



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 211

Monday, June 12, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 12, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

CHILD HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-252, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibition of food and beverage marketing directed at children), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

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

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

[*English*]

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. 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.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I request that it be carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to discuss my bill, Bill C-252. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my colleagues for all their support and hard work in advancing the bill.

Bill C-252 essentially seeks to prohibit the marketing of foods that contain excessive amounts of sugar, sodium and saturated fats to children below the age of 13.

Additionally, the bill contains a provision that would mandate Health Canada to monitor the impact of the bill on the marketing of foods and beverages to teenagers between ages 13 and 18. This is done in an effort to ensure that food companies and advertisers will

not simply turn around and amp up their marketing to teenagers to compensate for these new limits. Hence, the bill would provide an opportunity to verify the impact of this legislation and make adjustments if necessary.

One of the most concerning health issues for Canadians today is childhood obesity. To date, one in three children in Canada is either overweight or obese. We know that obesity leads to higher lifetime risk of developing severe health conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

Obesity increases the risk of at least 11 different cancers, and evidence has shown that diet-related diseases now kill more Canadians than smoking. In 2019, dietary risk factors contributed to an estimated 36,000 deaths, and the burden of chronic diseases, impacted mainly by diet and other modifiable risk factors, has been estimated to cost \$13.8 billion in Canada.

Despite these dire consequences, the proportion of obese children has nearly tripled in the last 25 years. Our government has recognized these issues, and that was why it launched, in 2016, the healthy eating strategy to help make the healthier choice the easier choice for Canadians.

In 2019, the revised Canada's food guide provided Canadians with relevant, consistent and credible dietary guidance. In 2020, sodium reduction targets were published to encourage sodium reduction in food supply. However, there is still more work to be done.

It is a well-established fact that one of the major explanations for obesity is attributed to food marketing to children. The World Health Organization recognized the marketing of foods and beverages to children to be problematic as early as 2010. In fact, in a recent policy brief, it went as far as to call the evidence that food marketing altered food preferences, choices and purchases as unequivocal. Furthermore, the World Health Organization stated that food marketing not only affected children's physical health, but it also "threatens their emotional, mental and spiritual well-being".

Children in Canada are currently being exposed to hundreds of ads every day. Whether it is through TV, online, video games or other forms of marketing, children are a highly targeted market. This is worrisome, because we know that children are especially vulnerable and susceptible to marketing. They are less able to understand or question the purpose or essence of the marketing and, as such, become easy targets of influence as they absorb and accept the messages.

Private Members' Business

A 2017 report on the health of Canadians has shown that well over 90% of food and beverage product advertisements viewed by children online or on TV have been for products that are high in sugars, sodium and saturated fats. It is not surprising then to learn that kids aged nine through 13 get more calories, almost 60%, from ultra-processed foods than any other age group.

This is especially problematic, because childhood is the period during which children learn and develop lifelong eating habits, and we know just how impactful food marketing is on the eating habits of our children.

We currently have a situation where corporations that produce foods and beverages with excessive amounts of sugar, sodium and saturated fats are allowed to market and target them to the most vulnerable members of our society, who then adopt problematic eating habits.

Furthermore, a 2018 UNICEF report argued that unhealthy food marketing to children constituted a violation of a number of children's rights as recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes children's right "to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health."

Bill C-252 would give us the tools to end the marketing of foods that contain the three excessive ingredients to kids and would enable them to make better and healthier food choices for themselves.

There have been some critiques of the bill. Some have said that it is not needed, because the Association of Canadian Advertisers has developed a code, "Code for the Responsible Advertising of Food and Beverage Products to Children", which sets some limits on what is considered reasonable advertising of foods and beverages to children. They have argued that the code is enough and therefore any further legislative efforts is superfluous. To that I would say absolutely not.

A significant amount of research has shown time and again that self-regulatory codes do not work, as they are voluntary in nature and make it too easy for industry players to amp up or simply opt out. On the other hand, the development of a code clearly demonstrates that the industry players recognize the existence of a problem with marketing to kids. While this recognition is welcomed, ultimately their efforts simply do not suffice.

