Canadians can stop being ripped off by the corporate greed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know well that Canadians are concerned about how much they are paying for groceries, which is why, months ago, the Minister of Innovation wrote to the Competition Bureau to ensure it was

using all available tools. It was also good to see the committee looking into this issue and calling grocers to account yesterday.

Our Liberal team will continue to stand up to ensure better answers, as well as continue to deliver real help for Canadians. Whether it is with dental supports and rental supports that Conservatives voted against, whether it is by doubling the GST rebate over six months to support Canadians or continuing to have their backs in different ways, we will be there for Canadians.

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*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister, foreign interference is more about Liberal security than national security.

Let us be serious. The Prime Minister wants a secret committee with secret hearings to report back to him on things that it has repeatedly told him and that he has always kept secret. However, a special rapporteur, a yes-man on the foreign interference file, is not the way to restore Canadians' confidence in our democracy.

The Prime Minister just said he trusts parliamentarians. Does he trust parliamentarians enough to let Katie Telford testify this afternoon?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his work on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Earlier today, I myself had the pleasure of appearing before the committee with my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Our colleague was obviously there. We answered the questions as expected.

This is what ministerial responsibility is all about, something that the Leader of the Opposition has often described himself.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2019, the Globe reported the PMO pressed the justice minister to intervene in SNC Lavalin's criminal prosecution. The Prime Minister responded by saying, "The allegations in the Globe story this morning are false." The allegations were later found to be true by the Ethics Commissioner, and the Prime Minister knew it.

The Globe has reported that CSIS documents show Beijing uses tactics to provide undeclared cash donations for federal elections and illegally reimburse donors.

Does the government believe these reports to be false?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since taking the reins of government in 2015, the government has put in place the resources, the authorities, the technology with the corresponding transparency that is necessary to shine a light on the way that, together, we need to combat foreign interference when it comes to our democratic institutions.

We will now take another significant step by appointing an independent expert who will put forward recommendations so we can take additional steps, so that, together, we can protect our democratic institutions. That is the commitment of this government. I hope all members will join us in this work.

• (1435)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, on February 23, the Prime Minister said in response to the *Globe* story about how Beijing used undeclared cash donations and illegally reimbursed donors that “there are so many inaccuracies in those leaks.”

The next day, he backtracked and said that he was not referring to the *Globe* story, but to some comments made two months earlier by his national security advisor Jody Thomas.

Why does the Prime Minister give the impression in these responses to these very serious, national threats that he is being less than forthcoming and truthful about the facts?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that, like him and all members, we take foreign interference very seriously, including as it relates to potential foreign interference through funding.

That is why the government put into place Bill C-76 to crack down on that threat. In addition to that, we set up two independent panels made up of our top public servants who verified that the elections in 2019 and 2021 were free and fair.

Now we will continue to work with public servants as well as with the independent expert in the special rapporteur to do this work together.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, documents reported in the *Globe* and *Mail* illustrate how the communist dictatorship in Beijing was operating an interference campaign in Canada, and it had two aims. One was to elect a Liberal government. The other was to defeat certain Conservative candidates.

Canadians deserve answers. We know that the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, was briefed on this very situation. Will the Prime Minister allow Katie Telford to testify at committee or will the Liberals continue, for a fourth day, their cover-up filibuster?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the supposition that a foreign government's objective is to elect a political party is a ridiculous notion. The reality is that the objective of foreign interference is to destroy our democracy. It is a threat to every single member in the House. The idea that every single member in the House is not united in repelling that threat is preposterous.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister still refuses to answer our questions about the foreign interference crisis shaking the country.

Now we find out that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are actively investigating two police stations allegedly controlled by the communist regime in Beijing and run by a municipal councillor from Brossard, Ms. Xixi Li.

Will the Prime Minister stop playing around with these serious issues and accept our call to launch an independent public inquiry into the interference by the communist regime in Beijing in Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that the Prime Minister just answered a series of questions on precisely that issue.

The good news is that he was here in the House yesterday and answered more than 40 questions. There was even a bit of a delay, as members will recall there was a technical problem. The Prime Minister was here specifically to answer the question my colleague asked.

As for the alleged police stations, my colleague from Public Safety and the RCMP were very clear: we have put an end to these alleged police stations in Canada.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all we learn from the Prime Minister's answers is that he is not saying anything.

If he does answer, it is that he is going to name a special rapporteur and that he will refer the investigation to a committee of parliamentarians who will not be able to talk about it. The members of this committee, Conservatives, Liberals and Bloc MPs, will be sworn to secrecy for the rest of their lives. What will we learn from this committee? We will learn nothing at all.

All we want to know is whether the Prime Minister will agree to an independent inquiry headed by someone endorsed by all the opposition parties and the Liberals, so that we can get to the bottom of foreign interference by Beijing in Canada.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concerns on this challenge regarding foreign interference. That is one of the reasons why we created the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, in co-operation with the opposition parties. This committee has already put forward recommendations—

• (1440)

The Speaker: I think there is a problem with interpretation.

I am going to ask the Minister of Public Safety to start his answer from the top.

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I share my colleague's concerns. That is why we created the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. It is a committee where there are opportunities for collaboration between the government and the opposition. We will build on all the measures already taken.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at last count, the Prime Minister had ignored two Chinese police stations in Quebec, more than 10 ridings where China is alleged to have interfered to influence the election and several intelligence reports.

The Prime Minister did everything wrong on this file. Still, he wants to act alone and in secret, as though there is something to hide.

Who in this government will stand up and speak to the Prime Minister, have him listen to reason and tell him we need to appoint a commissioner to carry out an independent public inquiry, immediately, right now? Who will dare stand up and speak to him?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, the government is working with the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and with the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency. It will also work with the special rapporteur and when that person tables recommendations, the government will follow them.

There is a lot of collaboration between the government and the agencies and officials who work independently to protect our democratic institutions.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on a somewhat lighter note, the arts, culture, language and communications are part of our soul in Quebec and part of what defines us as a nation.

The Bloc Québécois, and the member for Drummond in particular, was largely responsible for shaping much of the content of Bill C-11. The arts community was very appreciative of that. Unfortunately, the Conservatives turned their backs on a unanimous vote in Quebec's National Assembly and, quite frankly, betrayed it.

Is the minister committed to getting Quebeckers on board when Quebec issues are at stake?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for his question and for his interest in culture. I, too, want to acknowledge the work of the member for Drummond, the members of the Bloc Québécois, the members of the NDP and the government members.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives have no interest in culture, whether it is Quebec culture or culture from across Canada. All they do is listen to the web giants.

We will stand up for our cultural sector, for music, for movies and for videos. Our culture is who we are.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague was saying, we are now in the home stretch of the passage of Bill C-11.

I would like to remind members that Bill C-11 seeks to ensure that Quebec culture and Quebec and Canadian artists have their place and can succeed in the new digital world.

The Government of Quebec shared its demands concerning Bill C-11. It is asking that Quebec have a say in CRTC decisions that impact Quebec culture and that the Quebec act respecting the status of artists be respected.

How will the minister respond to Quebec's demands?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and, once again, for his work on Bill C-11. It is an important bill.

I have had several opportunities to have discussions with my Quebec counterpart. The Government of Canada will obviously have discussions with Quebec and will consult it throughout the process. It is important for us, as Quebeckers, and I would also say that it is important for all Canadians.

This bill will strengthen our cultural, music, television and film sectors. Despite the Conservative filibuster, despite roadblocks and the lack of respect for culture, we will move forward.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is another absolutely terrible day for the Liberal government and the Liberal Prime Minister. According to a Global News reporter, the Prime Minister was briefed on a top secret report that directly connects Beijing diplomats to choosing and funding preferred candidates.

Therefore, the reasonable question is this. How many of these Beijing diplomats did the Liberals expel? The awkward answer is zero. We are left with the question. Why? It must be really bad. What is the Prime Minister hiding?

● (1445)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been clear from the start. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had a firm and frank conversation last week in New Delhi with her G20 Chinese counterpart. We will always stand up for our sovereignty. We will always defend our democracy. We will always be there to protect Canadian safety. We will never tolerate foreign interference from any country in the world.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the government's response to Beijing diplomats directly influencing and attempting to influence our elections is a stern conversation. What is becoming abundantly clear is that the only thing the Liberals will stand up for is Liberal Party interests.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Why was not a single diplomat from Beijing expelled after everything had been exposed? What are those guys hiding?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has acted and she has declined a visa to a foreign operative from a country like China.

We will always be there, with eyes wide open, to defend our democracy, to protect our sovereignty. We continue to stand up for Canadian values.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we see again and again is that the government will always put the Liberal Party of Canada first. The documents that were leaked by CSIS, the foremost intelligence agency in our country, showed that there was in fact political interference by Beijing and that it benefited the Liberal Party of Canada. In fact, it states that Beijing wanted the Liberals to win.

The Prime Minister is skirting around and will not give clear answers. Will he at least allow his chief of staff to come and publicly testify at committee so Canadians can have the truth?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Justice O'Connor and Justice Iacobucci issued their reports urgently calling for intelligence oversight that involved all parliamentarians so that all parliamentarians could see into every corner of government, the Leader of the Opposition did nothing. The Leader of the Opposition was the minister for democratic reform and refused to act on those recommendations. What we have done every step of the way is make sure that parliamentarians can see into every corner of government.

I would pose a question to the member opposite. The member for St. Albert—Edmonton today said—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Victoria.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than 1,000 Iranian schoolgirls from dozens of different schools have fallen gravely ill, and it is suspected that they are being poisoned with biological warfare. As a mother of a young daughter, this is beyond horrific and horrifying. School-aged girls have been instrumental in the “Women, Life, Freedom” movement.

Iranian lawyers, experts from the United Nations and children's rights advocates are calling on governments around the world to support an independent investigation of these crimes, so will the government call for an independent investigation?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ever since the senseless killing of Mahsa Amini at the hands of the Iranian regime, the world has been horrified by the regime's violence on its own people and its blatant disregard for human rights. We are aware of reports that Iranian schoolgirls are being poisoned, and we are following the situation with great concern.

The truth of what happened to these young schoolgirls will come out. We will always stand with the women of Iran.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the majority of care workers are women. They look after our loved ones in long-term care, in hospitals and in child care centres, yet these essential workers do not receive the respect they deserve. Many care workers still have precarious immigration status, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. They deserve status now.

Will the Liberals finally grant permanent resident status to these migrant workers who are already contributing so much to society?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world is in turmoil, and we should be very happy with the government and its efforts in protecting and supporting. My heart goes out to all the women and girls who are affected by a regime that we need to condemn, which we will continue to do. Our government will always welcome the most vulnerable individuals.

* * *

● (1450)

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was International Women's Day. Women should be celebrated all the time. They have made and will continue to make incredible contributions to our economy and our country. “Every Woman Counts” is the theme this year. Let us celebrate all women who fought and continue to fight for their rights, all women who are thriving in everything they do.

Can the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development update this House on what our government is doing to support Canadian women, especially women entrepreneurs, for them to prosper and have a significant place in our economy?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for all of her hard work.

The women entrepreneurship strategy in Canada is working. Since 2018, our government has invested over \$7 billion, and in Canada, women entrepreneurs and women-led businesses are growing, at 18% now, up from under 16%. Our ecosystem is helping Canadian women entrepreneurs grow. Over 10,000 new businesses have been started by women, and over 12,000 businesses have grown under the support of this government.

I want to thank all the incredible women entrepreneurs across the country on International Women's Day.

*Oral Questions***HOUSING**

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, this week's housing data shows that the average rent across Canada has doubled, average monthly mortgage costs have doubled and variable mortgage holders are close to losing their homes. It is no surprise that after billions of taxpayer dollars were spent, records in fact, housing in this country is worse. It reminds me of the song we listened to growing up by Puff Daddy, *Mo Money Mo Problems*.

When will the Prime Minister end his “no money” inflationary policies so that Canadians can finally afford a home?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really interesting hearing members on that side talk about supports for Canadian renters. We introduced the Canada housing benefit to help tens of thousands of Canadian renters across the country—

The Speaker: I have to interrupt the hon. minister. I am having a hard time hearing his answer. It is nice to see everyone getting along and talking to each other, but it is getting a bit loud, and it is hard for those who want to hear the response.

The hon. minister, from the top so we can all hear the response.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that we have introduced supports for Canadian renters, from the Canada housing benefit to the \$500 top-up that will go to almost two million Canadian renters. It is really interesting to hear rhetoric from the other side. Over the years, not only have they voted against our real supports for Canadian renters, but they have no plan. They have not produced any housing plan or any workable ideas. I would urge the hon. member to take a look at our plan. It is a good plan and he should support it.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to have voted against every Liberal policy that doubled the cost of rent and monthly mortgage payments. When the Liberals came to power, people could rent an apartment for \$900. Now it is \$2,000. A mortgage that used to be \$1,400 is now over \$3,000.

Inflationary deficits are increasing mortgage interest rates, and the gatekeepers are blocking construction. When will they reverse these disastrous policies?

[*English*]

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians know is that they cannot trust the Leader of the Opposition when it comes to protecting their savings and when it comes to protecting their bottom line. The Leader of the Opposition thought that to get out of inflation, we could just invest in cryptocurrency, and that did not go so well.

Do members know what else he said? He said that child care was a slush fund for parents. I have travelled across this country and have heard from parents from coast to coast about how this is helping them at a time when there is a high cost of groceries, when rents are high and when they need to provide for their fami-

lies. Unfortunately, what they have learned is they cannot trust the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what Canadians know. When I was the minister responsible for housing, they could rent an average apartment in our 10 biggest cities for \$950 a month. Now it is over \$2,000 a month. When I was housing minister, it was \$1,400 a month for the average mortgage, and now it is \$3,200. One-fifth of mortgage holders at CIBC are actually watching their mortgage grow as Liberal deficits push up interest rates on their monthly payments. They have done nothing to stand up to the gatekeepers that block housing construction.

Will the Liberals get out of the way so homes can be built and we can bring home ownership home for our youth?

● (1455)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member was minister responsible for housing, there were 2.7 million more Canadians in poverty than there are today. When the member was minister responsible for poverty reduction, there were 450,000 more children in poverty than there are today. When the member was the minister responsible for democratic institutions, he made it harder for 150,000 Canadians to vote. What we understand is we are moving forward and we are helping Canadians. He has only held them back.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was the minister for housing, we did not have students living in homeless shelters as we do right now. We did not have nine in 10 young people saying they will never afford a home. In fact, people could buy the average home for \$450,000 and rent an average apartment for \$950. They are now double. The Liberals have doubled house prices, doubled mortgage payments and doubled rent. Their inflationary deficits are driving up interest rates, and they have done nothing to get gatekeepers out of the way and get housing built.

Will the Liberals reverse these disastrous housing policies so that we can bring home ownership home for our youth?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that when the leader of the official opposition was in office, his government withdrew from social housing. It downloaded social housing to provinces and municipalities. We have brought in measures to increase housing supply and to support municipalities and regional governments to build more housing. What did they do? They voted against that.

Since he has become leader, he has offered no plan for housing. I would really encourage him, with all my sincerity, to look at our plan. We actually have a really good housing plan that delivers supports directly to people, directly to municipalities and directly to indigenous communities, and has re-established—

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at last, there was light. At last, after six years of inaction on Roxham Road, the federal government sent the Minister of Immigration to the United States to renegotiate the safe third country agreement.

I have a very simple question for him, but it is a question to which nobody has ever received an answer. What does renegotiating the safe third country agreement mean?

What concrete demands did the minister make of Washington? Surely he did not go to Washington to take in a Capitals game. He went with concrete demands for the Biden administration. What were those demands?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, I know that the Bloc Québécois will never form the government. That is what we hope.

However, I want to clarify one thing here in the House. Bilateral negotiations take place in private. Our minister was in Washington. He met with his counterpart. We will continue to strengthen that agreement.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): What a surprise, Mr. Speaker.

We are not asking the minister what the results were in Washington. We already know. There were none at all. We saw it from the first second that he showed up alone to the scrum yesterday without an American representative by his side. That must have been embarrassing.

Obviously, we will not talk about results, but can we at least know, as a famous politician said, what he asked? He is saying that he is negotiating the safe third country agreement. That is great, but it means that he must be negotiating something. The question is easy. What were the actual demands that he made of Washington this week?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The United States is our neighbour and closest ally. We are working closely with the Biden administration. As mentioned, the minister had a bilateral meeting with his American counterpart. We will continue to defend Canada's interests. We will not stop now. We will continue to work to strengthen and modernize the safe third country agreement.

Oral Questions

• (1500)

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years of the Liberal government, housing rates and the cost of living are skyrocketing for Canadians. The average rate for a studio apartment in my home province of British Columbia is \$2,200, and mortgage rates are doubling, all because of the Prime Minister's out-of-control inflationary spending. Families cannot afford to eat, heat or pay their mortgages, and he could not care less.

It is time for the Prime Minister to remove the municipal gatekeepers so projects can get built and to stop his out-of-control spending so that people can once again afford a roof over their head. Better yet, why does he not get out of the way so we can fix what he broke?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will assure the hon. member that in his home province, the Government of Canada is delivering direct rental supports to tens of thousands of Canadian renters. In addition to that, we are introducing the housing accelerator fund, a \$4-billion program that is meant to partner with municipalities to remove the barriers that prevent low housing supply.

Unfortunately, members of the party opposite not only voted against that, but played procedural games to prevent real supports for renters from going quickly to Canadian renters across the country. They should look at our plan. It is a pretty good plan.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years, the dream of home ownership is disappearing under the Prime Minister's watch. Home ownership is becoming unattainable for many Canadians across this country today. House prices have doubled, and monthly mortgage costs are bleeding every bank account in this country. After eight years, because of the reckless government's spending, dreams are being shattered.

Will the Prime Minister simply get out of the way so that the Conservatives can fix what he has broken?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was in the member's province on Monday to make a great announcement with the Government of Saskatchewan. It means that as of April 1, child care fees in registered child care spaces will be reduced to \$10 a day, making Saskatchewan the third jurisdiction to reduce child care fees to \$10 a day. This helps families right across the country pay for the high cost of everything. Oftentimes, the cost of child care is equivalent to a monthly mortgage payment. I heard from so many families in Regina about how important this is for them.

We are there to support them, help them make life more affordable and give our kids the best possible start in life.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep breaking records, but not records we can be proud of.

The Prime Minister has plunged us into the worst inflation in 40 years. Because of him, Canadians have to tighten their belts and choose between feeding, housing or clothing themselves. After eight years with the Liberals in power, Canadians have to choose between one essential need and another.

When will the Prime Minister admit that he has harmed Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear.

Who in the House helped Canadians when they needed it? It is the government. We lowered taxes for Canadians not once, not twice, but three times. However, the Conservatives voted against those tax reductions. When we lowered taxes for workers, the Conservatives voted against. When we lowered prices for seniors, what did the Conservatives do? They voted against.

We are for Canadians, the Conservatives are against.

* * *

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, electric vehicles are not just a great way to reduce emissions, but they are cheaper to fill than a tank of gas, and they are creating thousands of jobs right here in Canada. They are also what many Canadians want, and in some parts of this country, the wait-list can be over a year. Canadians want to have their vehicles now.