Dr. Warshawski, chair of the board of directors at the Childhood Obesity Foundation, during his appearance at the Standing Committee on Health, stated, "The fox should not...guard the hen-house". We only have to look at the United Kingdom and Spain. They are respectively developing regulations to prohibit the marketing of foods to children after having witnessed first-hand that there were no positive outcomes from their existing self-regulatory industry codes.

Others have expressed concern that Bill C-252 could capture and prohibit the marketing of foods that are pantry staples, such as bread or milk. Let me be clear that is not the aim of this bill. The way the bill is framed it specifically directs Health Canada to develop regulations with the necessary nuances.

As Dr. Sharma from Health Canada repeatedly explained during her appearance at the health standing committee that the phrasing

of this bill allowed for the creation of categories rather than the targeting of specific foods, which in turn would allow for a nuanced implementation and application.

In other words, foods that contain high levels of one of the targeted nutrients, but which are generally considered to be beneficial to children's diets, such as fruits that contain high levels of sugars, would easily be exempted from the legislation. This process would be entirely based on an extensive regulatory process that would not only include consultations with a variety of actors, but also be based on strong scientific evidence regarding the nutritional needs of our children.

Some have also attempted to deform the bill and make it into something that it is not, which is an attempt to tell parents what they can and cannot buy for their children. This is simply and unequivocally false. Having raised three children myself, I strongly believe that parents have all the freedom in deciding and choosing how they want to raise and feed their children.

Bill C-252 does not target parents and adults, but strictly children. It is about removing the possibility of a billion dollar industry to reach our vulnerable children and manipulate them through the marketing techniques that will lure them into desiring products that we know could be detrimental to their health. Parents are and remain fully responsible for the food choices they make for their kids. The bill is simply about evening out the playing field and ensuring that parents can make decisions about the nutrition of their children without having to push back against powerful outside influences.

Finally, some have tried to argue that the bill should not be adopted because it would preclude other aspects of health from being addressed. For example, some people have said that the bill should not be adopted because they perceive it as a risk to the continuation of sports sponsorship and community sports. I would invite them to look at Quebec, as it serves as a model whereby sports sponsorship aimed at children has been restricted for over 40 years, yet community sports are still very much alive and well in the province. My bill's focus on specific nutrients leaves plenty of space for a modified approach to sports sponsorship.

● (1110)

Similarly, critiques have advanced that, instead of passing this bill, we should focus on encouraging children to be more active. This view represents a very limited and ultimately insufficient approach to health. There is no doubt whatsoever that sports and physical activity play an important role in protecting the health of our children. However, health is a multifactorial element, and diet is just as important as physical activity. As such, our government has committed to significant investments to encourage children to move and to participate in team sports, notably with a \$10-million investment in the recent 2023 budget. The supposed opposition between my bill and an approach more focused on active living is simply uncalled for. Both healthy eating and physical activity can, and in fact should, coexist. Ultimately, this is not a magic bullet that could fix childhood obesity all on its own. It is, however, an absolutely needed and key component of a broader, comprehensive strategy that needs to address this important issue.

It is also worth reminding everyone that this bill has been a long time coming. As many members may know, there have been previous attempts to advance similar legislation, which suffered from significant push-back. Most notable is former senator Nancy Greene Raine's efforts with Bill S-228, which unfortunately got stalled in the Senate and died on the Order Paper. Similarly, we witnessed efforts by the opposition to stall this bill at the committee stage. Some members have even tried to represent the bill as lacking in consultation with stakeholders, when in fact we have heard, time and time again, the same arguments from the food and advertising industries, which have deployed extensive resources in trying to block this legislation. Industries have had plenty of opportunities to express their concerns regarding this bill, which have been heard and have been taken into account in my version of Bill C-252. Industries would continue to have opportunities to express themselves throughout the regulatory process.

In Canada, we have the chance to have a remarkable consensus across party lines regarding our approach to health. We all believe in the importance of working to ensure the healthiest possible life for every single Canadian, no matter their age or their means. Ultimately, I believe that every member of Parliament has good reasons to support this bill. That is why I would like to say to my colleagues that we should make sure we act as quickly as possible to get this bill passed. It is long overdue, and our children deserve it.

• (1115)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to speaking to this bill after questions and comments, but I have one question for the member opposite. She has said that this has been in legislation in Quebec for the last 40 years. How much lower is the obesity rate in children in Quebec since the act was legislated in that province?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Quebec has served as a model in terms of not targeting marketing to kids.

However, this bill goes a lot further and is much broader. We want to put more measures in place to ensure that foods that are unhealthy for kids are not marketed to them. Obviously, there have been industries that have tried, in various forms and through various attempts, to still market to young children.

Having a law across the land would make this equal for everyone and would ensure that Quebec would abide by the same restrictions as all other provinces across the land.

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that Quebec is serving as a model once again.

My question for my colleague is quite simple. Can she guarantee that there will be no encroachment on Quebec's jurisdiction in civil matters? That is my real concern and it will set the tone in terms of how we vote.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Speaker, the goal is not to encroach on areas of provincial jurisdiction. The goal is to protect the well-being of our children and to ensure that children are not targeted by advertising campaigns that promote unhealthy eating. Health

Private Members' Business

Canada looks after its areas of jurisdiction and the provinces have theirs.

• (1120)

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening intently, and this is a conversation that constituents in the riding of Waterloo often have. Negotiating with a three-year-old child, a five-year-old child or even an older one is sometimes very difficult when it comes to marketing.

The member spoke about raising her children, so I would like to hear from her about what would have changed if legislation like this had existed while the member was raising her children and what the impacts would be for kids and families today, including those in Waterloo.

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has an excellent question. If such a law had been adopted a few years back, when Senator Greene Raine brought it before the Senate, we probably would have decreased the number of deaths that I have reported since then. More important, we know this is putting a strain on our health care system and is costing, in Canada, \$13.8 billion a year. Therefore, it is monetary, in ensuring that our health system does not get negatively impacted. Of course, an impact is also that our kids would have a better and healthier jump-start to their lives.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague for this bill, which we will be supporting.

My question concerns the age. My colleague referred to Senator Greene Raine's bill from 2016, which would have prohibited marketing to children under 17 years of age. At that time, the Liberals, her colleagues, at the health committee amended that bill to reduce the target age from 17 to 13. According to UNICEF, the proposed cut-off of 17 was more likely than a younger age threshold to protect the most vulnerable from the harmful impacts of marketing. We know that teens are exposed to more ads than younger children and that they remember them better.

Is my colleague interested in watching to see if the food manufacturers target more ads at 14-year-olds to 17-year-olds, and does she agree with the NDP that we have to be very vigilant to protect those children as well from this kind of marketing?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. In fact, the bill contains a provision that would mandate Health Canada to monitor impacts of this bill on the marketing of foods and beverages to teenagers aged between 13 and 18. This would be done specifically in an effort to ensure that food companies and advertisers would not simply, as I mentioned, turn around and ramp up their marketing to teenagers to compensate for these new limits. Therefore, the bill would give this opportunity to verify, once Bill C-252 becomes law, and to see the impacts of this legislation.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill C-252. I will not be supporting it, for various reasons, and I am going to walk through those reasons now. A lot of people in this place are parents, and I am a parent of three young children. Jameson is six. Clare is turning eight in July, and my son Nickson is 10, and we do talk a lot about nutrition in our family. I think a very important role of a parent is to begin healthy eating habits early in life.

With respect to kids being marketed to and Health Canada wanting to pull back some marketing, it seems like Health Canada always wants to bring in more and more bans. I remember that last year we were fighting Health Canada when it was trying to make amendments to front-of-package labelling to label whole beef and whole pork as unhealthy. It did that labelling for before the whole beef or whole pork was actually cooked. Once it is cooked, it loses a lot of its trans fats; the oil drips off, and then we actually have a healthier meal. That is another example of the banning that the government, seemingly continuously, wants to do, taking more and more control over the lives of Canadians. They are just expected to listen to exactly what the government says, and I think that is a dangerous road to go down.