How is the government going to ensure that affordable electric vehicles are available for Canadians to purchase right now?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, zero-emission vehicles are where the rubber hits the road, for Canadians who want to reduce emissions and get off the roller coaster of high gasoline prices. In fact, the third quarter of 2022 saw the highest EV registration on record, with almost 9% of sales. Canada is well positioned to be a leader in making the vehicles the world is looking to drive. However, we need to increase production while ensuring that vehicles are available for purchase here in Canada, which is why we have set a mandatory target of 20% of vehicle sales to be zero emission by 2026, 60% by 2030 and 100% by 2035.

* * *

● (1505)

HOUSING

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current Prime Minister rent and housing affordability costs have doubled. Canada's housing affordability is in a crisis, and it has not been this bad in 41 years. Average monthly mortgage rates now cost Canadians more than \$3,000

per month. In my home province it is no secret that Greater Moncton currently has the worst housing crisis in the country.

When will the Prime Minister stop his Liberal inflationary spending, get rid of municipal gatekeepers and make housing affordable for all Canadians?

[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 Conservatives say that they feel empathy for Canadians who are struggling right now due to inflation and higher interest rates.

However, real empathy also needs to be shown when it comes time to vote on measures that actually help Canadians. Unfortunately, the Conservatives vote against them every single time.

When we offered a \$500 top-up to Canadians struggling to pay rent, the Conservatives voted against it. When we decided to put in place a series of measures to help Canadians purchase their first home, the Conservatives votes against them.

Instead of just complaining, they could propose solutions that we could implement.

The Speaker: I do not know what is going on right now.

[English]

As we get closer to the end everybody seems to be talking to each other. It is not even heckling. It is just talking, and it is just kind of a rising hum. I am just going to ask everyone to pay attention to the questions and the answers, and they might be surprised.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current Liberal Prime Minister, rent and mortgage payments have more than doubled, and the dream of home ownership for young people is fading. I spoke to a young homeowner from Strathroy who told me that he is skipping meals just to pay his mortgage payment and that the bank is about to foreclose on his home. He is not alone. This is happening everywhere, thanks to the Liberals' reckless inflationary spending.

Will the Liberal government take responsibility for the reckless housing crisis it has created, stop its inflationary spending and remove the gatekeepers, or get out of the way and let Conservatives fix this?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is really pretty rich coming from the Conservatives, who got out of the way entirely and thought that housing was not a federal responsibility at all. This is an opportunity to celebrate something we did today with the Government of Alberta: \$27 million from us and \$27 million from the Government of Alberta for 600 new affordable housing units across the province. This is a good day for Alberta, a good day for Canadians and a good day for affordable housing, not that the Conservatives have anything to do with that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, paying their rent has become a headache for Canadians. The monthly cost of a two-bedroom apartment has doubled in the 10 largest Canadian cities since 2015. This phenomenon was created by this Prime Minister with his out-of-control spending, which has impacted inflation. Young families are giving up on their home ownership dreams. Others have resigned themselves to living in their parents' basement.

Will the Prime Minister finally accept responsibility for the crisis he has created?

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, our government is well aware of the difficulties Canadians are facing. Over the past seven months, inflation in Canada has remained stable or decreased. Although Canada is in a good economic situation at present, we continue to help people and to provide support to those who need it most because we know that rents are high.

What we do not understand is why, every time that we want to help those in need, the Conservatives vote against it.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since August 2021, when the Taliban took over Afghanistan, the people of Afghanistan have been subject to the rule of this brutal terrorist group. They have had their rights and freedoms stripped away from them. Women and girls have been subjected to misogynistic laws, discrimination and now even prevented from attending school. Canada has continued to provide humanitarian assistance, immigration services and aid, because that is what Canada does.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on how the government intends to continue support the people of Afghanistan?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the relationship between Canada and Afghanistan is deep and abiding. That is why, after Kabul fell, we introduced a program that would resettle 40,000 refugees. That is a goal we are approximately 30,000 into, and we will continue to do that.

We cannot forget about the women, the girls and the religious minorities who have been systematically targeted by the Taliban.

That is why, today, we introduced Bill C-41, which would reduce barriers and would allow us to deliver the humanitarian aid, the food, the shelter and the clothing they need. By doing so, by passing this law, and hopefully with the support of all opposition parties, we will be able to get that support to them as quickly as possible, while at the same time tackling and pushing back against the Taliban.

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● (1510)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when veterans, advocates and VAC workers come together to say the same thing, the minister must listen. They want the contract of \$560 million given to a company owned by Loblaw's cancelled, because it is not working. It has been delayed, service providers are still unable to provide services, and veterans and their loved ones are being left behind.

Will the minister stop ignoring veterans' concerns and cancel this botched contract?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's concern about veterans, but this rehab contract provides 14,000 veterans with access to over 9,000 professionals located in 600 areas right across the country. There is absolutely no one falling down between the cracks. What we are doing as a government is to make sure we provide for veterans, where they need it and when they need it.

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TAXATION

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, at committee yesterday, grocery store giants like Loblaw's claimed they pay their fair share of taxes, but we know that is not true. While regular Canadians struggle with the rising cost of living, the wealthiest corporations in the country are busy avoiding \$30 billion in corporate taxes, as they report much higher book profits, which is what they report to shareholders, than they pay in taxable income after exploiting loopholes.

The U.S. already has a minimum tax on these higher book profits. Will the governing party follow suit in budget 2023?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has worked, since we formed government, to close tax loopholes and to ensure everyone pays their fair share. We brought in the Canada recovery dividend and increased taxes on bank profits and on those of insurance companies. We continue to work with OECD partners to make sure there is a minimum tax that is in place. These are concrete steps and the work continues.

*Government Orders***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Brad Johns, Attorney General and Minister of Justice for the Province of Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Kelvin Goertzen, Minister of Justice and Attorney General for the Province of Manitoba.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the traditional Thursday question, where the government House leader updates the House as to the business for the rest of this week and for the week after next.

Next week, of course, is a constituency work week, and I would like to wish all Canadians of Irish heritage, and those who enjoy being Irish for the day, a happy Saint Patrick's Day, which will take place on the Friday of next week. Being someone of Irish descent, I will be celebrating with my friends and family.

I also want to point out to the government House leader that the last time the House leaders were given a House calendar, there two days next week that he had not informed us of what the business would be. I hope he can inform us today of that Thursday and Friday.

I would signal to the government House leader that, were the government to table legislation to establish a registry for agents working on behalf of a hostile state government, the official opposition would look upon that very favourably and work to facilitate the passage of such an act. It has been months since the Prime Minister has been briefed on the threat that poses to Canada and our democratic institutions, yet they have done nothing. I hope the government House leader will take advantage of those two days and bring forward legislation that protects Canadian democracy.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start with joining the member opposite in wishing all who are recognizing Saint Patrick's Day a very happy Saint Patrick's Day. I can say that, with some roots of mine that come from Tipperary, I will join them in celebrating that day.

Also, I hope all members have the opportunity over the constituency week to be with their constituents and their families. I hope that it is productive for them, and I look forward to seeing all members back in this place.

With respect to the question on hostile state actors, the member opposite knows of our shared commitment to repel such forces, and I look forward to working with him. I appreciate his very helpful suggestions as to where that might fall on the calendar, and I look forward to fruitful discussions as to what might take place on those two mysterious days.

However, I can say that tomorrow we will begin the debate at second reading of Bill C-33 concerning port systems and railway safety.

I would like to inform the House that Monday, March 20, and Wednesday, March 22, shall be allotted days.

Finally, on the Tuesday of that week, we will resume second reading debate of Bill C-23, the historic places of Canada act.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[*English*]

ONLINE STREAMING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate on Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, and of the amendment.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and represent Peterborough—Kawartha.

I will start by saying that art is subjective. Art is in the eye of the beholder. What may be amazing to me and what may be amazing to members is completely subjective. How in the world could we ever allow bureaucracy to dictate what is art? That is a question I would ask as we look into Bill C-11.

There is nothing more inclusive than the Internet. It does not matter where we live or what we look like, there is a place for us online, for now, but Bill C-11 jeopardizes this freedom. It jeopardizes this free market.

I can remember walking into a room with online content creators, mom bloggers who had created a community that literally saved the lives of women who were suffering with postpartum, who were suicidal, who were struggling with their mental health. These women were extreme introverts, meaning they otherwise would not have been able to create this medium if there were not able to flip open their computers and write something online that connected them to hundreds, thousands and millions of people, built a community and allowed their voices to be heard.

If we go to the Canadian government website, it states this about competition: "Competition pushes individuals, firms and markets to make the best use of their resources, and to think outside the box to develop new ways of doing business and winning customers. This not only drives productivity up, it also improves our own standard of living."

Government Orders

Bill C-11 would go after a competitive market that needs zero government interference. Online content creators are making their own destiny. They are building communities. They are raising money for not-for-profits and charities. They are connecting people all over the world. It is a major concern when the government wants to interfere, dictate and control what it thinks people at home should be watching.

Artistry and creation are not a choice. If we ask artists, they will tell us they did not choose it; it chose them. They have to create. It is what fuels them. It is simply who they are.

What someone values as art or great content is completely independent of the consumer. I may love Cat and Nat, two Toronto-based “mompreneurs” who built an empire by creating an online space for moms. They were, for the record, turned away by countless broadcast agencies and had the door slammed in their face multiple times, but because of the free market of the Internet, they were able to build an empire and connect millions of moms. They are from Toronto, Canadian content creators.

What about “Train with Joan”, made by the 70-year-old Cobourg-based woman who transformed her life using physical fitness and now reaches millions of people online? She is the inspiration so many of us need to know that it is never too late to change our mind and body. Would she have been given an opportunity on a broadcast station? Would she have been given the same opportunity that the Internet allowed her to reach the people she reached?

It is called choice. It is called the freedom to find and choose what to watch. Why in the world would we ever want the government to decide what is worthy of being seen and what is not? This is what Bill C-11 would do. It would give the Liberals the control to decide what we see and watch online.

In the online world, we often hear of a term called “organic reach”. This is the ultimate goal for a content creator. A creator puts content online and the free market decides if it is worthy of liking, sharing and commenting. We have already seen organic reach being meddled with by Facebook and other platforms because of paid reach tactics, a play-to-play system, which has caused problems, so why in the world would government want to meddle even further with this system? Why in the world do we want the government to decide what we watch and see?

• (1520)

Jim Morrison said that those who control the media, control the mind. I really want people to think about what this legislation is and why it is being tabled. Famed Canadian author, Margaret Atwood said it best, saying that this is not a problem that needs fixing. She said, “It is creeping totalitarianism if governments are telling creators what to create.”

The approach of how this bill has been managed is awful and simply undemocratic. In the House, for those who do not know, a bill must be approved at all three readings before it is sent to the Senate to be approved and given royal assent. The Senate should be a safeguard for Canadians when major concerns are raised. There were 26 amendments put forth by the Senate. This is a very high number and speaks volumes to the fact that this bill should be thrown out.

What is the point of the Senate and expert testimony if the Liberals refuse to listen? How is this supposed to build trust with Canadians when people are silenced? When people are silenced, that is censorship, and it is our job as elected officials to bring balance to this room, to find the common ground, to listen to both sides.

I will tell the Liberals, as somebody who has a background in broadcasting, the Broadcasting Act one hundred per cent needs to be updated, but this bill is trying to regulate a free market space of the Internet, and there is no place for the government to do that.

Simon Wiesenthal, a famous Nazi hunter and fighter for human rights, said, “Freedom is not a gift from heaven. One must fight for it every day.” The Tour for Humanity bus was here on Parliament Hill yesterday. I had the opportunity to tour it.

Censorship does not work. History has shown us this over and over again. The Liberals have refused to make the policy direction to the CRTC on how the legislation would be implemented public until after the bill is passed. Let us think about that for a second. The Liberals have refused to make the policy direction to the CRTC on how the legislation would be implemented public until after the bill is passed.

If the Liberals main intention is to promote Canadian content, why in the world would they ask us to sign first and ask questions later. This is so sketchy. Why not just tell Canadians now? What are they hiding? Why are they not being transparent?

Critics are furious, and so they should be, because the heritage minister announced a complete rejection of the senators' work that excluded user content from CRTC regulation after he said they would not. Somewhere right now there is a quirky, talented, gifted content creator who has not discovered that they fit somewhere. They have been told no. Maybe they have not found their community. Maybe they have not found their tribe. However, they hit the upload button, and all of a sudden, their world changes and so does that community's world.

There is much that is great about the Internet. For better or worse, it is here. I have to be honest, I am absolutely shocked that the NDP does not see the value of independent, free market content creators who are doing so much good for social justice and all the things they fight for in the House. It is shocking to me that we are having this fight when we are here to elevate voices of Canadians, to give them the freedom to use their voice for good. It makes no sense to me why we are fighting this bill.

Government Orders

I came here with an open mind, with optimism that we are here to elevate voices. This bill is censorship. It makes no sense. I appreciate and agree a hundred per cent that the Broadcasting Act needs to be updated, but this bill is not achieving that. Its intent is to control online content.

I will end with this: Enough is enough. Stop with the controlling legislation, and please, kill Bill C-11.

• (1525)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the Conservative members of Parliament who are spreading misinformation to Canadians. In no way and in no clause is there anything that would infringe on the rights and freedoms of Canadians. That is nowhere within the legislation, and yet we get a member of Parliament from the Conservative Party who is quite content to spread misinformation. I cannot use the word lies, so I will not say that, but the member is spreading misinformation.

The Speaker: I was distracted, but if I may interject before the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge says anything, I want to remind hon. members that they cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly in the House. I do not know if that covers it. It is a rookie mistake.

I will let the member continue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It was a rookie mistake, Mr. Speaker. I apologize, wholeheartedly.

The point is that there is nothing at all within the legislation that would infringe upon a person's rights and freedom, and yet the Conservative Party members continue to go out and spread information that is not accurate and it is causing a lot of anxiety in our communities.

Could the member cite something specific within the legislation that clearly says that it is an infringement on a person's rights or freedoms?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Mr. Speaker, I cannot wrap my head around what it is the Liberals do not understand. When they are saying they are going to control what Canadians see and read, it makes no sense. The critics have spoken up. There are hundreds and hundreds of them. They have said to the heritage minister that he has completely rejected the senators' amendment that would exclude user content from CRTC regulation. They said that they were going to do one thing and they are doing another. It makes no sense.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her passionate speech.

She began by talking about art. Art certainly offers a certain perspective on nature. Something becomes art when the viewer decides that it is artistic. An author once said that to read a book is to write another. The artistic aspect certainly lies in someone viewing it more than its distribution. We know that everything in the art world is what ultimately constitutes culture.

I want to ask my colleague what impact Bill C-11 will have on culture.

[*English*]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I enjoy conversing with the hon. member and I promise him that I will get better at my French one day and answer him in French. In answer to his question, culture is not force-fed by the government. Culture is created by the people.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, since the 1970s, the Government of Canada has regulated television broadcasters and radio broadcasters. When people turn on the radio, a certain amount of the content that they listen to has to be Canadian content. People may agree or disagree with those rules, but I have never heard it characterized as censorship.

I wonder if my hon. colleague down the way would consider those rules around Canadian content, which we have had since before I was born, to be censorship.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, having worked for a Canadian broadcasting company as I did for 12 years, I understand Canadian content. I understand that the Broadcasting Act needs to be updated, and I stated that clearly in my speech. However, this bill would not do that. There is an unintended intention here to control the Internet. This is a massive problem to society. That is what we are speaking about. Therefore, absolutely, that is censorship.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I feel as though we are in a space where we are talking past each other, because nothing I am hearing about this bill being about censorship makes any sense when I read the bill. We have a Broadcasting Act, and we would now be equalizing some of the playing field, so that Canadian writers and Canadian screenwriters are not losing out because of the online streaming from the big producers of Hollywood content, and sometimes Canadian content. All I can ask is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the member for Peterborough—Kawartha some seconds to answer.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I would actually like to think we all want the same thing, but the more I am in this House, I start to doubt that. I really do, because at the end of the day Conservatives trust Canadians to decide what they want to watch, and we do not believe that the government getting in the way of what their gifts are should be what decides what Canadians should or should not do, so that is my answer to the member.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, normally, there would not be much debate in the House when we talk about making updates to the Broadcasting Act, which came into effect in 1991. At face value, most Canadians would say that a lot has changed since then. A little thing called the Internet came along, and most would agree.

I have talked about this topic in the House before and I am pretty proud of myself. I am pretty sure that I was the first MP in Canadian history to put Boyz II Men in the parliamentary record, when talking about the legislation before us, because times have changed a little bit. Back in 1991, Boyz II Men, Bryan Adams, MC Hammer and Monty Python were on the charts. I wanted to put that in the record again, and I am glad I have done that.

The goals of the Broadcasting Act have been reasonable: respecting official languages and providing an avenue for Canadian content in the traditional media at the time of TV and radio. Here is the thing I have said in the House, sadly, on many issues over and over again: Only the NDP and the Liberals, working together, can take something so mundane and so innocuous and make a disaster out of it when it comes to policy.

Here is how I know that. Outside of the Ottawa bubble, there are not too many Canadians who know what Bill C-4 or Bill S-252 or Bill C-39 is when it comes to government legislation. We know that the government is in trouble and we know it is on the wrong side of public opinion when a bill title becomes famous. In the last couple of weeks or couple of months, Bill C-21 has become synonymous with an attack on rural Canadians, indigenous communities and hunters, when the government tried to ban commonly used hunting rifles. Here we are now, with the famous term “C-11”, known by millions of Canadians across the country today as the most blatant attempt by the Liberals and the NDP, and bureaucrats in Ottawa, to have control over what Canadians see and what they search on the Internet.

If that was not convincing enough, Bill C-11 being a household name to millions of Canadians, we know we are in trouble when Conservatives and Margaret Atwood are on the same page, pushing back against the government. She is a wonderful Canadian, one of the most regarded and successful Canadian artists and content creators this country has ever seen. Canadians do not have to take my word for it or believe this side of the bench if they do not want to. Canadians will take Margaret Atwood's word on Canadian culture and content any day of the week over that of the Liberals and the NDP.

I want to give members the dictionary version of what she said. She said some pretty harsh things, calling out the government on Bill C-11. When we break it down and use the dictionary to further define what she is calling out the government for, it is creating a centralized and dictator-like system of control that requires complete subservience to the state.

This is bad legislation. They know it. It has been ping-ponged back and forth between the House of Commons and the Senate. It is back in the House of Commons, and it is going to go back to the Senate. Every time there is a committee hearing, every time there are more witnesses testifying, there are more questions than answers about what the government is doing here with this bill. From consumer groups to legal experts to content creators, many, many groups from every walk of life and every angle on this topic are calling out the government's direction and how bad and how flawed the bill is.

Government Orders

I am proud to stand as a Conservative to say that when we form government, we will repeal Bill C-11. We will kill Bill C-11, as simple as that.

Let us get into the weeds and talk about some of these pieces bit by bit. One of the things we hear the Liberals and the NDP say is that we need to support Canadian content more.

When I think about that, I pull up a list and say, sure, let us support Canadian content, things like *Deadpool*. It was filmed in Vancouver, starring Canadian actor Ryan Reynolds, with a screenplay by Canadian Paul Wernick, based on a Canadian comic book character.

We have *Canadian Bacon*. Who could forget that? There is John Candy, a legendary Canadian actor, in a story involving Canada.

I talked about Margaret Atwood. We have *The Handmaid's Tale*, based on her book. When we look at the production, the series was filmed in Mississauga, Toronto, Brantford, Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Cambridge.

I think of Canadian content like *All or Nothing*, a series on the Toronto Maple Leafs. It is a five-part series that followed the Leafs for months during the 2020-21 season. It is narrated by a Canadian, Will Arnett. It used Canadian crews.

Is this all Canadian content? No, every one of those examples I just cited does not meet the definition and criteria for Canadian content in the definitions that we have.

- (1535)

Bill C-11 is currently 56 pages long, and any Canadian can go online and look at it. They can hit Ctrl+F and search. Nowhere in there does it talk about modernizing and cleaning up that definition. I will argue that this is not about Canadian content, but about something else.

Every time, we put an amendment forward to clarify. If the government wants to debunk a myth and say that what we are saying is not the case, it can clarify it and put in amendments to say what it is not, to exclude certain things. The government refused to do so. It says, “Don't worry. We are not going to determine that. It's going to be the CRTC.”

This brings me to my next point, about another fundamentally flawed part of the legislation. The CRTC is an Ottawa-based acronym. Federal acronyms go left, right and centre around here. It is an agency in Ottawa, and on the Quebec side as well, in the national capital region, full of bureaucrats who, behind closed doors, would not only set the rules for what is Canadian content, but also, through the bill, be directed to start controlling the search results we have on the Internet.

Government Orders

Members heard that right: “behind closed doors”. We have asked repeatedly to put some sunshine, sunlight and transparency on those protocols. There are no criteria in the bill. There is no public formula. There are no clarifications or guardrails on what those protocols are, so for Canadians, when it comes to what they search and what they want to see, whether it is searching on Google, Crave, YouTube or any other platform, as a Canadian here and now, the government will control what goes up in search results and what goes down, and we would not be able to find out the algorithms and calculations it uses, because of CRTC bureaucrats doing it behind closed doors. They never have to share their reasoning, or what I call “showing their homework”. That speaks volumes.

The Prime Minister and the NDP will say not to worry because the CRTC is an arm's-length agency of the federal government. “It is independent,” they say. Let us just debunk that right now. The CRTC reports to the Liberal Minister of Canadian Heritage. Its chair and the commissioners who are working there and leading that organization are appointed directly by the Prime Minister and the Liberal cabinet.

Nobody believes it is arm's-length, and nobody believes the legislation is about Canadian artists and everyday Canadians, because if it were the right thing to do and the popular thing to do, and if there were no problems about it, the government would have made that whole process a lot more public, rather than punting it over behind closed doors.

The bill is not about sunlight. It is not about Canadian artists and content creators. I say the bill is a Trojan horse, because there are some very big cheerleaders for it. The bureaucracy at the CRTC would be exploding in size. The size of the Internet is massive. The amount of content uploaded every single day is huge. It is going to take an administrative swarm of new bureaucrats to go through, and the people who are going to hit the jackpot, the people who are doing cartwheels in downtown Ottawa, are the lobbyists who would be hired by all these groups, associations and artists to try to lobby to get them, when the CRTC goes behind closed doors, to take what is going on.

As I share my time with the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, we will continue the commentary on this and how it works. If someone is a budding content creator in north Winnipeg, a Franco-Ontarian or an indigenous artist in northern Canada, in Nunavut, they can currently upload, and may be the best content win. The cream of the crop rises. Canadians will determine what they like and what they want to watch, and that should be the most popular search result. That is the most organic way possible. Trust me, the best way is to let Canadians do their own work and let the organic way go. Good videos go to the top. We have thousands of artists who have made a living by creating content and continue to do so. We do not need to fix what is not broken.

I will wrap up by saying that Bill C-11 is bad. It is online censorship. Ottawa telling 37 million Canadians what they should watch and see is wrong. The Liberals and the NDP have had years to get this right, and now they are just being stubborn.

• (1540)

We oppose this bill now, and as a Conservative government, we would kill Bill C-11.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, the member referred to the Liberals and the NDP. It is the Liberal members of the House of Commons, the Bloc members of the House of Commons, the NDP members and the Green Party members. It is only the Conservative Party that is spreading the misinformation that is out there.

The member stood in his place and tried to give a false impression, saying that the government is trying to control what Canadians are watching. In no way whatsoever can the member cite anything within this legislation that would prevent a Canadian from watching whatever he or she wants to watch on the Internet. There is nothing there, so we would think that would stop.

The motivating factor for the Conservative Party on Bill C-11 is purely finances, feeding a frenzy of individuals it wants support from. I say “shame on the Conservative Party” for not protecting cultural industries and the arts in Canada.

• (1545)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, my colleague spends a lot of time in the House. I would encourage him to read clause 7 of this piece of legislation. That is the exact reason why Conservatives have major concerns and are calling out this bill as flawed.

Liberals have had so many opportunities in the House of Commons, in the Senate and in committee, through amendments, to do this, but the reality of the situation is true. They are punting the power to the CRTC behind closed doors, to create algorithms on what goes up in searches and what goes down. That is control. That is censoring something.

If it is organic and what people want to watch, and the Liberals do not like it, they could put a formula in and make the company have it go down. If they have these big lobbyists who advocate to tweak that formula, all of a sudden search results can go up. It was not a problem until Bill C-11 came along and the government's intent. It has had every opportunity to clarify it, and it refuses.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, in my life as a parliamentarian, there are things I find difficult, and one example is when either individuals or parties try to trash things that make perfect sense, simply for the sake of trashing them.

The Conservatives are clearly talking here about attacks on freedom of expression. Nothing in this bill constitutes an attack on freedom of expression. In fact, Pierre Trudel, an eminent law professor at Université de Montréal who is highly respected by all Quebecers and Canadians, has said that this bill does not infringe on freedom of expression. The Department of Justice even studied the matter and came to the same conclusion.

What does my colleague say to that?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I do not know if my translation device is broken or not, but am I hearing the Bloc Québécois supporting a bill that gives power for bureaucrats in Ottawa and the federal government to control what the people of Quebec see on a search engine result? I could have bet on a lot of things, but I never would have bet that the Bloc Québécois would be supporting Bill C-11, especially when the provincial government and numerous groups in that province have said this should not be standardized and centralized by the federal government. Shame on the Bloc Québécois for doing what it is doing.

The Bloc Québécois was wrong on Bill C-5. Bloc members voted for it and now they are regretting it. They are going to vote for Bill C-11, and I will bet \$10 that in about a year, they will be regretting that too.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am finding it very difficult to address this without trying to make the context larger. Let us imagine that in the digital world we thought everything was going to be more fun, so we invited Airbnbs into our neighbourhoods and we have discovered that we lose housing because Airbnbs compete with the hotels and take up residential space.

In the world of entertainment, digital is looking like we can play with it ourselves, we can put up cat videos, but then we discover that Canadian content, Canadian screenwriters, Canadian writers, Canadian producers are being disadvantaged by online streaming of the giants. Just as in the past when we needed Canadian content to bring us the shows that told us what it was to be Canadian, whether it was *The Friendly Giant*, *The Beachcombers* or whatever, we need protection for Canadian content because in the digital world it is all different. That is all this bill would do.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, the bill is flawed in so many ways, and I will give an example. We heard at committee that we need to have this to generate more Canadian content. The minister quotes that it would bring \$1 billion more. Here is the thing. At committee, various organizations in the industry have said they are already investing \$5 billion per year in the industry, but they need this control.

My argument to the member, the Liberals, the NDP, the Bloc, the Greens and anybody else who thinks this bill is a good idea is that there have been thousands of artists across this country who have gotten their start online and with the freedom of the Internet to rise up and make a living. We have had success to date. It is gatekeepers being brought in, and it is wrong.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here today talking about the Liberals' online censorship bill, Bill C-11. That is what this is. It is an attempt by government to meddle in the leisure time and the cultural and social education that Canadians have. Sometimes, under the Liberals' proposal, Canadians would have to pay for it. Canadians will subscribe to services and pay for their own Internet service and the Liberals would decide what they should be watching and what they should not be watching.

It is interesting, but not surprising after eight years of the Liberal government, that it is on full display now for Canadians that it is a

government that wants to control what Canadians see and control what Canadians think.

This is a theme we have seen over the last eight years with a Prime Minister who is always looking to silence his critics and who is also looking to discredit those individuals who have the reputation, who are able to hold him to account. A few obvious examples comes to mind. We will first talk about media.

The Prime Minister has said on more than one occasion that stories that have appeared in mainstream media like *The Globe and Mail* are false, that they are fake news or misinformation. Then it comes to light, as was the case in the SNC-Lavalin scandal where the Prime Minister was found to have used his position to interfere in the criminal prosecution of his friends, that the story in *The Globe and Mail* was correct.

We must not let that get in the way of a good cover-up from the government. It wants to be able to control the narrative, even when there are members of the King's Privy Council who push back against the government and push back against the Prime Minister. Instead of taking that advice, that sober second thought, what did the Prime Minister do? In the case of Canada's first female indigenous attorney general, Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, when she spoke truth to power to the Prime Minister, he fired her. He kicked her out of cabinet. When another eminent Canadian, a minister of the Queen's Privy Council, Dr. Jane Philpott, spoke out on that issue, he kicked her out of cabinet too.

Canadians are best served when they get truth and honesty, and not when we have a government that is looking to exert control. That is the pattern we have seen with the government. When we are hearing from Canadians and from experts that this would affect what Canadians are able to watch and see online, we should take notice. It should give the government pause, but instead, what is it doing? It is dismissing its critics and saying it is misinformation. We have seen that pattern before.

When the Senate, Canada's chamber of sober second thought, brought forward amendments to protect some of the areas where we have heard the greatest concerns from Canadians with respect to user-generated content, the government dismissed those amendments out of hand. It said it was absolutely not going to do that, but not to worry as the bill does not affect user-generated content.

Why would the government defeat those amendments at committee and why would it refuse those amendments from the Senate? It is because, make no mistake, Bill C-11 would regulate and censor what people see. It would make the government, the Prime Minister through his Minister of Canadian Heritage and through the CRTC that reports to him, the regulator of what we can see online.

Government Orders

It would also censor what one can say. When I say the bill would censor, I mean the government and the Prime Minister, through his Minister of Canadian Heritage and through the CRTC. They would make sure that homegrown talent would not be able to rise to the top based on its quality.

• (1550)

We have seen countless examples where, against the odds, against media giants and production company giants around the world, not the least of which is the United States, Canadian content has flourished. Digital content of course is at the heart of what a lot of Canadians see and do online. The marketplace of ideas should be a meritocracy, but the government is afraid of that. The Liberals are afraid of that. They want to decide who the winners are and who the losers are, when it should be the consumers. It should be Canadians who get to decide.

We hear a lot about favourite programs that people grew up watching or listening to. No one made them watch it because it was Canadian. If it was quality, Canadians consumed it. Now that there is more content, there are more opportunities for Canadian content to flourish, and that is exactly what is happening.

We have a content creator in my riding, and I am not confused. It is McMullan Appliance and Mattress. Corey McMullan from McMullan Appliance and Mattress, which on a county road in my community, is a viral Internet sensation. He is not making cat videos. He is not doing any crazy stunts. He is talking about fridges, washers, dryers and stoves.

His honesty and his authenticity has caused him to gain global celebrity, and with that has come revenue for his business. He is able to sell products online. People buy them from him online because he talks about it. He is not advertising and he is not paying for advertising, but the innovation, the entertainment value and the character of this gentleman have propelled him to such fame and credibility that folks in my community in southeastern Ontario will take their pickup trucks from North Bay and drive all those hours to my community to buy an appliance from Corey because they trust him.

This type of obviously Canadian content is now going to be subjected to a test by the government, where it will decide if it is Canadian enough. We have heard other speakers talk about productions that are made in Canada, written by Canadians, produced by Canadians and have Canadians who star in them, but they do not meet the standard for Canadian content.

If the Liberal government is not prepared to exempt user-generated content, we need to ask why. Why does it refuse to recognize Canadians should have the freedom to say, to think and to watch whatever they want? I believe in my community and I believe in Canadians. I believe in people like Corey McMullan rising to the top based on that sometimes indefinable quality that Canadians are recognized for around the world. That is why, for a very small population, so many actors of stage and screen, so many people who write and produce, and so many people who create are household names. It is not because the government made people like them. It is because Canadians are extraordinary and we are extraordinary because of our freedoms.

After eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, Canadians have had enough control. That is why a Conservative government would repeal this bill and that is why we believe we need to kill Bill C-11.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to be here today.

[*English*]

Listening to the comments from the other side of the aisle, one would think that the world is falling down or something to that effect. In fact, Bill C-11 is very prudent. It is a good step and a very big first step in modernizing the Broadcasting Act, which has not been modernized since 1991.

In fact, it would do nothing to discourage creation or streaming for Canadians who wish to produce content. It would encourage more Canadians to produce Canadian content. Who would not be in favour of such a goal, to have more Canadian content seen, listened to and read by Canadians from coast to coast to coast? This is a bill that has been debated on both sides, in the Senate and here, for hours upon hours and with amendments brought forward. Would the hon. member not agree that this is the best way to produce legislation, when we have both Houses working, witnesses coming forward and the committee doing the work that Canadians sent those MPs here to do?

• (1600)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question because it makes my point. The Senate came back with amendments. The senators did the work and listened to the witnesses. They said that there needed to be a carve-out for user-generated content, but the minister has rejected that. The minister should recognize the important work of the Senate, accept the amendment and exempt user-generated content.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, about two years ago, the Conservative member for Lethbridge said that Bill C-11 was just a way to protect old, out-of-date Quebec artists that nobody cares about anymore. My riding boasts our national poet, Gilles Vigneault, an extraordinary man.

I have two questions for my colleague.

Does he, too, feel that our national poet is an old, outdated artist?

He has also been giving shout-outs to videos of dishwashers, washer, dryers and refrigerators. Is that his definition of quality Canadian content that makes him proud of his culture?

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, some great Canadian content that has come out of the province of Quebec is an absolute favourite of my wife, and that is Celine Dion. My wife loves Celine Dion not because the government told her to but because Celine is Celine. That is the kind of content that we do not need the government to tell us we have to like. Although I am not familiar with the artists my hon. colleague has referenced, I am sure that if they bring him great enjoyment, they should be available on the streaming service. He should have the option to be able to listen to that if he likes it.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am going to read just one sentence from the Canadian Media Producers Association website. I quote: “Canada needs updated broadcasting legislation to ensure we can compete and succeed on the world stage.”

Does the member agree that we need to make sure that this bill passes so that Canadians could compete and succeed on the world stage?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, we do not want this bill to pass. There have been reasonable amendments put forward. There have been amendments proposed by the Senate that would offer some protections to user-generated content, but this is a deeply flawed bill that has ignored the advice and the expertise of the witnesses who testified in committees of this place and of the Senate. It is not a solution when we have more control by the government over what Canadians see, where it is able to control its critics. That is not freedom. That is not Canadian. This is why the bill cannot move forward.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, if anybody is looking for any Canadian content, they just need to head down to room 025-B in this building. There they will see the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, who has been generating a lot of content today based on some of the disparaging comments that he made towards a very capable and prominent female cabinet minister—

• (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have a point of order.

The hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, the hon. member just made mention of the presence or absence of one of the hon. members from the Conservative Party in this House. That is something that we try not to do here.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would agree. The hon. member made indirect reference to a member, and we avoid that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I made a reference to a committee, not this House. Am I allowed to make reference to a committee?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The answer is no.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I think my point was made though. The member for St. Albert—Edmonton is making a lot of content today with the very unfortunate comments he made in that committee meeting, if anybody is looking for content.

I would like to say that I am just the warm-up act today for the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, who will be speaking after me. Please applaud the member because he deserves it.

I want to read a quote from Gord Sinclair, a member of The Tragically Hip, who appeared before the committee when it was studying this bill. He said:

Gord Downie wrote in our song *Morning Moon* that if “something’s too cheap, somebody’s paying something”. Every song ever recorded can now be streamed for less than \$10 a month. The somebodies in this case will be the future you and me when we realize that we’ve undervalued the contribution of Canadian musicians and songwriters.

He went on to say, “Streaming is here to stay, but the platforms...must contribute to the long-term health of the arts”.

I bring that up because I am obviously very proud to come from and represent my riding. Part of my riding is a municipality that The Tragically Hip calls home. If we dive a little deeper into Mr. Sinclair’s testimony in committee, the band attributes its entire success and becoming so renowned in Canada to having the proper tools in place to make sure that its content got exposure.

Why is that important? It is important because we are a country of rich cultural diversity that has a lot to offer in the arts. However, the concern is that we have another market right over the border, literally fewer than 10 kilometres from my riding, where the market is 10 times the size. It would be very easy for the Canadian market to be consumed into the American market.

When we think about it, it has 10 times the population and effectively 10 times the number of artists. To compete against that is very difficult, regardless of the incredible contributions that Canadians give to the arts. That is why, in the 1970s, legislators said that we needed to preserve the culture and the unique identity that comes from having Canadian artists able to perform and create.

I have been listening to this debate since it started yesterday. I heard the member for Lethbridge tell this story about how back in the day, all an artist needed to do was bundle together their best hits, put them on a tape, bring the tape to a radio station, beg them to play it and hope to get on the air. The successful ones would make it, and the others would not.

She left out a very important point, which is that the radio stations were required to play a certain amount of Canadian content. The number has changed, it is not relevant, but at the time, 30% of the content had to be Canadian.

Yes, those Canadian artists had to compete against every other emerging artist, collaborator and songwriter, but they only had to compete within the realm of that 30% against the other Canadians. They did not have to compete with a market 10 times our size right over the border.

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I get the Conservatives' angle on this. They like to take the free market approach and say everything is about the free market. I get it. That is where they come from on this. What they need to do is come to terms with the fact that they just do not want to support Canadian content. They think that Canadian content needs to go up against the market 10 times our size to the south and just let the chips fall where they may. I think the majority of Canadians disagree with that position.

• (1610)

We have seen the success of The Tragically Hip, which I will always use as my reference. It was able to get into the Canadian market and become known as one of Canada's best bands as a result of having that incredible opportunity to gain exposure when it would have been difficult otherwise. Therefore, I cannot help but wonder why the Conservatives are doing this. Why are they so insistent?

It became quite obvious a couple of days ago, when I saw a fundraising email sent out by the Conservatives. This contained a screenshot of one of my tweets and basically said that I was agreeing with a reporter's assessment of Bill C-11. They know they can raise money off this. That is what this comes down to: politics as usual. I have said this many times in the House because it is true. All they are interested in is the politics around it.

The email talked about censorship and the right to freedom of expression. It talked about how they know that we are not telling the truth and asked Canadians to help kill the bill, with a big "Donate Now" button underneath. That is what this is about for the Conservatives. That is it.