One thing the government was doing was talking about marketing. It struck me as funny that, as I was driving down a road in Ottawa, I saw a candy store frontage, but it was not actually a candy store; it was a cannabis store. When we talk about taking on some marketing and some advertising, maybe we should start with not allowing certain companies to actually make cannabis look like candy. It would be a really good start in this country to actually tackle some of that marketing.

When we were looking at other aspects of Bill C-252, my colleague from Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies came over and talked about why we were trying to fight against the bill in its previous iteration with Senator Greene Raine. The unintended consequence of the bill is that it would take away opportunities for sponsorship in youth sports. Timbits hockey actually sponsors 300,000 kids to play sports in Canada. When we want to have these opportunities for kids who cannot play, because sometimes sports are becoming expensive, we need sponsorship like this. Why would we take a bill that would bring forward government regulations to, and I disagree with my colleague opposite, tell parents what to feed their kids, what is healthy and what is not?

Do members know how much access we are able to have to information on ingredients in the grocery store? My wife takes our kids grocery shopping all the time, and she actually shows them the ingredients that are in the stuff they want her to buy. They look at the first ingredient, and it is sugar. She says, "Why would we buy this? It is full of sugar and it is not going to make us healthy or give us energy." That is what parents should do; they should create healthy eating habits. The member who spoke previously, the sponsor of the bill, did say that we have to have a multi-faceted approach to kids when it comes to treating obesity and bringing obesity rates down. That approach does involve physical activity.

We have been talking about all the marketing kids are seeing, but my kids do not see a lot of marketing. They are on an iPad or a cell phone one hour a week; on Saturdays they get to play a game. The rest of the time, we go outside and play. We are very active. This

weekend I was at home, and I watched six flag football games because our kids were outside. When they were not playing flag football in the league, they were practising with other kids in the park. That fights obesity. Something we should be more focused on is getting our kids outside and playing, and that is something my wife and I have, as parents, taken to heart.

● (1125)

Also, parents should show a healthy lifestyle to their kids. We should be role models for our kids. We do not need the government to tell us how to feed our kids and what they should and should not be doing. Parents need to be better role models across this country for their children, and I think that is something we really need to focus on. I see it time and time again when intermingling with some other parents, where the first thing their kid does is to grab their iPhone from their pocket and sit with it for an hour. We need to be more involved. That is not government's job; that is our job as parents, and it is our job as to what we should be teaching our children. This is why, when legislation like this is brought forward, I am actually quite disappointed.

This legislation is not new; it has been done in Quebec. For 40 years, this legislation has been in place in Quebec. I asked the member very directly how much the obesity rates have gone down in Quebec with this legislation. Members probably noticed that she would not give a number. She would not answer, because government legislation does not have that much of an affect on what kids are going to eat; parents do, and that is what we should be focusing on.

The member talked about \$10 million in the 2023 budget for keeping kids active. When that is spread across the country, it is not a lot of money to keep Canadian youth active. However, legislation such as this has actually been done in Canada and proven not to be as helpful as some members like to say. This seems to me to be the definition of insanity: doing the same things over and over again and expecting different outcomes. I see that a lot with the government.

The government talks about marketing to children and trying to make sure that children are not affected by it, because they might respond negatively. However, we also have to teach our kids that they are going to see things in their lives, but they have to learn and be able to look at it, say that it is not for them and move on. We should actually teach our children to see marketing, look at the package on the label when grocery shopping and make the decision not to eat it and put it in their body. The government does not have to do that for parents and kids.

There are a lot of roles where I know there is not a big difference between the Liberals and the NDP members, who think that government can do nothing wrong. Over here, we think government should be less and less involved in the everyday lives of Canadians; this legislation is a perfect example of that. I do not want the government to look after me or my children from cradle to grave. I want us to be able to make our own decisions.

Kids might make mistakes. We work hard, but we are not perfect. Our kids do get the odd stomach ache from eating too much candy or too many chips, but the kids actually learn a lesson from that as well. They realize that they cannot put all this artificial food in their system, because it actually makes them feel unwell; that is a learning experience.