We can recall when the first version of this legislation came about, when in all honesty, the Conservatives were able to get a lot more attention on the issue than they are now. I think Canadians have now seen through them. However, they were not as interested in this until they were able to make it a sensational issue like they are now and like they did then. I do not think they are really that successful at doing it now because the vast majority of Canadians realize that Bill C-11 is not about censorship, infringing on rights or trying to do anything malicious. Rather, it is about ensuring that Canadian content continues to get exposure and that Canadian content creators have the opportunity for their material to be shared.

If members do not agree with that or think that government should play a role in it, it is a legitimate policy and a legitimate position to take. That is at least taking a position. They would at least be coming in here and saying that they do not believe in CanCon, they do not think it is relevant or necessary anymore and artists should fend for themselves. If that is the position of the Conservatives, which it looks like it is from the writing on the wall, then they just need to come clean about it and say that. They should not dress it up with these words about censorship and freedom of expression being infringed upon. That is absolutely ludicrous.

The member for Lethbridge, although quoting someone else, said that with Canada going down this road, it likens us to North Korea. Can members imagine that? That is talking to one's fringe base. What Canadian witnessing that would actually sit there and think that Canada is going to be like North Korea if this passes? Nobody would ever actually think that, except—

Mr. John Barlow: Is Margaret Atwood our fringe base?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, they are heckling me, but nobody would think that except their base.

Good news. The fringe in the Conservatives' base is super-duper happy with their position on this, and they are certainly representing this fringe. I am sure they will raise a bit more money off this when they send out the speech by the Leader of the Opposition by email. However, it is certainly doing nothing for Canadians or content creators. Moreover, it is certainly doing nothing to advance, protect and enhance the cultural identity of Canada.

• (1615)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about how the Conservatives are only listening to our fringe base. However, I would argue that Margaret Atwood, one of the most famous authors in Canadian history, is certainly not a fringe base Conservative supporter. Her comments were, "This bill is a step towards dictatorship and authoritarianism".

Would my colleague agree that Margaret Atwood is a fringe Conservative supporter?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that member did not even listen to what I said. I never said the Conservatives are only listening to the fringe Conservative alt-right base. I said that is who they are playing to. They are playing to those individuals, and if I said it differently, then I certainly apologize right now, and I thank the member for allowing me to correct the record.

Do I agree with the quote the member read from Margaret Atwood? No, I do not. I think it is wrong. I think it is off base, and I do not think it represents the realities of this bill.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the NDP supports an amendment that would ensure it is the CRTC, not the cabinet, deciding what kind of content media can produce. Can the member explain why this is not a form of government control that other parties are talking about?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what I get a real kick out of is when I hear the Conservatives go on about the fact that it is cabinet that is going to make these decisions on what people listen to, as if suddenly the Conservatives are willing to say the Bloc, of all parties, with all due respect, and the NDP would be going along with this plan if they really thought that was what it is. Talk about taking a leg out of the credibility of that argument. We have two other established parties in this House that are basically saying that, no, it is not cabinet that would be making these decisions and that it is not the way Conservatives are portraying it. The reality is that this is about ensuring that Canadian content is out there.

To answer the member's question a little more directly, I agree with the member's position on this. I think it is important that we do not give the impression that we would allow policy-makers to decide which songs are cool and which ones are not, because that is the way the Conservatives would like people to believe it. We should be ensuring that in the content that is put out, there is a certain amount that is Canadian content. We should be ensuring that money and revenue is generated to continue supporting Canadian art, culture and identity, just like we have been doing since 1970. We have just expanded this to include online streaming services.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would just like to put this to the member across the floor. The former Bill C-10, in its original version, included an exemption for programs that users upload onto their social media or, as it was called, user-generated content. The Liberals voted to take that out of their own bill in committee, which really builds confidence in Canadians, and resisted Conservative attempts to reintroduce it. They then put it back into Bill C-11, but then put in an exemption to the exemption that basically makes it meaningless. If Canadians are supposed to trust the government and believe what it is saying, this flies in the face of that.

Will the Liberals put that amendment back in and make it very clear to Canadians?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not know what the particular discussions were at committee. I am not on that committee. I do not know how exactly every amendment was debated and voted upon, how they ended up in the final production of the piece of legislation or which amendments to the legislation ended up before this House, but I will say that I have great confidence in the work the committee did. I feel as though the committee has properly represented to make sure that Canadian content will be preserved, and I have even more confidence, knowing that both the Bloc and the NDP are supportive of this too, because that shows that there is multi-party support around this, and that gives me confidence.

• (1620)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to be here this afternoon, and I hope all of my colleagues are having a productive day.

I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-11, the online streaming act. This important piece of legislation will level the playing field by requiring online streaming services to support Canadian artists and culture, just as Canadian broadcasters have been doing for decades.

As we have all heard many times, the last time the Broadcasting Act was updated was over 30 years ago, in 1991, when yours truly just finished high school, I believe. Since then, the way content is broadcast to audiences has changed dramatically, but our system is stuck in the 20th century and needs to be updated. After over a year of thorough study in both Houses of Parliament, the finish line, yes, is in sight.

Conservatives have recently started claiming that parts of this bill have not yet received the appropriate scrutiny by parliamentarians. I beg to differ.

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With all due respect, I fail to understand how they can genuinely suggest that this bill has not been studied enough. At every step of the process, they have attempted to delay and distract from the issue at hand, which is bringing the Broadcasting Act into the 21st century to support Canadian artists and creators.

To show just how much this bill has been studied, let us take a trip down memory lane. On February 2, 2022, Bill C-11 was tabled in the House of Commons. Second reading debate started on February 16, 2022. Over the course of five days of debate, we heard over 15 hours of speeches from 48 members of Parliament in all recognized parties, including 29 Conservatives.

Conservatives then claimed that they did not have enough time to debate but then moved concurrence motions that blocked their own ability to speak and debate on the bill. They did this during the previous iteration of the bill in the last Parliament and on Bill C-11 in this Parliament, when they cut three hours of debate time and prevented their own members from having the opportunity to speak. I note the irony. Ultimately, these obstructionist tactics have only hurt the Canadian artists and creators that the online streaming act, Bill C-11, seeks to support.

Fortunately, Bill C-11, finally—

Mr. Ron Liepert: Because of the unnecessary election fiasco.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, the committee gave our colleagues the opportunity to study the bill with much closer scrutiny. That study lasted 12 meetings, where the committee heard from 80 witnesses and received 52 written briefs, but do not worry; the Conservatives still managed to delay and distract. They filibustered during the meeting at which the minister was supposed to appear and they filibustered the committee's clause-by-clause consideration.

They can try to deny it today, but the member for Lethbridge admitted it herself. She said, and this is a direct quote, "I did filibuster at committee".

Fortunately, our colleagues in the Bloc and the NDP have decided to join us in modernizing Canada's broadcasting system through Bill C-11, and 38 amendments passed at the heritage committee, which included amendments from all recognized parties. Despite the Conservatives' best efforts, the bill made its way to the Senate.

Very well. At this point, I think it is valuable to remind my colleagues that the Conservative Party of Canada is the only political party recognized in both the House of Commons and the Senate. Senator Leo Housakos, the proud Spartan, who is both the Conservative critic for the bill in the Senate and the chair of the committee that reviewed it, is a regular in "Kill Bill C-11" videos posted by the Leader of the Opposition on social media.

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Ironically, those videos, I might add, would not be impacted whatsoever by this bill, no matter what he claims. The best word to describe the Senate committee's study of Bill C-11 is "robust".

Starting in June 2022, the committee spent over six months reviewing the subject matter of Bill C-11, hearing from 138 witnesses over 40 meetings. The members did not mishear me. I said 40 meetings, dedicated to considering the subject of this very important bill. Senators spent nine of those meetings in clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-11, including three-hour meetings, making it the longest clause-by-clause consideration in Senate history.

The bill emerged with amendments from all recognized parties and groups in the Senate, of which we are pleased to support close to 80%.

Here we are, over a year later, hearing the Conservatives urging us to send the bill back to committee, after over 100 hours of committee study, over 200 witnesses and dozens of written briefs, including from Telelatino in Toronto. I know that the folks at Telelatino produce great ethnocultural broadcasting, and they are in support of this wonderful bill.

• (1625)

This does not even include the countless hours of debate and study of the previous version of the bill that contributed to the on-line streaming act. As it stands, this bill has amendments from all recognized parties and groups in both houses of Parliament. It has truly been a group effort, and the future of Canada's broadcasting system is better for it.

The Conservatives are now bringing up Quebec. It is great they are finally paying attention, but they must have missed the two unanimous motions passed by the National Assembly to support the Broadcasting Act and the entire Quebec cultural industry pushing for the bill's swift passage.

The reality is throughout this process there have been endless opportunities for Conservatives to work collaboratively to defend Canadian artists and creators. Every time, they have chosen to side with foreign tech giants to maintain the status quo.

On this side of the House, we believe in doing more for Canadian culture, not less. We know in the prior Conservative administration how much less its members did for Canadian artists and culture and how they cut spending on Canadian culture, artists and content creators. We will not do that and we have not done that. We will continue to support the Canadian arts sector, culture sector and content creators.

I know this has been brought up many times throughout the debate, but there is an urgent need for this legislation. It cannot be overstated. The integrity of Canada's arts and culture system is at risk. We owe it to the tens of thousands of Canadians working in the arts and culture sector across the country. We have done the work as parliamentarians and now it is time to pass Bill C-11.

Many of us watch streaming services that provide content over what are called non-traditional methods. My wife and I really enjoy *Ted Lasso*, and the third season of *Ted Lasso* is coming out on March 15. We very much enjoy it. It is very well written. It comes across on I believe Apple TV+ and we pay a monthly fee for that.

That content provider would now be subject to the Broadcasting Act, and it should be, much like Canadian broadcasters have been subject to the Broadcasting Act for decades.

Finally, to end off, the Broadcasting Act has not been revised since 1991. I wish to applaud all members of both the House and the Senate on those committees who have worked so judiciously, even when their opinions did not converge, to be unified and even when they disagreed vehemently and passionately from potentially different ideological bents on how they view the Broadcasting Act and how they view the CRTC. However, they did the work Canadians sent them here to do, and particularly in the House of Commons. They did the work their constituents elected them to do judiciously and diligently to bring forth the best possible legislation with regard to the sector we are talking to, which is broadcasting and updating the Broadcasting Act after three decades, or since 1991.

I look forward to questions and comments from my colleagues and I hope everyone is having a wonderful and productive day and week.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I invite the member to follow along with me. Clause 7 of the legislation says that the cabinet can issue a directive, an order, to the CRTC because it amends certain sections of the act. When I go into the original act, it actually gives the right to cabinet to set policy objectives for licensing, service fees and for access.

The way I read Bill C-11 right now, it would allow the government to censor content it does not like because of clause 7 in the bill. Members have repeatedly mentioned that this bill is bad and that we need to kill Bill C-11. We have been consistent on this message.

Does the member agree with me on the reading of clause 7 that in fact it would give the cabinet the ability to direct the CRTC on licensing, content and fees?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary Shepard for his question.

[*English*]

I have known the hon. member for Calgary Shepard for many years since I was elected a member of Parliament and I have a great deal of respect for him.

The content creation would not be impacted in any way by Bill C-11. That is not the intent of the bill in any way. We encourage and value content creation by Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This is a bill to modernize our Broadcasting Act and ensure the technological advances that have allowed streaming services like Netflix, Crave or Apple TV+ are brought under the Broadcasting Act, much like the Canadian homegrown broadcasters have been so for many decades.

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• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, how does my colleague explain the fact that all of Quebec's creators and artists, regardless of their sphere of practice, are eagerly awaiting this bill? If anyone is sensitive to the issue of censorship, it is our creators and artists.

How is it that they are looking forward to us passing Bill C-11, yet the Conservatives alone see it as censorship?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Montcalm for his question.

[*English*]

Quebec is a very economic, vibrant sector here in Canada, and we applaud all the artists in the cultural sector in the province of Quebec. We should take a nod from them in their support of Bill C-11 and how it would modernize the Broadcasting Act.

Also, we then scratch our heads about why the Conservative Party of Canada is against a bill that the cultural sector here in Canada supports. It makes me think about the other ways Conservatives are looking at this bill, such as for ideological purposes and partisan purposes, and not for the direct benefit of the Canadian cultural sector, including the cultural sector in the province of Quebec.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions said, “The pandemic has considerably accelerated the transition to streaming to the benefit of foreign platforms that have no obligation to showcase local cultural expressions.”

A lot of jobs were of course lost during the pandemic. A lot of people were hurt within the cultural and artistic industry. From all the years we have been waiting for this type of legislation to make it more fair for companies such as Netflix, Disney+ and Apple+, as he mentioned, to come in line with their competitors in more traditional spaces, could the member, if he has the information, share with the House what kind of funds and what the numbers are in the financial hit the industry took, which would now be added into the industry?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I work closely with the hon. member for London—Fanshawe on the Ahmadiyya Parliamentary Friendship Group, and we share the same concerns when it comes to the beer and wine sector here in Canada and some of the challenges it faces.

Obviously, COVID accelerated a number of trends in our economy and our society, from working habits to staying home and from streaming to online shopping. We need to pay attention to the changes that have happened. Exactly as the member stated, this amends the Broadcasting Act to address an acceleration in streaming services. Therefore, for the broadcasters, much like the broadcasters that are under the Broadcasting Act today that pay their fair share for Canadian artists and content creators, the same thing would apply for those services now. It would be brought in under the Broadcasting Act.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Democratic Institutions; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Finance; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Families, Children and Social Development.

[*English*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak in the House today to this very important bill, which will certainly impact Canada for generations to come. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Foothills.

This really is about the Internet. That is what we are talking about today. It is such a marvellous thing. It has led to the creation of Canadian content being shared around the globe. It is truly the definition of free market, merit-based hard work and consistency, and there is so much it can do for Canadians and their content to share it globally with the world. From the palm of one's hand, all that is needed is the Internet or a data subscription package, and people can share their ideas with everyone with the push of a button.

It really is an incredible time that we are living in. It has only been about 15 years that Canadian content creators and producers could share their ideas so freely and so easily all around the world. This really begs the question of why, if they have had this much success and this much freedom, why is the government looking to regulate that?

Why is it looking to put constraints on the freedom that has generated so much success for homegrown Canadian content? That is the question we are looking to answer today. The answers I have heard from the government have not satisfied me that this bill is worth the risk of what it may do, and what it will likely do to Canadian content creators.

Through this piece of legislation, the government, in essence, is about to give itself authority to control what Canadians see on the Internet. Rather than Canadians getting to decide what they see, it would be the government dictating what they see when they open up their smart phones, when they pull up their YouTube app. That would be dictated based on CRTC criteria. I will go into that in a minute.

It would not just impact what we see online, it would also impact the content that Canadians themselves put online. Thousands of videos from Canadians are uploaded every minute, so we are talking about a huge impact on Canadian content creators and those who enjoy watching that content.

It is not only the Canadian content within our own national borders, but also anything that Canadians are looking to view on YouTube from around the world, that would be regulated by this bill.

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Why are the Liberals doing this? They are claiming that they are the government and they are here to help content creators. They want to promote, as they say, Canadian content with government regulation. As a Conservative, that immediately brings up a lot of red flags. It also brings up a lot of red flags for Canadian content creators regardless of their political views.

How the government is going to do this is really the concerning part of this bill. The bill gives the government, through the CRTC, the power to force social media platforms and streaming platforms to manipulate their algorithms so that the discoverability of what they deem Canadian content is sort of pushed up the ranks. This is concerning. We have to remember that the CRTC, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, controls what we see on traditional television and radio, and has done so for the last 50 years. It is really the ultimate gatekeeper of content in Canada in the traditional formats. That comes into play in sections 9 and 10 of the bill under what is called discoverability regulations.

As I mentioned, that is what is really going to determine what we are seeing when we open, for example, our YouTube page. It is going to be based on what Canadian content is, which has yet to be defined. To me that means it is going to be some Ottawa bureaucrat deciding what Canadian content is.

From what I understand, *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is a world phenomenon Netflix show based on the book by Margaret Atwood, who is, of course, a very notable and famous Canadian author, would not be considered Canadian content. That is not something that would be promoted based on these discoverability rules.

One would think, if this were for Canadian content creators to help them or give them a boost, that Canadian content creators would be over the moon about this, but in fact it is quite the opposite. Over 40,000 content creators, and that is incredible because there is a lot of content creators but not that many people who actively contribute online looking to influence and share their ideas, but 40,000 of them in Canada have affiliated with Digital First Canada and signed letters calling for the discoverability rules of Bill C-11 to be removed from the bill.

Again, 40,000 people who would be directly impacted this, who are supposed to be the ones that the government is saying it is helping, said they do not want this. That, to me, in itself, is enough to say that maybe we should park this bill, shelve it or throw it in the trash for good.

However, the government has continued on for the better part of the last three years. It is not just Conservatives or these content creators who are sounding the alarm. There are other experts in this field as well. Scott Benzie from Digital First Canada explained, "most Canadian creators do not care solely about the Canadian market. The platforms are built for global discovery...local discovery, is a recipe for failure and jeopardizes successes like the indigenous creator renaissance...Canadian musicians seeing global recognition and the world-class gaming industry." local discovery is what Bill C-11 would target and promote through the algorithms and their manipulation, but they have all had success without the need of any government control from the CRTC.

• (1635)

Marie Woolf, for the Canadian Press, who did extensive research on this, said:

YouTube itself has warned that Canadian digital creators, including influencers and streamers, could lose foreign revenue if the government forces digital platforms to promote Canadian content.

The proposed legislation that would force YouTube and other streaming platforms to actively promote Canadian content risks downgrading the popularity of that same content abroad....

Again, it is important to know that the data from YouTube says that nine out of 10 people watching the stuff that our Canadian creators put online are not from Canada. Therefore, this would have serious consequences for those who are looking to be successful online. It would limit their global audience based on the basic algorithms of YouTube.

A lot of money and livelihoods are depending on this. The number of YouTubers from Canada earning \$100,000 or more is growing steadily every single year. People are already having a lot of success, again, without the government's control and so-called support.

Morghan Fortier, co-owner and CEO Skyship Entertainment said, "We've seen first-hand that, when barriers are removed and Canadians are given equal, free access to an open platform and a global audience, they can take on the world. For Canadian creators, YouTube is a level playing field on a world stage. It doesn't matter who you know or what you look like. Any Canadian with an idea and a smart phone can be a creator and find an audience on YouTube."

That is what it is today, but that is not what it will be tomorrow or whenever Bill C-11 passes.

She went on to say, "If this bill passes as written, the CRTC could determine what content should be promoted in Canada through discoverability obligations.... This approach puts the regulator between viewers and creators, handing the CRTC the power to decide who wins and who loses."

Obviously, this will have an impact on our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the freedom of speech that we enjoy.

Michael Geist, a foremost expert in this area in Canada, outlined this very well. He said:

To be clear, the risk with these rules is not that the government will restrict the ability for Canadians to speak, but rather that the bill could impact their ability to be heard. In other words, the CRTC will not be positioned to stop Canadians from posting content, but will have the power to establish regulations that could prioritize or de-prioritize certain content, mandate warning labels, or establish other conditions.... The government has insisted that isn't the goal of the bill.

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He finished by saying, “If so, the solution is obvious. No other country in the world seeks to regulate user content in this way and it should be removed from the bill because it does not belong in the Broadcasting Act.”

Many people have outlined the threat that this poses to free speech. As someone who loves our Charter of Rights, that is a grave concern to me and the Conservative Party.

Certainly, the elephant in the room here is, as Jay Goldberg, Ontario Director and Interim Atlantic Director for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said, “If government bureaucrats get to choose what content to push on Canadians, there’s a very real risk the government will be tempted to use its filtering powers to silence its critics”, which we have seen since time immemorial from governing authorities looking to quash dissent. It is happening right now in China, Russia, North Korea and Iran. I really do not understand why we would open the door in Canada for our government to do that, yet here it is in the bill.

If we do not need this, then why are we doing it? Content creators tell me that they have had lots of success already. Why are we doing this? I do not know. I have yet to be convinced of the need for it at all.

I will conclude with a quote from the leader of Canada's Conservatives, who said this very well on the threat that this poses to the liberties that Canadians enjoy and the success they have received online with the freedoms we, at least today, have for now. He said:

We live in a free country. Everyday, ordinary Canadians should be allowed their own megaphones and the only limit on how loud and how vast their voices are should be whether people choose to listen to them. Everyday Canadians should be able to decide what they like by voting with their clicks. That is the kind of liberty we should extend to the Canadian people. In the marketplace of ideas, there is no role for state coercion and intimidation. There is no role for nameless, faceless government bureaucrats to decide who is heard and who is not. Everyday Canadian people should have the freedom to do that for themselves.

After eight years, it is time for a government that protects freedom of speech and consumer choice, and encourages Canadian creators instead of getting in their way, which is what Bill C-11 would do. That is why Conservatives will fight it every step of the way, and we will repeal when we are in government.

• (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I indicated earlier, nothing in this legislation threatens Canadian freedoms and rights, and that has been very well established. The Conservative members know this, yet they continue to give a false impression.

Given that we have a minority government, we are very dependent on opposition parties. Whether it is the Bloc, the Green Party or the New Democratic Party, we are all saying the same thing: There is no infringement on rights and freedom of speech. However, the Conservatives continue saying that.

I wonder if they applied the same principles to the Broadcasting Act that they are applying today, or going back to the traditional act, where there were Canadian content mandates, for example. Is it the Conservative Party's policy today that it would also get rid of this so that there would not be a level—

• (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul a chance to answer.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, the control is right in the bill. Clause 9, for example, the one I talked about in my speech, would dictate discoverability. It would provide the CRTC, the ultimate gatekeeper of traditional content platforms, the ability to force online streaming platforms and social media platforms to comply, under pain of a \$10-million fine, I will add, with the enforcement of discoverability laws. They will downgrade a video that does not meet the government's definition of “Canadian” and will upgrade a video that does. To me, that is absolutely a limit on the free speech of the individual who is deemed not Canadian enough by the government's vision of Canada, which, as the Conservative Party has made very clear, we take great issue with over and over again.

That is in the bill itself. I do not know what to tell the member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague said that Bill C-11 paves the way for algorithm manipulation. That is worrisome. Can she tell me how, technically, it is possible to manipulate algorithms?

How does she know, technically, that Bill C-11 will provide control over algorithm manipulation?

[*English*]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, it is from the reading of the bill and the experts in Canada who have been telling us this. I mentioned a number of expert opinions, whether they are from Michael Geist or other legal experts. They have explained to Canadians that it is discoverability rules that would dictate what social media and streaming platforms can do with their algorithms to ensure they are meeting the standard of what is Canadian.

I will say to members of the Bloc Québécois that I am surprised they are supporting this. They seem very keen to separate themselves from Canada, yet they are handing over the power of their own content creators, to be dictated to by a major Canadian gatekeeper, the CRTC. It really does not make sense and is not in line with what they believe in and how independent they want Quebec to be. This bill would ensure that what Quebec content creators get to share online and what other Quebecers get to see would be dictated by a major Canadian gatekeeper. I cannot really square that circle.

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[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, is the member telling us that algorithms and access to algorithms are easy things to decrypt? Is that actually what she is telling us?

Basically, as she sees it, the only way to avoid any interference in broadcasting and streaming is to abolish the CRTC.

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, I think the member is asking me the same question twice, so I will repeat that clauses 9 and 10 in the bill would dictate discoverability to social media platforms. As I have said three times now, or four if I include what I said it in my speech, this will mean that when someone opens their YouTube page, if it is not Canadian enough based on the criteria from the CRTC, as dictated in clause 7 of the bill, it will not be promoted based on the algorithms.

Perhaps the member is not aware what an algorithm is, and that is okay, but an algorithm is determined in the very software of the legislation. He may want to just google that quickly if it is still available online—

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

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very proud as the member of Parliament for Foothills to see the incredible growth of the film and television industry in Alberta, where *The Last of Us*, the largest production in the world, has just finished filming, much of it in my riding. What this has done is inspire a whole new generation of content creators, who are going out on their own once they have learned the craft and learned the trade from some of these massive productions. They are doing it on their own, many of them from rural communities across my riding in southern Alberta. I know that is happening across this country.

We have had dozens of emails from many of the same people involved in the film and television industry in Alberta, and they are raising grave concerns about the direction of Bill C-11 and the impact that it could potentially have on their ability to grow their viewership, grow their subscribers and be successful artists and entrepreneurs. I am an elected official, and when we have hundreds if not thousands of these content creators and artists raising the alarm about potential legislation, that should be all we need as parliamentarians to slam the brakes and say that clearly there is something wrong with the legislation being proposed.

If anything, the House of Commons should be doing everything we possibly can to raise awareness and promote and showcase the incredible Canadian talent we have across this country. However, clearly, with Bill C-11, experts from a wide variety of genres are raising concerns about the potential of this legislation, and they come from across the political spectrum.

I found it very interesting that my Liberal colleague, earlier in his presentation, said the Conservatives are only listening to the fringe base of their party. I would argue that Margaret Atwood is definitely not what we would consider a fringe supporter of a right-wing Canadian party. We also have young content creators and entrepreneurs from across the country who are saying that this legislation is pushing the Canadian government and how we deal with

Canadian content into totalitarianism. We are going in a direction that I thought we would certainly never go in Canada.

Government members like to say that Canadian talent will not succeed in Canada or on the international stage unless they are coddled by the government and this massive bureaucracy. However, we are hearing from Canadian artists themselves that they want to be successful on the international stage and that they can be and are being successful on the international stage without government help. In fact, the government is going to put up obstacles so they cannot reach international viewers.

J.J. McCullough, a YouTube content creator who appeared at committee, is a professional YouTuber from New Westminster, B.C. He was talking about hundreds of Canadians who have millions of subscribers and more than a billion views on their YouTube channels. They have done this without massive government intervention. They have done this without the Liberal government putting its thumb on the scales of the algorithms on the Internet. They have done this because they are incredibly talented. They know how to use the Internet and know how to find their followers. They are finding unique and entertaining content to put up online.

I would like to quote Mr. McCullough:

Given the broad powers of the CRTC, which Bill C-11 expands to include digital platforms, the Canadian YouTuber community is right to worry that the continued success of their channels could soon be dependent on their ability to make content that's Canadian enough to obtain government endorsement.

He goes on:

...it really makes me wish that we could just erect this big wall between old media and new media. I, as a new media creator, do not want to live in the world of old media. There's so much regulation. They have all of these financing issues. They want these subsidies....

In the new media world, which is much more dynamic, we're all independent. We're self-employed. We don't deal with government, and we don't have to have huge teams of lawyers to navigate all of these media regulations. If we feel like working with Americans, we just do and we don't have a big existential crisis about it. We've been very successful.

He continues:

It's based on our ability to produce content that the masses want to watch—not only Canadians but a global audience. No Canadian YouTuber is successful just by appealing to Canadians. They are successful because they appeal to a global audience. That is the way that media works in the 21st century.

● (1650)

Imagine we have a Canadian story told by a Canadian for Canadians, but we are going to have a bureaucratic monster, the CRTC, make the decision on what is Canadian and what is not. That story, a Canadian story told by a Canadian for Canadians, may not be deemed Canadian content by the Liberal government and the CRTC. That is not right and that is not what this bill should be intended for.

Canadian content creators should not have to be filtered through the CRTC and this bureaucracy, which has a political or ideological lens. These creators are successful because what they are doing is unique and shows their talent. That is all they should need to be successful. We should be proud of that, not suppressing it.

That is what worries me about Bill C-11. We are politicizing the whole idea of Canadian culture, Canadian identity and Canadian artists. Canadian culture and what constitutes being Canadian is about being grassroots. It is about coming from the bottom up. However, Bill C-11 was created from the top down, and we are going to have a bureaucracy dictating to Canadians what Canadian content is and what they should be watching.

It is clear in clauses 7 and 9 of Bill C-11 that the CRTC would have the authority to dictate what content will rise to the top, what will not and what constitutes Canadian content. What is worse is that clause 7 clearly states that cabinet will have the authority to influence the CRTC, how the algorithms are set and what is deemed Canadian content. I want to be clear here. No government, no political party and no level of bureaucracy should have that kind of power and that kind of authority. Canadian content should be dictated by Canadians: what Canadians want to see, what Canadians want to support and what Canadians are willing to purchase with their hard-earned dollars.

This is about integrity and public trust, not only regarding the government but regarding Canadian broadcasting and Canadian content. If there is even a whiff that what people are seeing on a YouTube channel, Facebook page or Twitter account is being influenced by any level of government or any bureaucrat, it is wrong, and we are going to lessen the trust and integrity in what we are seeing online.

The Liberals have a chance to prove to Canadians their argument that what we are seeing in the writing of the bill is not really what is going to happen, which I find odd. If the Liberals truly believe that what is in the bill is not accurate, then they would support the amendment they put in the bill, then took out of the bill, the one that clearly exempts social media content from the implications of Bill C-11. However, they have refused to support that amendment.

What that clearly states to me and to Canadians who are raising concerns about this is that the Liberal government is not being honest. It is not truly being supportive of the fact that YouTube creators and artists are going to be impacted by this bill. The Liberals can say what they want, but they are not putting their words to action. They should be supporting this amendment to ensure that our talented content creators are not being impacted. Again, no government, no bureaucrat and no political party should have authority over dictating what is Canadian content and what Canadians can see, hear and read online. That should be up to Canadians and Canadians alone.

• (1655)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is nothing in the legislation that would prevent Canadians from uploading or watching whatever it is they want to watch. There is nothing in this legislation that would impede the

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rights or freedoms of Canadians, contrary to what the Conservative Party continues to espouse.

The issue is for me is why the Conservative Party continues to not want to support Canadian content by modernizing the act. He talked about the old system versus the new system. We would be modernizing the act, because 1991 was a long time ago. There were not any iPhones. There was not any Facebook. The need to modernize the act is there today.

Does the Conservative Party believe, ultimately, that—

• (1700)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, modernizing the act does not mean modernizing it and putting all the power within the government and the CRTC. That is not what Canadian content providers want.

To my colleague's question, nothing in the bill suppresses the power and influence of Facebook, YouTube, Bell or Rogers. None of what the Liberals are saying actually happens. The entire intent of Bill C-11 is to provide more control and more influence to the CRTC and the Liberal government over what Canadians watch, see and read on the Internet. It is that simple.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, as members have mentioned several times in the House, there is legislation dating back to 1991 that helps promote local content, including Quebec content. That legislation from 1991 has become a bit outdated. Inequality grew between the different platforms, so to continue to protect Quebec content, the legislation needs to be updated.

We have three options. The first is to update the legislation, which Bill C-11 would do. The second is to keep the old obsolete legislation and become culturally American. The third is to do what some Conservatives want, namely to withdraw any type of regulation and become culturally American even faster.

As my colleague does not want to opt for the first choice, does he want to become American with the second option or the third option?

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I am a very proud Albertan, as I know my colleague is a very proud Quebecker. Therefore, I find it interesting that the Bloc is so supportive of the legislation. He is very intent about protecting Quebec artists and Quebec culture, which I would agree is a very admirable goal. Why he would be putting the authority to protect Quebec culture, Alberta culture and Canadian culture as a whole in the hands of an autocratic, ballooning bureaucracy and one political party in particular by supporting Bill C-11? It clearly would give the cabinet the authority to influence the decisions of the CRTC.

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Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I believe my colleague from Foothills said that we are going to have a bureaucratic monster that decides what is Canadian content and what is not. Looking past the hyperbole of that statement, I hope my colleague is aware that, for longer than I have been alive, Canada has been regulating content as to whether it is Canadian content or not. Much of the debate we have heard today, particularly from the Conservative Party, has been a criticism of this idea of Canadian content, and that, perhaps, is a debate we should have. However, if we already have it for radio and for television, should there not be a level playing field for other broadcasters as well? I believe that is the aim of this bill, if I understand it correctly.

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I was actually involved in the radio business for quite a few years as a high school student doing the midnight to six in the morning shift at town and country radio GX94. I would use the radio voice, but it is a little scratchy. I know it exactly. Those things were meant as the local radio station. We had 25% or 35% Canadian content, but it has changed. Our Canadian YouTube content generators are not worried about southeastern Saskatchewan. They are going around the world. This is a completely different game. Absolutely, there was a time when the CRTC had a role in controlling what content was out there and promoting Canadian content, but now we are playing on a world stage, not a regional stage.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to say from the outset that I will be splitting my time with the member for Nunavut.

I am pleased to rise in this debate, and I will try to talk about Bill C-11, instead of all the other kinds of things not related to Bill C-11 that seem to have found their way into the debate today, because it is very fundamentally important to our Canadian identity. The way we learn to understand our country and ourselves depends on the stories we tell each other, the movies we watch and the music we listen to. Therefore, it is very important that there be a space created in this cacophonous world media that is emerging for Canadian content. Otherwise, we will lose our identity as Canadians.

This bill seeks to amend and to update the Broadcasting Act. It looks at making sure there is a level playing field for the new streaming services that have taken a great deal of control over what is happening. It is a very important bill. It asks that the streaming services, which take an enormous amount of revenue out of Canada without paying taxes here, for the most part, be obliged to contribute funds so that Canadian creators can continue to create that content.

The Conservatives are focusing on people who are creating content on the Internet. However, what I am talking about is music, publishing, television and movies, and it is essential that we have that Canadian content. If we tell artists to go ahead and create Canadian content, but the money has already been sucked out of the economy that would go to finance that, then that content will not exist. It cannot exist. The money will be invested and decisions will be made by the streaming services, and they will invest those Canadian revenues around the world wherever they think they can make the most profit. This bill asks that they make an equal contribution to the revenues they are taking out of this country to make sure that

Canadian content in movies, television and radio continues to exist. To me, that is the importance of this bill.

A secondary part of this bill that is very important to me is that which updates the broadcasting policy to add a requirement that when we are looking at Canadian content it includes diversity. In particular, one of the things that has never been recognized is the importance of indigenous culture and indigenous languages in this country. This bill updates the Broadcasting Act to include an obligation that the Canadian content that is being protected would be inclusive of indigenous culture and indigenous languages. I think that is a very important step forward.

It also acknowledges other forms of diversity. No one would be surprised that I belong to one of those minority communities. I think it is important that all of that diversity, whether with respect to sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic, racial or religious backgrounds, is represented in Canadian content. This bill would update those regulations to recognize how important that diversity is to who we are as Canadians. For that reason, I am supporting this bill. I have supported it from the beginning.

Do I think the government has done the best job of communicating its messages here? Frankly, no, I do not. Do I think it has done the best job of getting this done in a timely fashion? Obviously it has not. We had an unnecessary election that caused us to start over on this bill. However, that does not make any difference to the final outcome.

We are talking about Senate amendments today. Everyone knows that I am not a great fan of that other place. Most of the time, I think the House should reject all amendments from the Senate. Very few senators even show up to vote on legislation, and they are not accountable to anyone. Therefore, I have no hesitation at all in saying that we will look carefully at amendments that come forward. However, if we in the House do not think they are good amendments, we have every right to reject them, because we are the elected members who represent Canadians in the House. I have no problem sending the amendments back to the Senate, thanking it very much, and telling it that we, the elected members, will decide on legislation.

Having said all of those positive things, I cannot avoid talking for a minute about this other world that the Conservative caucus seems to be living in. It is a world where the Internet is unregulated in a free market where quality rises to the top. I do not live in that world. It is not the real world. The web giants control the content and who rises to the top already. Through their algorithms, they determine what Canadians can see. Google decides in its search engine what will be prioritized.

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• (1705)

I belong to the interparliamentary group working on online anti-Semitism, and we have been trying to get those web giants to acknowledge their role, in this particular case, in promoting anti-Semitism in the way that their algorithms function. We had a great deal of trouble getting the attention of parliamentarians from 12 countries to this problem, which they create through their algorithms. They say those algorithms are a business secret. They cannot share how those work. They cannot let anyone have any role in those algorithms. Those are theirs, and they make profit out of them. The bill says that, in terms of discoverability, there be a way that Canadian content created in Canada can be discovered through those search engines.

Yes, there is an intervention about content and what we see. It is not an attempt to censor. It is an attempt to create opportunities for diverse material to make its way forward through the business-controlled algorithms that determine what people see and watch now. There is no wild frontier out there where everybody competes equally on the Internet. We hear the Conservatives saying there is an attempt to censor. There is an attempt to create an opening for more diversity and an opening for Canadian content. That is not censorship.

We heard very extreme statements about Canadian content here, which would, I would say, throw the baby out with the bathwater. They are saying for all these years we have had Canadian content, which has helped Canadian filmmakers and Canadian singers establish a base that they have been able to use to go on to become stars on the world stage. They want to throw that away and say no level playing field and no resources for Canadians against the rest of the big streaming giants who are funding things elsewhere.

That is not the Canada I want to live in, and that is not the way we should approach what is absolutely a changed environment. That is what this bill tries to do. It tries to respond to that changed environment that the streaming companies have created and to make sure there is a role for our stories, our music, our movies and for us as Canadians on the world stage.

That is why I will continue to support Bill C-11. I hope the Conservatives believe what they are saying. I am not sure they do, but I hope that they are arguing from a very honest perspective. I just do not understand how creating opportunities for Canadians is censorship.

• (1710)

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my riding, I have met with many news and content creators from many diverse backgrounds, and they share very important news and stories from their local communities to ensure that there is strong representation in media.

What would be the consequence if this bill does not pass, if that is something that the member has not mentioned already?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, what happens and what the Conservatives are failing to recognize is that business-dominated streaming services and Internet result in the most homogenous material going the farthest. It actually works against diversity. Those who have a smaller market, because they are appeal-

ing to serving their own local communities and their own local culture, will not advance as far in this free competition that the Conservatives see out there. What we need is a bill like this that would create that opening, that opportunity and that funding for Canadian content that will respond to the diversity of Canada.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill has gone back and forth in the House for a long time. The NDP's position before was completely different from what it is today.

I would ask the hon. member to tell us what kind of revelation happened for New Democrats to have changed their minds all of a sudden.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, we started with Bill C-10, which was definitely worse. I think what the member is referring back to are the concerns we were expressing at that time. Some of the changes that came in Bill C-11 reassured us, and one of those changes is the very one the Conservatives are harping on. That is the change that made sure that user-generated content is not affected by this bill.