However, to say that the government can control what kids are going to see and control marketing is an issue. In an earlier part of my speech, I brought forward a very valid point, which is that if we want to talk about marketing to children, we need to talk about the fact that people are trying to market cannabis to children and call it a “candy shop”. We should look at tackling some of those issues, which are actually dangerous to kids, and let the parents tackle issues of healthy dietary habits, healthy habits when it comes to staying active and making sure that we are more involved in our kids’ lives, day in and day out.

The government is not going to solve those problems; the government of the day definitely will not solve many problems. However, as an engaged parent and a member of society who actually wants to help out and make sure that kids are making healthier choices, I think we have to have more education system involvement when kids have phys. ed. class. Kids can quite often opt out of phys. ed. class. We have to stay active, and we have to stay motivated to make sure that we are making healthy lifestyle choices; that can be a part of it.

My Liberal colleagues have said that we need a multi-faceted approach, but maybe they can take all the effort that has been put into the bill before us into keeping kids more active. In that way, when they get older and have to make choices by themselves, they are going to stay active. They will have a healthy lifestyle, and they will have a healthier diet. This is how we are trying to train our kids so that they can make their own choices. They can read what is on the label and decide that if the first ingredients are sugar and carbonated water, it is not going to be healthy for them. However, we need to train the next generation to actually make decisions on their own, because the government cannot make every decision for them.

● (1130)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to acknowledge the initiative of the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, who tabled Bill C-252. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Food and Drugs Act to prohibit food and beverage marketing directed at persons under the age of 13.

Young people have a very difficult relationship with images. I am the mother of two young adults, so I talk to teens a lot. I can see that their relationship with images is difficult, because youth are exposed to a lot of images. On apps like Instagram, TikTok and Be-

Private Members' Business

Real, our youth are constantly exposed to marketing images or influencers showing them what kind of looks are acceptable in our societies.

That is the main source of anxiety for many youth, because they are comparing themselves to filtered and altered images. They are seeing people use unhealthy weight loss methods. Youth are comparing themselves to something that cannot be real. These apps, which our youth use extensively, also contain marketing aimed at them. There are ads for unhealthy foods that are portrayed as very healthy. Youth are being manipulated through social media, which is at their fingertips all day.

It is time for the House of Commons to take action to regulate the big industry groups that are unfortunately more interested in their profits than in the public health of youth, who are our future. We were all young once. We all know what it feels like to want to be cool. We still want that today. We have all wanted to copy everyone else. That is normal, and that is not what I want to question today. The issue is how big food companies that manufacture junk food use marketing. They know which buttons to press to make young people feel guilty about not having tried the latest sugary cereal. It may taste good, but it is not healthy.

Just because there is a cute little rabbit in a field on the box does not mean that the product is healthy or that it is part of a healthy diet. If we can prohibit that kind of advertising from being directed at youth under the age of 13, we could save an entire generation from marketing. Let me give some figures.

Obesity is a well-documented problem. Unfortunately, it is a problem that is on the rise in Quebec and around the world. According to a 2016 report from the Institut national de santé publique du Québec, the INSPQ, 52% of Quebecers are overweight, meaning they have a body mass index, or BMI, of 25 or slightly more.

Fully 18% of those people are obese, which corresponds to a BMI of 30 or more. That is a lot. According to the INSPQ’s most optimistic projections, those numbers could rise even more to 54% and 21%, respectively, by 2030. That is very worrisome. The increase in overweight and obesity among children has not stopped. It has been ongoing for the last few decades.

Between 1978 and 2004, the combined prevalence of overweight and obesity among children between the ages of 2 and 17 rose from 15% to 26%. That is almost double. This increase was particularly marked among youth aged 12 to 17, with overweight and obesity again doubling for this age group, from 14% to 29%. It was precisely at this time that there was a significant explosion of processed foods on grocery store shelves.

● (1135)

It was the time of convenience. It was the era of frozen pizzas, Jell-O boxes and tasty fish sticks.