What Conservatives are ignoring is that there is an exception. If those making their own content have a million subscribers and they are making money out of that, then, yes, the CRTC will have an ability to look at that. It is not what the Conservatives are saying, which is that we should have a blanket exemption that nobody who is making money on the Internet has to report to anybody or be accountable for anything. That was one of the major improvements between the first version of the bill and the bill that New Democrats are now supporting.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are here in Ottawa attempting to modernize the Broadcasting Act to better protect our local content. Quebec has made some demands. We are trying to advocate for those demands. Conservatives say they are proud Albertans and want nothing to do with regulations. Today, people asked questions during question period. They asked the minister if the prospective order will respect Quebec's demand that it be consulted in matters affecting Quebec culture.

It is complicated. Personally, I like simple things.

Does my colleague realize that, if Quebec were independent, this would be a lot easier?

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, that is a bit of a perplexing question for me. Quebeckers have decided in referendums a couple of times that they wish to be part of Canada, so I will go with what they have decided.

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However, I do think an important point we were raising in debate about this bill, outside the chamber, was whether Celine Dion, an example the Conservatives like to cite, would be such a big star without Canadian content. We were having a debate about whether it was the Eurovision Song Contest or the Canadian content requirements that allowed Celine Dion to build her world fan base. I do not have an answer to that question.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. colleague for making a lot of sense of this bill. It can be complicated, and there has certainly been a lot of back and forth that has made this bill seem different from what it actually is. I am glad he was able to nail that down. I appreciate that.

One of the things that New Democrats consistently talk about is those big companies, the big CEOs, paying their fair share. A big part of what we are pushing for in this type of legislation is exactly that, that those big web giants would actually pay their fair share and not get away with taking advantage of the tax loopholes, and contributing fairly to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke a few seconds to answer.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Speaker, that is an important question.

We do already require Canadian broadcasters to make those contributions that help support Canadian content. It is just not fair that we allow the web giants to get away with not making similar contributions.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

* * *

ONLINE STREAMING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate on Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, and of the amendment.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am pleased to represent Nunavut in speaking to Bill C-11, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act again. I spoke to this bill before it reached the other place, and I am pleased to speak to the amendments made upon its return to this place.

I have heard some of the debate this morning, and throughout the day, I have heard the word “misinformation” used by all parties. It is really unfortunate that the bill is being used as a way to pit Canadians against each other.

I am glad to see that supports for indigenous creators will still be given in this bill so they can share their talents online. It is important that small content creators can share their art. They need to be able to reach a larger audience, as this is where they can be discovered and profit from their own talents.

Uvavut TV and Isuma TV are Inuit media channels that provide great Inuit content. Their content is made by Inuit for Inuit and can be easily watched in Nunavut and abroad. They do not have the same ability to compete with web giants such as Netflix and Disney+.

Canada's broadcasting system offers very little content that reflects Inuit lives, and even less content in Inuktitut, despite the fact that two-thirds of Inuit speak Inuktitut. Online streaming services such as Netflix and Disney+ are not required to play Canadian artists on their channels, and very little indigenous content is being added to these streaming services.

Bill C-11 would ensure that Canadian media broadcasters are obligated to produce programming that includes indigenous languages. This change would enable more indigenous people to access programming in their languages. This would also expose indigenous creators and artists to a broader viewership.

Many people in this room have never watched TV programming that is not in French or English. I want my grandchildren to see and hear Inuktitut wherever they go. I want Inuit programming on Netflix and Disney+ created by Inuit. When content is not created with and by indigenous people, mistakes will happen. We must create a better future for generations of indigenous content creators.

A way to learn about someone is through their media. Indigenous people need to be represented through mainstream media. With better funding, indigenous programming can have French and English subtitles. This bill is not perfect, but it can help create a space for small independent creators to showcase their work.

Streaming companies hold a lot of power in what we watch. They need to be pushed to be inclusive. It is not enough that indigenous programming is only shown when it is convenient to them. Indigenous creators exist in Canada, and they need our support.

Promotion of indigenous art and media is an essential part of reconciliation. Call to action 84 calls for representation of indigenous languages, cultures and perspectives. Bill C-11 could expand on this call to action and ensure that all media channels are promoting indigenous content.

I will turn back to today's debate. The use of fearmongering language is causing confusion and fear among Canadians. The Senate amendments are supported by large corporations, including YouTube and TikTok. They say that Bill C-11 would cause the CRTC to police content. However, this is not factual.

Government Orders

I will conclude by quoting what Alex Levine, president of the Writers Guild of Canada, was reported as saying regarding Bill C-11. He said, “We only work on Canadian content. We don't work when, for example, Netflix or HBO decides to shoot a show here.” The report goes on to say, “Without the bill, Levine says market forces mean Canadians ‘will see a world reflected back to them that is determined by studio executives in Los Angeles and not by Canadian artists.’” Like Mr. Levine, I prefer to see a world reflected back from indigenous peoples and Canadians, not studio executives in other countries.

• (1720)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Nunavut, who is good friend, colleague and strong member of the New Democratic Party. I want to thank her for her tremendous work in ensuring that the digital kind of media, both audio and visual work, of indigenous people is valued, heard in this place and truly funded, governed and regulated in such a way that it brings to light the incredible contributions of indigenous artists.

Would the member like to highlight some of the remarkable artists in her riding of Nunavut who are contributing to the arts in phenomenal ways?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, I have mentioned two of them: Isuma TV and Uvagut TV. They highlight the great talent that exists in Nunavut. I hope that more Canadians go to their websites to watch what they can, to learn about Inuit culture and what we do to make sure that Canada is a better place.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments that the member has put on the record with regards to Bill C-11.

However, there is a certain sector of society that is starting to buy into a lot of misinformation. Somehow we have people concerned about individual rights, freedom of speech and not being able to watch what they want on the Internet, which is all based on false information. We have the Conservative Party promoting that misinformation.

I am wondering if the member could provide her thoughts in regards to how that is, from my perspective, unhealthy when we get people promoting false information.

• (1725)

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, to put it simply, I very much prefer to have the CRTC determine what is reflected back in what it regulates regarding online streaming as opposed to studio executives who are outside of this country, and that is what we are talking about in the bill. There has already been content regulation for TV, there has been content regulation for radio, and that content regulation needs to happen for online streaming, because so many Canadians are online every day.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for highlighting some of the important organizations.

I want to mention that corporations, particularly American-owned corporations like Disney+, Netflix and some of the other major producers and streaming services, would seek to ensure that

they are not regulated and would not have to contribute to our existing art scene here in Canada. However, this legislation would give that regulation to ensure that Canadian content is present on those services. It is an important piece of Canadiana. It something we see on our cable television, something that is required for our radio, but it is not something that is required on our streaming services. We also see Conservatives continuously defend these corporations, which otherwise would see finances derived from their profits go to the small producers and artists across the country.

Could the member speak to how important it is to support artists on the ground, grassroots artists, and to ensure that they have the financial ability to do that?

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, to respond to the great question from the member, the bill would help make sure that those major corporations like Netflix and Disney+ do share their profits. They are making huge profits by helping to entertain Canadians. Not only should they be allowed to hire and ensure that there is indigenous content, they should also be contributing some of their profits back to indigenous broadcasting in Canada as well, making sure that, as Canadians, we are proud of our heritage, which is founded on indigenous people's lands, and showcase why it is important to recognize Canada as a place of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Yiddish proverb will then have to wait until after we resume. I am saving it for next time.

In addressing Bill C-11, which is in fact a censorship bill, I want to go into the legislation. I am going to start with clause 7 of the legislation that is being proposed, which would amend section 7 by adding a “for greater certainty” clause after subsection 7(6). Generally, I like these types of clauses, but not this one. It says:

For greater certainty, an order may be made under subsection (1) with respect to orders made under subsection 9.?(1) or 11.?(2) or regulations made under subsection 10(1) or 11.?(1).

Since I am not burdened with a legal education, I had to go back to the Broadcasting Act to discover what exactly we are amending. With respect to policy directions, the cabinet would be able to order any of the objectives of the broadcasting policy set out in subsection 3(1) and any of the objectives of the regulatory policy set out in subsection 5(2). Licensing, fees and access would all be determined, if the cabinet chooses to direct the CRTC on what it can and cannot do when it comes to licensing content creators, who gets to be a content creator in Canada and what gets to be Canadian content.

In fact, let me go on to regulations generally, which is section 10 of the actual Broadcasting Act. It goes into quite a bit of detail on what the cabinet would be able to order the commission to do. When members of this House are getting up and saying “No, no, this is not what it does”, they are saying that people like Michael Geist are wrong. He is a professor who is renowned in Canada as the leading Internet law expert. The government is saying to ignore the experts because they are all wrong. In fact, in the House committee—

Private Members' Business

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have 18 minutes to finish his speech the next time this matter is before the House.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-289, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (identity verification), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me begin by acknowledging that we are gathered here on the traditional lands of the Algonquin people.

I am pleased to join this debate on Bill C-289, an act that would amend the Criminal Code regarding identity verification, which was introduced by the member for Simcoe North on June 16, 2022. I want to congratulate the member and thank him for all his work.

Although this bill proposes only one change, it seeks to address an important and topical issue in Canada: combatting the serious crime of money laundering. The bill aims to discourage money laundering through the provision of false identity information to certain financial institutions and business professions. It would amend the Criminal Code to add an offence of knowingly providing false or misleading information to these regulated entities when they collect and verify the identity of their clients under the rules set out in the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act.

Money laundering is a serious challenge faced by all countries. It compromises the integrity of the financial system and represents a threat to global safety and security. By its very nature as unlawful activity, the scale and scope of money laundering are difficult to measure. Nonetheless, a 2020 study entitled "Estimating money laundering flows with a gravity model-based simulation" estimated that \$37.8 billion U.S. may be laundered annually in Canada, which represents over \$50 billion Canadian.

As highlighted a moment ago, the bill proposes one change to address the provision of false information to regulated entities. It is important to consider that an entity responsible for verifying identification under the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act may face significant administrative monetary penalties or criminal prosecution if it fails to carry out its regulatory requirements to identify and verify its clients.

Another important consideration in examining this bill is that there are already offences in the Criminal Code that address the activity and its target. The offence of uttering a forged document can apply when a person opens a bank account or purchases real estate for the purpose of money laundering and knowingly uses forged identification documents. The offence of fraud can only apply when

a person provides false or misleading identification or other information to a real estate agent or other regulated entity and that entity faces economic loss as a result.

Of course, laundering the proceeds of crime itself is a criminal offence. That offence consists of any dealing in proceeds with the intent to conceal or convert those proceeds while knowing or being reckless as to whether all or part of the proceeds were derived from the commission of an offence. An important feature of the offences I mentioned is that they are broad in scope and can apply to a wide range of conduct.

We are aware that money launderers continually shift their methods and approaches to evade regulation and law enforcement. The final report of the Commission of Inquiry into Money Laundering in British Columbia, known as the Cullen commission report, highlighted the nature of the problem of money laundering in that province in the casino, real estate and luxury goods sectors. It also considered less well known but equally serious aspects of the problem, such as trade-based money laundering, and it examined the fast-growing options for money launderers, including the use of cryptocurrencies, private exchanges and cryptocurrency ATMs.

Responses to the challenge of money laundering may be more effective if they are sufficiently flexible to respond to a variety of situations. New offences are likely to be more effective if they come from the numerous ancillary tools in the Criminal Code that are available to investigators and prosecutors. Relevant examples include the use of wiretaps in appropriate circumstances or the ability to rely on copies of stolen identity documents in a court proceeding so the originals can be returned to the rightful owner or destroyed, if appropriate.

Bill C-289 does not propose any amendments that would enable the use of these tools for the investigation or prosecution of the offence proposed in this bill. This undermines its effectiveness.

Money laundering can compromise the integrity of financial institutions, businesses across the economy and the investment climate. When states fail to take concerted and coordinated action, the risks are clearly significant. Rightly so, the government has made concerted efforts in recent years to address the risk of money laundering and has been active in international forums.

• (1735)

I am aware that it works to advance international anti-money laundering initiatives through the G7 and the G20, as well as the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, which is an international organization that facilitates co-operation and intelligence sharing between national financial intelligence units, and through its leadership role in the Financial Action Task Force, of which Canada was a founding member.

Not only that, but Canada's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist fundraising measures are regularly reviewed by its peers through the FATF. I am pleased to have learned that, in October 2021, a follow-up review by this body placed Canada amongst the best-performing jurisdictions of the world. The FATF recognized the impact of the government's ongoing commitment to address the problem of money laundering in Canada.

The government has continued to step up its efforts. A few important examples of its efforts since 2020 include new regulations that apply to virtual currency service providers, including foreign providers operating in Canada, and new rules that apply to virtual currency transactions, which entered into force in 2020.

Furthermore, to assist in strengthening Canada's response to financial crime, the Financial Crime Coordination Centre, or FC3, was established as a five-year pilot initiative led by Public Safety Canada in 2019. It brings together anti-money laundering professionals from across jurisdictions with the aim of enhancing inter-agency collaboration and capacity building through a number of means, including training and expertise development, legislative and policy initiatives, partner support, and best practice resources.

Another example includes the commitment of approximately \$28 million over four years, and \$10 million ongoing, to create a multi-disciplinary fraud and trade-based money laundering centre of expertise at the Canada Border Services Agency to strengthen our capacity to tackle this borderless crime.

The government also committed \$98.9 million in 2020 to support the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in strengthening its federal policing capacity. This investment included \$19.8 million to establish new integrated money laundering investigative teams across Canada. These teams include police officers, lawyers, forensic accountants and other specialized experts, led by the RCMP. They investigate crimes that are using capital markets to harm the economic interests of Canada.

Mostly recently, in the budget tabled on April 7 of last year, the government accelerated its earlier commitment to implement a public and searchable beneficial ownership registry, which would now be accessible before the end of 2023. The government also committed to working with provincial and territorial partners to advance the national approach to a beneficial ownership registry of real property.

Finally, the government has committed to establish a new Canada financial crimes agency, which was also announced in the most recent budget. This agency would respond quickly to complex and fast-moving cases of financial crime and is intended to become Canada's lead enforcement agency in this area.

Private Members' Business

I share my colleague's concern about the serious challenges of money laundering in Canada. However, this bill risks duplicating existing offences in the Criminal Code. For this reason, I oppose this bill. It risks being a less effective option for law enforcement and prosecutors, therefore weakening the administration of justice. The government has shown and continues to show through its actions that it is committed to adopting its strategies and responses to the significant and rapidly evolving crime of money laundering.

I look forward to continuing our efforts to respond to this important societal challenge. I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for bringing this forward.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to say that I cannot believe the Liberal government's stance on this bill and how weak the arguments are. I find it unacceptable. What a joke.

I am pleased to speak this afternoon to Bill C-289, introduced by my friend and colleague on the Standing Committee on Finance, the member for Simcoe North. As my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord said last October, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this important bill.

This bill will amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence to give false or misleading information to a financial institution requesting that information in accordance with the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act. As we know, the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act currently asks financial institutions to verify their clients' true identity and the source of funds under certain circumstances. Financial institutions must also report transactions they deem suspicious to the government, so the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada, or FINTRAC, can carry out the necessary verifications, prevent laundering of the proceeds of illegal activities and prevent such funds from being used to finance illegal activities, such as terrorism.

The problem with the current situation, which the Liberals do not seem to understand, is simply a lack of vigilance. I see this bill as a step in the right direction to increase everyone's vigilance. The government's lax attitude and lack of vigilance are a problem right now, even though the tracking of dirty money is one of the most important areas of action.

The problem with the current situation is that if a client makes a false statement to their bank, they may get away with it because there is minimal verification. It is important to do more to combat money laundering.

Private Members' Business

The problem with the current situation is that if a client makes an intentionally misleading or incomplete statement, the consequences are not serious enough. There are virtually no consequences for these criminals, so there is every chance that they will fall through the cracks. As a result, the information that FINTRAC obtains is incomplete and its work becomes less effective. This explains the poor results in this area in Canada, contrary to what has been argued on the other side of the House.

This is how this chain of negligence results in dirty money being laundered in the real economy. Bill C-289 addresses this flaw. The bill does not fix everything, but it is one more step in the right direction to better uncover money laundering activities.

I want to provide an example connected to the sanctions against Russia. It is not a direct example of tracking dirty money, but it does illustrate the lack of vigilance at present. Early this week, two Montreal companies were sanctioned by the United States for circumventing economic sanctions against Russia. These companies are distributors of electronic components. In tracking the money, the Americans discovered that these two Montreal companies were circumventing the sanctions.

Why were Canadian authorities not able to uncover this scheme? Why were our southern neighbours doing our own institutions' job for them?

The reason may be the lack of vigilance and the lax attitude. That has to change. We must change the existing culture. We have been speaking a great deal about the Chinese government's interference. We have to figure out a better way to track illicit money in order to guarantee our independence. We must change attitudes. That is what this bill helps accomplish.

Members will recall that last May, the Italian consulate in Montreal organized an event to mark the 30th anniversary of "operation clean hands", a vast anti-mafia and anti-money laundering operation during which two Italian judges were murdered. Retired Italian judge Roberto Scarpinato came to Montreal to give us a warning. He told us that Canada had become a haven for mafia activity and money laundering. Society needs to do something. He encouraged us to develop "antibodies" to money laundering. He said we needed to stop being naive, to be more vigilant and to not be afraid to enforce our laws to the fullest extent, because money laundering is a scourge in Canada and in Quebec.

According to Transparency International, the amount of money laundered annually in Canada could be between \$43 billion and \$113 billion.

• (1745)

This means that up to \$113 billion a year in proceeds of crime, from both here and abroad, is being reintroduced into our economy, allowing criminals to reap the benefits of their crime with impunity and causing economic distortions, such as skyrocketing real estate prices. It is an appalling situation and the complacency we are seeing is pitiful. Something needs to change.

British Columbia launched a commission of inquiry into money laundering, the Cullen commission. The Cullen commission may be the most comprehensive effort ever made to understand the phe-

nomenon of money laundering in Canada, its effects, its causes and the best ways to prevent it in future. It submitted its report in June after more than two years of work and hundreds of witness testimonies. The report points the finger at the RCMP and FINTRAC for not taking money laundering seriously enough. It excoriates the banks for looking the other way. In fact, it accuses pretty much everyone of negligence. It also provides examples of what money laundering looks like.

There is the case of Runkai Chen, a Chinese immigrant who came to Vancouver in 2006. Despite reporting about \$40,000 in annual income, he built a real estate empire worth tens of millions of dollars. Mr. Chen was a straw man who laundered dirty money from China. He regularly received large transfers from foreign numbered accounts and reinvested the money in real estate. He made false statements to financial institutions here, and they did not ask questions. None of the big Canadian banks raised any red flags. Not RBC, not CIBC, not BMO.

It was actually a foreign financial institution that alerted FINTRAC, and that is how the scheme was uncovered. Foreigners are more vigilant than our institutions when it comes to finding dirty money laundered here. It is this kind of negligence every step of the way that Justice Scarpinato was talking about when he said we need to develop antibodies.

We actually already have a lot of the legal arsenal needed to deal with this problem. The Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act is a powerful tool. Banks are required to verify the identity of their clients and where the money is coming from. They have the power to freeze funds they deem to be suspicious. They are required to report suspicious transactions, large amounts of cash, and international transfers if they have difficulty determining where the money actually came from.

These requirements exist, but most of them rely heavily on the client acting in good faith and the financial institution being vigilant. By forcing clients to make true and complete statements to the banks or face criminal penalties, Bill C-289 addresses the first step, which is to verify the identity of the client and the source of the funds. This could start off a virtuous cycle where the financial institutions themselves would be more diligent about checking and government organizations would be better informed and more likely to co-operate with their counterparts abroad. In short, we could begin to develop the antibodies needed to seriously address the scourge of money laundering. That is why we will support this important bill.

Once again, I denounce what I believe to be the spurious arguments of the Liberal Party in opposing this bill. At present, there is a lack of vigilance and rigour in the tracking of dirty money. We must take action. Bill C-289 sets the bar. As I was saying, that is why we will support it.

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada has a significant money-laundering problem, and corrupted money comes flooding into our economy on account of that. Nowhere is that more evident than in Vancouver. Professional money launderers have a term for it. It is called the “Vancouver model”. It usually involves a lot of foreign, corrupt money, and it is distorting our economy.

We learned a lot about money laundering in British Columbia recently, with the release of the report from retired judge Austin Cullen. He had been appointed by the provincial government to head up the commission of inquiry into money laundering in B.C.

He heard from 199 witnesses, produced a report of 1,800 pages and summed up his work succinctly with this statement: “This Inquiry explored the myriad ways in which the greedy and the devils seek to make their crime-stained money appear legitimate.”

The Cullen commission found that, between 2008 and 2014, which were the years of his focus, billions of dollars were laundered through B.C. casinos. The report stated: “In 2014 alone, British Columbia casinos accepted nearly \$1.2 billion in cash transactions of \$10,000 or more, including [almost 2,000] individual cash buy-ins of \$100,000 or more”. The report noted that this is an average of five per day.

At least in British Columbia, we are all familiar with the scenes that we saw on television. There were clips taken from the security cameras in casinos of people walking in with hockey bags full of money and \$20 bills all neatly stacked up for easy counting and managing. Those are used to buy casino chips.

The commission found that these transactions usually happened late at night or early in the morning, when law enforcement people were not paying attention. Judge Cullen put it this way: “It should have been apparent to anyone with an awareness of the size and character of these transactions that Lower Mainland casinos were accepting vast quantities of proceeds of crime during this time period.”

This is just to state the obvious. One does not need to be a law enforcement specialist to know that this did not pass the smell test. As a matter of fact, in the words of a senior investigator with B.C.'s gambling regulator to the commission, the cash “smells like drug money”. He went on to note that it was simply not the practice of casino operators to make any inquiries of their patrons about their sources of cash. Operators would not ask, and patrons would not tell.

I do not want to be too hard on the BC Lottery Corporation. It has done a lot of things right. People have the right to go to casinos and lose money. I want to make just a couple of important points about things that they did correctly.

In February 2015, the BC Lottery Corporation called on the RCMP to investigate a number of people that it suspected of organized crime. Following that investigation, the BC Lottery Corporation put certain persons, about 600, on a watch-list, requiring them to prove source of funds.

A couple of years later, it expanded its source-of-funds procedures based on recommendations from Dr. Peter German, who had been appointed by the provincial government to investigate this. It is not that the BC Lottery Corporation did nothing, but it just did not do enough.

One of its representatives, giving evidence at the Cullen commission, put it this way: “Viewed from the lens of what we now know, everyone could and should have responded more quickly to those large cash transactions”.

I am happy to say that the B.C. government has taken this seriously. It has attempted to prosecute at least one bad actor for whom it felt that it had enough evidence about significant amounts of money-laundering activity.

The Joint Illegal Gaming Investigations Team conducted the investigation, and they recommended charges to the BC Prosecution Service. However, looking at all the evidence, the Crown counsel said that they did not have enough evidence and that there was not a substantial likelihood of conviction. That is their standard test.

The current premier, David Eby, was the attorney general at the time. This was his file, and he was not going to take that lying down. Therefore, he tried again.

● (1750)

He told his assistant deputy attorney general to retain the services of a special prosecutor to look at it once again and this time to, if necessary, use the exceptional evidentiary test of a reasonable prospect of conviction, so a much lower standard. Here is a political lesson. If one does not succeed the first time, try it again but lower the bar. This was a political decision and I think it was the right one. There was a very real concern in British Columbia that something had to be done in order to stop the erosion of public confidence in our justice system.

The result of the independent, special prosecutor investigation with a lower bar now, unfortunately, was still no. In his words, the critical question was whether the Crown would be able to demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that this cash was itself the proceeds of crime. He concluded that they would not be able to do that. There was lots of smoke but he could not put his fingers on the fire. Just very recently, he told the provincial government not to waste its time or its human resources trying to change this, that it would be unsuccessful and that it should change the law instead. He said in his conclusions that if Canada had laws, anti-money laundering laws similar to what the U.K. and Australia have, his opinion might well have been different.

Private Members' Business

That brings me to the debate of the day, the private member's bill from my colleague, the member for Simcoe North. I want to thank him for introducing Bill C-289, which would amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence to knowingly make a false or misleading statement or to knowingly provide false or misleading information, to a person or entity listed in section 5 of the Proceeds of Crime and Terrorist and Financing Act; false information with respect to the verification of individuals. In other words, do not lie to banks, credit unions, other financial services businesses and, importantly, do not lie to casinos about whose money you are dealing with. We want to know. There needs to be transparency. It would make a difference, if we had that law, as to whether we would be prosecuting some of these cases of obvious money laundering.

It is a very serious crime. If this legislation passes, it would make it an indictable offence with a fine of up to a \$1 million or jail time of 10 years, or the Crown counsel could decide to go by way of summary conviction with a possible fine of \$10,000 and two years less a day in jail.

I am pleased and people in British Columbia are pleased with this type of legislation because that is exactly what needs to be done. It is a small step, but it is an important step in the right direction.

More needs to be done. I am happy to hear that the Liberal government is again saying that it is going to bring forward legislation for transparency in corporate registries. In Justice Cullen's words, we do not want "the greedy and the devious" to hide behind numbered companies as they "seek to make their crime-stained money appear legitimate." Mr. Justice Cullen had 101 recommendations. Not all of them were for the federal jurisdiction. There are a couple that I think this Parliament needs to be paying attention to in the near future, not today but soon: fighting trade-based money laundering, closer scrutiny of money service businesses, better regulation of the mortgage industry and procedures for unexplained wealth orders. This is legislation that other countries and jurisdictions around the world have adopted against money laundering. We should be doing the same. Today, I am happy to say, we are taking a small, important step in the right direction.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, like my colleagues, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-289. I think my colleagues beat me to the punch, but I will say again that the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-289 at second reading. For one thing, we want to be able to suggest amendments and improvements when it goes to committee and perhaps cast the net a little wider, so to speak, in terms of the bill's scope. I will come back to this a little later.

What is the context surrounding Bill C-289?

The reality is that money laundering is unfortunately reaching alarming levels in Canada. Several institutions have conducted analyses and reached that conclusion. It is estimated that approximately \$100 billion is being laundered, and it is often the proceeds of drug trafficking and human trafficking. That is \$100 billion that comes into Canada every year to be laundered, to enter the legiti-

mate economy and to disappear. That is the principle of money laundering.

This has repercussions on the local population, on everyday people who, for example, live in places with a very low vacancy rate and where people are trying to become property owners. As we know, real estate is used as a way of laundering money by buying different buildings through nominees, which puts upward pressure on the price of housing. This has an adverse effect on everyone.

We also know that, unfortunately, Canada does not have a particularly good record when it comes to anti-money laundering legislation. Canada is at the back of the pack internationally. Our laws are relatively limited and rather lenient, and they do not make it easy to go after offenders and money launderers. That is basically what Bill C-289 tries to do. It is not going to fix the whole problem in one fell swoop, but at least it is a step in the right direction. It may help stimulate the debate on what more could be done beyond what Bill C-289 proposes.

It is always fun to read what is in the bill. This one is relatively short. I will just read the main clause, which is actually the only clause. It would add subsection 462.311(1) to the Criminal Code. As an aside, so many new sections have been added to the Criminal Code over the years that it might be time for consolidation. That is for my criminal law colleagues to say.

The addition reads as follows:

Everyone commits an offence who knowingly makes a false or misleading statement or knowingly provides false or misleading information, including by omission, whether directly or indirectly—

This casts a pretty wide net for what constitutes a lie. It goes on to say:

—to a person or entity referred to in section 5 of the *Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act* respecting the identity of a person or entity to be verified under section 6.1 of that Act, including with respect to the ownership, control or structure of the entity.

Who are we referring to when we talk about section 5? Who are these people who have an obligation to verify identity? We are referring to pretty much every existing entity that deals with money transfers. We are talking about banks, both local and foreign. The list set out in section 5 is very long, so I will not go through the whole thing. I will just do a quick overview. We are talking about banks, co-operative credit societies, savings and credit unions, life insurance companies, trust companies regulated by a provincial act, loan companies, companies that provide portfolio management services, companies dealing with foreign exchange, and even those dealing in virtual currencies. If money is being transferred somewhere, the entity that takes care of it has an obligation to verify the sender's identity. The problem is that there are absolutely no sanctions for providing false information.

Bill C-289 remedies that. It adds an obligation to provide truthful information or face one of two fines, depending on whether the person is found guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction or an indictable offence. The penalty for an indictable offence is a fine of up to \$1 million and up to 10 years in prison. The penalty for an offence punishable by summary conviction is a fine of up to \$10,000 and a maximum prison sentence of two years less a day.

• (1800)

There are some good things in this legislation. One aim of the bill is to discourage the use of nominees. Currently, there is absolutely no penalty for a person who is used as a nominee for the purpose of money laundering. The new obligation would provide authorities with additional tools so they can secure convictions for money laundering activities. The bill does not limit itself to the obligations of financial institutions. It seeks to ensure that there are penalties for false statements.

We also want to give authorities a little more flexibility to use the threat of conviction. That is the deterrent effect. This would allow authorities to gather information on large-scale money laundering cases and perhaps catch criminals with a lot more money than the small-time money launderer at the local pizza parlour, for example.

It also sets the stage for other steps that could be taken in the future, such as introducing a beneficial ownership registry that would require corporations governed by the Canada Business Corporations Act to disclose the identity of their actual owner. We hope legislation to that effect will be introduced in the House sooner rather than later.

I want to go back to the responsibilities of the financial entities that I mentioned, which are named in section 6.1 of the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act.

Pursuant to section 7, these entities are responsible for the following:

Subject to section 10.1, every person or entity referred to in section 5 shall, in accordance with the regulations, report to the Centre every financial transaction that occurs or that is attempted in the course of their activities and in respect of which there are reasonable grounds to suspect that

- (a) the transaction is related to the commission or the attempted commission of a money laundering offence; or
- (b) the transaction is related to the commission or the attempted commission of a terrorist activity financing offence.

Private Members' Business

There has been a lot of talk lately about Chinese interference. In this context, it seems to me that there is one thing that could, at the very least, be discussed by the committee that will be studying the bill, and that is the use of money that is not necessarily the proceeds of criminal or terrorist activities, but that is earmarked for an election campaign, for example.

I am wondering if certain witnesses would suggest that we add, not to the current bill but to the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, a paragraph (c) to section 7 to cover the conveyance of money with a view to making an illegal donation under the Canada Elections Act. That could be one approach.

There may also be a way, through Bill C-289, to make changes in order to make it an offence to lie about a donation to a political entity and the origin of the money that was used. This may be an idea to consider, given what is currently happening in the news. We are always a bit behind the news when we are in the House of Commons, but in this case, it may be a good idea not to lag too far behind. We might need to jump at the opportunity, at the fact that a bill is being studied, to invite witnesses who could outline a more forward-thinking vision of what could be done in terms of sanctions for making false statements about campaign donations.

In closing, I want to reiterate that we will support Bill C-289 and there is still a long road ahead, but at least this is a step in the right direction.

• (1805)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and support Bill C-289 from my colleague, the member for Simcoe North. I want to congratulate him for taking on this important issue. This is a bill aimed at combatting money laundering. As we move towards the second reading vote on this bill, I wanted to share a few thoughts that reflect conversations I have had. In particular, I have had conversations with people in Canada's cultural communities about their concern over the issue of money laundering. They are especially concerned when it involves money from foreign hostile regimes, sometimes even ones that are using those resources to threaten and hurt people from cultural communities here in Canada.

I want to say parenthetically, as it is Thursday, that I have had my son Judah with me all week. He is seven years old, and it has been wonderful to have him here. I want to thank him. He has been to committee meetings and to the House. He has watched question period, and he knows the rules and procedures better than some members do.

On the subject of Bill C-289, this excellent bill that I will certainly be supporting on money laundering, I want to reflect a bit on some of the conversations I have had. When I first got elected in 2015, I had a role involving human rights and religious freedom. In that context, I spent a lot of time getting to know leaders in various cultural communities in Canada.

Private Members' Business

Right away, the issue of money laundering came up in this context: We have people who flee authoritarian hostile regimes, who face persecution. Forms of that persecution also involve having their property confiscated and taken from them in various ways. Then they have fled to Canada and sought a new life; they are working hard to prosper and succeed here. At the same time, they see or perceive agents of that same hostile regime that are bringing stolen money to Canada and trying to launder that money and to create a safe haven for agents of that regime here.

Probably most prominent in my mind in terms of these conversations are those with the folks from the Iranian community whom I have spoken to. Regularly and repeatedly, they raise the issue of how the Iranian community here in Canada is concerned about how the Iranian regime is, in their perception, laundering money in Canada. In addition, while Canada is rightly perceived as a place where those fleeing that regime and other hostile regimes can come, they see how members of that regime have been able to try to use Canada as well.

We have put forward various measures to try to respond to this. For instance, approaching five years ago, I put forward a motion to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization in Canada and effectively shut down its operations here. Unfortunately, while the government voted for that motion, it never implemented it.

If we are going to shut down the activities of hostile foreign regimes in Canada, we need to take a series of measures. Those include listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization and expelling foreign diplomats involved in foreign interference, which we have been calling for in the context of the regime in Beijing. The current government has actually failed to expel any diplomats from any country for foreign interference. It has not expelled any diplomats associated with the Chinese Communist Party, nor has it expelled any Russian diplomats or diplomats from any country.

In addition, in the suite of measures that we need to prevent hostile regimes and maligned foreign actors from operating in Canada, as part of our response, we need to combat this issue of money laundering and the financing of these regimes. This could perhaps include financing of their operations in Canada, as well as their efforts to launder money for various other purposes here.

We as Conservatives have tried to reflect these concerns that we are hearing from people in cultural communities about how they have been victims of foreign interference and about money laundering in particular as part of that victimization, as well as other areas. However, it has been striking to me that one of the government's tactics for dismissing this is to suggest that it is somehow racist to talk about the very real and obvious problem of foreign interference.

● (1810)

I would submit that the opposite is true. It is actually a form of racism to not respond to the serious problem of foreign interference, because the primary victims of foreign interference have often been cultural communities, where there may be family members back home, and people are threatened by the fact that their family members would be hurt if they do not cease speaking up about certain issues.

I know people personally whose family members have been negatively affected abroad because of political activities they have been involved in here in Canada. I know that those threats can be frequent and can be put forward by hostile regimes. It is generally Canadians who have those family members in potentially vulnerable situations who are most likely to be victims. They are people who are recent immigrants to Canada, who faced persecution, who faced confiscation of their property, and then they see that money laundered in Canada and they see a government that is perversely claiming it is racist to talk about this problem.

I would say it is actually a form of racism to fail to address this problem that may not be directly impacting the lives of people whose families have been in Canada for a long time, but it is much more likely to impact the lives, security and well-being of people who are relative newcomers to Canada, of course depending on the countries they come from.

There are many reasons to support this bill. This is a common-sense measure to make it easier for law enforcement to target those who are involved in criminal offences and to hold them accountable for those offences. However, particularly in a context where we are seeing this pressing issue of foreign interference taking various forms and where we need stronger measures here in Canada to combat the scourge of foreign state-backed interference, one thing we could do is support this bill. Members could at least support it through to committee for further studies if they have doubts about some of the provisions. I think it is great the way it is. In any event, it should be supported through to committee so that it could be further studied and perhaps strengthened at the committee stage.

Unfortunately, while the government wants to now talk about being concerned about foreign interference, it seems intent on missing this golden opportunity to support a good piece of legislation, which would take a constructive step towards, among other things, combatting the problem of foreign interference. It underlines, again, that while the government is happy to talk tough, ultimately its talk is cheap and it is not prepared to take the measures that are required.

The government has refused to call a public inquiry into what happened in the last two elections. It is instead trying to bury this issue with fake new positions and by sending the issue to a committee that has, in fact, already studied the issue of foreign interference, but which is severely limited by secrecy rules and cannot report publicly. It must report first to the Prime Minister, and then it can only publish the information that the Prime Minister allows it to publish.

Incredibly, today on Bill C-289, the government and its coalition partners in the NDP seem intent on opposing a common-sense piece of legislation to combat money laundering.

I appeal to individual members of the Liberal and New Democratic Parties to think about what they are hearing from their constituents, to think about how many Canadians of Iranian origin, Canadians of Chinese origin, and Canadians of Russian or Ukrainian origin have seen the impact on their lives, of threats from hostile foreign powers. If we listen to those concerns, we should do all we can to combat the scourge of foreign state-backed interference. One critical way of doing that would be to support Bill C-289.

I hope we see individual members of the governing party and the NDP searching their consciences, thinking about what their constituents would actually want them to do and not blindly deferring their judgment on such critical issues to a front bench that has, frankly, been totally obtuse when it comes to crime, foreign interference and national security.

I do hope that, notwithstanding the positions of those two parties officially, we will see members have the courage to help us pass this bill, send it to committee and continue to do the work required to stand with all Canadians, Canadians of all backgrounds, in defending justice and human rights, and in opposing foreign interference via money laundering and other means.

• (1815)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Simcoe North has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here again with you today to talk about a very important issue.

I want to thank all members who participated in this debate, whether they agree with this piece of legislation or not, but in particular my friends from the Bloc, who spoke in favour of this piece of legislation, which I think is very important.

I would like to touch on a few things for members to reflect on.

The NDP position is that the bill is somehow not worthy of being supported because it was not a specific recommendation of the Cullen commission. The Cullen commission went to great lengths to make sure everybody knew that it did not have the resources or the ability to make recommendations with respect to federal jurisdiction.

I did my homework. I spoke to members of the Cullen commission and asked them if a bill like this would make it easier for law enforcement. The answer was yes. Therefore, I would ask the members of the NDP not to take my word for it, but to spend next week, especially those from British Columbia, asking NDP MLAs in British Columbia if they support this piece of legislation. All I ask for is a fair hearing on that point, because the Premier of British Columbia said that it is a “shocking” example of the shortfalls of federal financial crime law that money launderers cannot be prosecuted and convicted in British Columbia. That is the issue.

These cases are incredibly complex. In the United States, people are convicted for lying to the authorities or committing perjury more often than they are for the actual offence for which they are being investigated.

With respect to the position of the government, and I understand the government should meet any changes to the Criminal Code with high scrutiny, it refers to the offences of uttering and fraud, which do not carry a very significant penalty. The provision I am putting forward is one with up to 10 years in prison and up to a million dollars in fines. It is a hybrid offence. Members do not need to worry because there are no mandatory minimums in this Criminal Code provision.

The government also mentioned the laundering of proceeds of crime. I would say this. The example we just had in B.C. is the rea-

son why we need simpler Criminal Code provisions to catch, prosecute and convict money launderers. These cases take multiple years and often yield absolutely no results.

I would like to quote Kevin Comeau of the C.D. Howe Institute, who stated:

That lack of legal accountability in our anti-money-laundering system weakens the quality of information received from clients, places our financial, commercial, and real estate markets at greater risk of money laundering, and undermines the ability of law enforcement agencies to investigate money laundering and terrorist financing.

The federal government can reduce these risks by enacting legislation attaching sanctions to false reports of beneficial ownership made to persons who are legally required to collect that information.

The government is going to release beneficial ownership legislation, and this is what is going to be in it: There is going to be an administrative penalty that money launderers will view as the cost of doing business and a tax. It will not be a serious penalty, and money launderers are going to continue to view Canada as a safe haven to do their dirty business.

Therefore, I would ask and implore all members in this House to reflect on some of these comments, and I would ask NDP members in particular to go to British Columbia and ask their provincial counterparts if they support this legislation.

• (1820)

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

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I would just as soon see the bill pass right now, but I would request a recorded division if there is no agreement to pass the bill at all stages.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to an order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 22, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1825)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Adjournment Proceedings

Rideau Hall

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 9th day of March, 2023, at 5:10 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ian McCowan

Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

The bill assented to, Thursday, March 9, 2023, is Bill C-39, An Act to amend An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying).

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister is under immense pressure on the issue of foreign interference, and it is no wonder, when he cannot answer very simple, basic questions and instead resorts to feigning outrage on every possible pretext. How dare the opposition ask these questions. How dare we insinuate that the people involved are failing to put the national interest first. How dare we suggest that ministers have not been sufficiently strong or definitive on this important issue.

My question is, how dare the government persist in trying to hide the truth. If it persists in obfuscating and hiding what happened, Canadians are going to legitimately wonder why. Why can the Liberals not come clean on the issue of election interference? Why will they not work with us to find out what happened and help root out foreign interference instead of flailing around and trying to blame everyone else? In all likelihood, it is because they already know things, and if the public found out, they would be very disappointed in the government's failure to stand up for national security.

It has been widely reported, based on information shared with the media by CSIS, that the communist regime in Beijing sought to interfere in Canadian elections. In many ways, this is not surprising to those who have been following the operations of the communist regime, but the details are particularly troubling. This regime wanted, as reports indicate, to re-elect Liberals and defeat Conservatives, especially to defeat certain Conservatives.

It is not surprising this would be the case, since former Liberal minister John McCallum directly invited this kind of interference right before it happened. He told the South China Morning Post, "Anything that is more negative against Canada will help the Conservatives, [who] are much less friendly to China than the Liberals. I hope and I don't see any reason why things will get worse; it would be nice if things will get better between now and [the] election."

The Liberals directly and publicly invited foreign interference, and they knew about that foreign interference. They were in fact briefed that one of their candidates was believed to have been com-

PLICIT with the communist regime in getting illegal foreign support in a nomination race. The Liberals were briefed on this and they did nothing. The sad reality is that the Liberals are increasingly behaving as if foreign governments are stakeholders to woo for support in domestic elections. That is dead wrong, and it is a grave threat to our national security.

Clearly, many who are responsible for protecting our security have become frustrated with the approach of the government. They have increasingly spoken to the media directly. According to media reports, CSIS has begun an outreach program directly to MPs, and now we are seeing leaks from CSIS to multiple media outlets. The government should be listening to our security agencies and addressing their pressing concerns about foreign interference, rather than dismissing them and trying to distract from them with all manner of baseless excuses.

The Conservatives believe that Canada needs a public inquiry into what happened, an inquiry with the capacity to hold powerful people and, in particular, powerful members of the government accountable. The Liberals have tried to obfuscate by creating a new made-up position, a special rapporteur they would appoint and set the terms of, and they have said NSICOP should look further into this. We know NSICOP has been working on issues to do with foreign interference for a very long time, but this is a secret committee with no mandate to report anything publicly unless it has the permission of the Prime Minister to report it first.

Foreign state-backed interference has been the greatest threat to our national security for a long time. The Liberals like to say that the purpose of such interference is to cause chaos and confusion. That is sometimes but not always the case. Sometimes the purpose of foreign interference is simply for another country to advance its interests, steal information, elect more pliant politicians and punish critics. These are the kinds of things the Beijing regime is doing. It must stop, and we need a government that is actually prepared to put a stop to it.

● (1830)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to share a few thoughts on the issue. It has been interesting that Conservatives have been beating a drum on this particular issue as if it were something completely new. International foreign issues of this nature have actually taken place in the past. In fact, they predate this government.

When Stephen Harper was prime minister and the current leader of the Conservative Party was responsible for democratic reform, they were aware of foreign interference. Today's leader of the Conservative Party, when he was in the position to take some action, chose to do nothing. He chose to completely ignore the issue.

It was not until the federal election of 2015 that we actually had a government that recognized there was a need for us to do something on the issue. In fact, shortly after that, the member will recall, we had the establishment of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. It has parliamentarians from all sides of the House.

It has the incredible power to investigate. These members of Parliament, including Conservative members of Parliament, have all been cleared. They have top-secret clearance so they can meet with different security agencies that Canada has and get the information that is necessary.

In 2009, we also established a panel of independent civil servants to ultimately protect against any potential threats to our national elections. We had professionals indicate, in 2019 and 2021, that there was not any form of international interference that affected the outcome of the elections.

It seems to me that, for the first time, we have a Prime Minister and a government that have actually acted on the issue of foreign interference. That is why I think it is important we contrast that to the lack of action from the previous administration.

Yesterday, in question period, I do not know how many questions the leader of the Conservative Party stood up and asked. It was 15 or 20 times in question period. He was challenging the Prime Minister, when he was, in fact, the minister of democracy and did absolutely nothing even though he was aware there was foreign interference taking place.

The Conservative Party will continue to beat its drum. We have now indicated, because we can understand and appreciate the apprehension Canadians have in regard to the issue, that establishing an independent special rapporteur is a responsible way of dealing with it. It may not be quite as political as the members of the Conservative Party would like, given that it is an independent—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Liberals plan to make Gerry Butts the rapporteur. Their sense of independence seems to be off the charts.

In all seriousness, the member's response is absurd. He says his government has been in power for eight years, and he asks why the Conservatives did not see this problem coming and fix it beforehand. He said we are the ones responsible. He is saying the Liberals have been in power for eight years but that they cannot be blamed for what has happened since.

Clearly, foreign interference has existed in various forms for all of human history. However, we have CSIS telling multiple media outlets that the government was directly briefed on interference that was aimed at helping it politically, and the government, when it received that information and realized it was benefiting from foreign interference, did nothing to stop it. That is quite incredible. The level of frustration from our intelligence agencies is quite incredible.

NSICOP is not able to release information without the Prime Minister's prior approval. The government is doing nothing.

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• (1835)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, even the question the member puts forward is silly. He gives the impression that seven or eight years ago, the Conservatives would never have seen this coming. Former prime minister Stephen Harper and their current leader were aware of it because it was happening when they were in government.

The security agency advised the Conservative government of foreign interference. What did the current leader of the Conservative Party do? He did zip, nothing. The only change he made was to make it harder for Canadians to participate in elections. I sat on the PROC committee when they were trying to stuff through the anti-democratic legislation.

What we are seeing is not only happening in Canada. It is happening in France and the U.S.A. It is not just one country; it is many countries. The Conservatives need to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has the floor.

FINANCE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are in a cost of living crisis in Canada, and we have heard one of the driving factors for that crisis is the contribution to inflation of things like the carbon tax. It is a tax on everything.

That is not the only area where the government is ignoring the serious situation Canadians find themselves in. One can take a look at the lack of prudence the government is approaching the taxpayer dollar with. Canadians work extremely hard, and when they have to remit that hard-earned money to the federal government, they expect that it is for the purpose of furthering the national interest and for basic services only the federal government can provide.

When one looks a little closer and scratches just beneath the surface, one will see an absence of care or concern for where that tax dollar comes from. It comes from the pocket of a Canadian who, like the average Canadian family, is paying more than \$1,000 in increases in their grocery bill this year. That price would be higher for Canadian families if many Canadians were not skipping meals to help drive down their grocery costs.

The government has not found a tax dollar it is not prepared to waste. Now, it is not using the increase in tax revenue it is getting from inflation to do things like reduce wait times for passports, although we have seen people camping outside for them. It is not doing it to improve services at our airports when we have seen people stranded and delayed in just unprecedented wait times and disruptions to our airline industry. We are not seeing it with improvements to the interdiction of firearms at our borders and to end gun smuggling from the United States, although we have seen the scourge of gun violence being perpetrated with smuggled firearms across Canada.

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The government is also spending wild sums of money on projects with no care or concern for where that dollar comes from, like the \$54 million it spent on arrive scam. That app was supposed to cost many orders of magnitude less than it did, and it did not even work right. It arbitrarily detained Canadians in the thousands. We recently learned that the Prime Minister was charging \$6,000 per night for his hotel room in London, and he did not just stay a single night.

Meanwhile, Canadians are struggling to keep the heat on, feed themselves and put enough gas in the tank of their truck to get to work or their minivan to get to a doctor's appointment or an after-school activity for their children.

The government needs to approach the serious issue of the affordability crisis we are facing in Canada, and it needs to hold up the mirror and ask itself: What is it doing to make life more affordable for Canadians? Where is it going to find the savings? When is it going to stop raising taxes?

• (1840)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not think I will be given enough time to properly respond to the member's statements.

When we think of inflation, the starting point is that we are concerned about inflation. However, when we put it in a world perspective, we see a war happening in Europe, and the pandemic had worldwide impacts. Canada's inflation rate, for the most part, is less than those of the U.S., Germany and other G20 countries, but that does not mean we will just sit back and ride it through.

This is a government that has, in fact, demonstrated its caring attitudes and concern. That is why we have brought in program after program to support Canadians. I could talk about the dental program for kids under the age of 12, which the Conservatives voted against. I could talk about the rental program to support low-income individuals who are finding it difficult. It was a \$500 program, which the Conservatives did not support.

The member talks about these big expensive programs. Yes, we are a government that understands that the true value of what Canadians want and expect of the government. That is why we brought in \$10-a-day child care. Just the other day, I was with the Prime Minister and the Premier of Manitoba announcing that we will hit the \$10-a-day day care in April, well ahead of the national target. Yes, that did cost billions of dollars, but it will enable an expanded workforce. It will enable a better quality of life. We might be spending billions, but it is only the Conservative Party of Canada, here in the House of Commons, that says it is going to throw out the program. At the provincial level, we have Conservative, NDP and Liberal governments that are all buying into it and developing the \$10-a-day child care program.

We can talk about the billions of dollars for health care. That is \$198 billion over 10 years, which is a lot of money, but Canadians expect us to ensure that our core health care system, which we have grown to love and appreciate, will continue to be there, and the federal government will continue to play a strong role in that system.

The member talks about inflation, with which, compared to the world, Canada is doing relatively well, but we continue to work on it. There are expenses the government is incurring to try to alleviate some of those pressures. The Conservatives had to be shamed into supporting our initiative to double the GST rebate for a six-month period of time. Initially, the Conservatives were against it, but then they realized it is a bad thing to be against, so they came onside to support that.

Yes, the government is very much aware of the importance of the tax dollar. The government is also very much aware of the importance of our economy and the types of services we must support, and we will continue to do so. We have a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who is aggressively getting us into a position so we will be able to continue to lead, in many ways, the G20 over the next number of years.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, no government has ever spent so much to achieve so little. What did the Liberals get for the piles of money they threw on the inflationary fire? What is the result for Canadians? The cost to rent an apartment has doubled. The cost of a mortgage payment has doubled. The dream of home ownership has evaporated. That is the legacy of the government.

It literally took the Prime Minister years to answer the request from provinces to meet to discuss health care funding. It took years for the Liberals to come up with support for the provinces. If this is what help looks like, Canadians are crying for them to stop.

Raising taxes when Canadians are struggling is the very last thing they need. They need help, not hurt.

• (1845)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what the member just said is completely inaccurate. It is just not true.

Within a couple of years, we had a federal government that, unlike Stephen Harper's government, negotiated health care accords with the different provinces, providing secured funding. We just had a major announcement in regard to health care. Historic amounts of money are currently going to health care, with an additional \$198 billion.

When the member says that we are not spending money where we should be spending money or implies that we are wasting money, he can tell that to the hundreds of thousands, going into the millions, of Canadians who received CERB payments during the pandemic. He can tell that to the business owners who received literally billions of dollars through the wage subsidy so that we could keep Canadians working during the pandemic. Canada was in a great position to be able to rebound out of the pandemic because the Government of Canada supported the economy and supported Canadians. That is why, in comparison to the rest of the world, we are doing relatively well.

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise this evening in Adjournment Proceedings to pick up on a question I asked on the occasion of World Children's Day. On the closest opportunity to that day, I asked the hon. minister responsible for children and families whether the government was finally making any progress toward creating, at the federal level, a position to advocate for the rights of children.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Canada has signed on to and which most countries have signed on to. Since 1989, virtually the entire world has committed. Strangely enough, not the United States, but most countries around the world have adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I pointed out that the committee that oversees that convention has been asking Canada for some time when we plan to fulfill one of our obligations, which is to create a position within the government that advocates for the rights of the child and that oversees, monitors and promotes the well-being of children: a children's advocate.

Since I first asked that question in November of last year, Canada lost one of our most extraordinary advocates for children. Senator Landon Pearson, whom I had the honour to know and work with, passed away. She was perennially, in the other place, making the same points I am making here tonight: that Canada is letting down our children and that we need to have an advocate for children at the federal level. People may ask "Why?" and say that Canadian children are doing great. We do not know, if we do not advocate and if we do not collect data.

I found fairly recent statistics, from last year, 2022, in a report called the "KidsRights Index". Because I am a proud Canadian, I like it when we rate really high, so I immediately looked up the top 10 countries in the world. The top is Iceland; second, Sweden; third, Finland; fourth, Netherlands. I will not keep going, because we were not in the top 10. We were not in the top 20. We were not in the top 30. We rank, in the world community, at number 48 in terms of measurable commitments and measurable achievements to ensure the rights of the child.

What are the rights of the child? They are the rights to life, to health, to education, to protection from harm and to enjoying an enabling environment that supports them as they grow. One would think that Canadian children must be pretty well off because Canada is an industrialized society that is wealthy. A recent report on poverty among Canadian children found that thanks to the CERB, the special COVID benefits, poverty in Canadian children dropped by 40% when the CERB was reaching families. However, even with that, we had a million Canadian children living in poverty. Globally, 1.1 billion children live in poverty.

We are not doing what must be done. In the wake of the pandemic, we see increasing mental health issues for our children. We know we need to do more. What progress is being made for the rights of the children?

• (1850)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Is-

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lands for her advocacy on behalf of children and on so many important issues in this chamber. It is always a pleasure to hear her speak.

The principle of establishing a national children's commissioner has been proposed and is in line with Canada's signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I would like to start my comments this evening by stating that our government reaffirms its commitment to the convention and ensuring every child gets the best start in life.

How do we ensure that? It requires a holistic approach that considers the key determinants for resiliency and well-being. That is why several mechanisms already exist to achieve these goals. We have taken a whole-of-government approach to advancing children's rights since 2015, specifically in three key areas.

The Canada child benefit recently celebrated its sixth anniversary. The positive impact is that now, each year, over 3.5 million Canadian families receive more than \$25 billion tax-free. We have done this because we are committed to helping parents with the high costs of raising their kids, and it is making a real difference.

More than five years ago, the government started creating a Canada-wide early learning and child care system, because we believe that high-quality, inclusive and affordable child care is something that every family and child should have access to. We have since signed agreements with every province and territory, and we are seeing positive results. As of April 2, 2023, families in nearly half of Canada's provinces and territories will be benefiting from regulated early learning and child care at an average of \$10 a day or less. Fees have been cut by at least 50% in all other jurisdictions, with work on track to delivering regulated child care at an average of \$10 a day by March 2026. This is putting money back in the pockets of thousands of families with young children.

Finally, I think everyone here agrees that no child should go to school hungry, yet on any given day, one in five children in Canada does. Regular access to nutritious food is a key determinant of a child's health, growth and well-being. Food insecurity is something our children should not have to face each day when they arrive at school. School meal programs support and improve the overall health of our children, but programs currently only serve 21% of school-aged children. That is why we are developing a national school food policy to help more Canadian children get a better start every day.

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We all know that raising a child to their fullest potential is the goal of every Canadian parent. That is why we are focused on goals relating to no poverty, zero hunger and reduced inequalities among children and youth. While we are seeing results from our efforts, we know there is still a lot of work to do. That is why we continue working with our provincial, territorial and indigenous partners across Canada to make sure that all our children have the resources they need to succeed.

With regard to a children's advocate, as the member is well aware, multiple levels of jurisdiction are involved in the safety, well-being and growth of a child. We will continue to actively explore other initiatives to advance the rights and interests of children in this country.

I want to thank the member for her important question and her advocacy. As a parent to two daughters, I too am among the fans of the beloved *Baby Beluga*.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I want to both thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for her kind words and wish her a very happy birthday. I apologize for the fact that I have kept her late on her birthday tonight.

Getting back to the matter at hand, we have a tremendous opportunity right now. We have a minister who is committed. We have a parliamentary secretary who is committed. Let us finally get this done and get an advocate for children at the federal level.

Yes, the Canada child benefit is great. Yes, it is good see, at long last, universal child care and \$10-a-day agreements with the provinces. Yes, it is great to see progress, although it is not yet fully delivered, on a child benefit for school nutrition. That is very important. However, let us have someone at the federal level keeping track of where things are falling through the cracks and where we are not delivering what we need to. Let us make poverty history here and around the world. A children's advocate is a key part of that solution.

• (1855)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, we can all in the House agree that every child deserves not only the best possible start but also access to the things they deserve to have each and every day. They deserve to not live in poverty, to not go hungry, to have access to a good education and a safe environment to study in. That is why the government is working tirelessly to establish legislation and programs that protect children in all of those contexts and environments. That is why the Canada child benefit has helped lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. That is why we are building the nationwide child care system, which is affordable, flexible, inclusive and regulated child care, and that creates safe spaces.

I did not mention it earlier, but that is also why we created the Canada dental benefit for children under 12, because we know that the health and safety of our children, making sure that they have the best start in life, is a universal priority. That is why we will continue on the national school food program for our children as well, because a healthy start to the day starts with good food.

These pillars matter, and we are committed to working on that common goal.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would also like to wish the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development a very happy birthday.

[*Translation*]

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:57 p.m.)

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