Private Members' Business

I know many families for whom, in the 1980s and 1990s, frozen, overly processed foods with too much fat and too much salt were a magic solution. Indeed, they were easy meals. I do not blame the families, quite the opposite. I have two daughters and at 5:30 I used to run to go pick up my kids from school. Supper was not ready. Those evenings, my partner was working late at night, homework had to be done, and we hoped the kids were in bed by 8:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. The solution was a frozen meal. It was easy for me and it was what we had those evenings.

As I said, we must take action for our young people, as we did with tobacco products. However, I am not burying my head in the sand. I know that this is not a problem that can be entirely resolved, but we certainly can help. We can do better, but we have to start.

Young people spend a lot of time on screens. As parents, we have to control what they see, especially during childhood. It is not easy to control, but we have to plug the holes in the law. I am sure members know where I am going with this, because earlier I was explaining how proud we are that legislation has been passed in Quebec. The jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces must be respected. I would remind members that it is Quebec that has full control over health care within its territory, delivers services and promotes healthy lifestyles. While the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-252, I want to point out that that it did not help develop the federal, provincial and territorial framework for action to promote healthy weights and that it does not support a pan-Canadian strategy in this area. Quebec intends to remain solely responsible for developing and implementing programs to promote healthy living within its territory, while obviously continuing to exchange information and expertise with the Government of Canada.

The Bloc Québécois is going to examine whether the proposed strategy fits in with the approach Quebec has decided to take, with laws like its Consumer Protection Act. It will be important to ensure that Bill C-252 does not encroach on jurisdictions. This is a *sine qua non* because, as I seem to find myself saying quite often these days, respect must be maintained. Jurisdictions must be protected. Of course, it is important to safeguard the health of young people and do what we can to quickly bring down childhood obesity rates and tackle diabetes, which is a silent but ever-present evil.

I would like to stress that health and well-being are critically important to me. I am an athletic person, in winter and summer alike. I have done triathlons, I ski and I have participated in figure skating, even competitively. I still pursue these activities. I still swim, surf and stay active. It is important to encourage our young people to adopt these healthy lifestyles. This goes hand in hand with nutrition.

Parents have full discretion over how they raise their children, but they also need tools to help them. It is very important to be aware of these issues, as we in the Bloc Québécois are.

We will therefore be voting for Bill C-252, because children have the right to not be treated like merchandise and have the right to a childhood without little tigers, bunnies or any other characters trying to influence them at every corner. These are very appealing characters that are solely used to sell sugar.

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-252, which has the laudable goal of prohibiting food and beverage marketing directed at children of materials that are unhealthy and damaging to their health. This legislation is long overdue.

By way of a background, Canada's New Democrats have been advocating for a ban on unhealthy food and beverage marketing to children for many years. In 2012, over 10 years ago, the NDP member of Parliament for New Westminster—Burnaby introduced legislation to expressly prohibit advertising and promotion for commercial purposes of products, food, drugs, cosmetics or devices directly to children under 13 years of age. One can tell already from that short list that the bill was more ambitious than the one we are discussing today, which deals only with unhealthy food and beverages, but it dealt and engaged with the very same concepts before the House today.

In 2016, as has already been heard in the House, Senator Nancy Greene Raine introduced the child health protection act. It was called Bill S-228, and that legislation would have banned the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages primarily directed at children under 17 years of age. A bit later I will touch on how this bill has reduced that age to 13, and of course, under 17 would have been more ambitious. As I will advocate in my remarks today, it would have been preferable.

Health Canada held an online consultation in 2017 to seek feedback on restricting the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children. That was over six years ago. That consultation was open to the public, health organizations, industry and any interested stakeholders.

At the House Standing Committee on Health at that time, the Liberals unfortunately amended Bill S-228 to reduce the age limit from under 17 years to under 13 years old. They also added a five-year legislative review, which is a prudent measure.

According to UNICEF Canada, the proposed age cut-off of 17 was more likely than a younger age threshold to protect the most vulnerable from the harmful impacts of marketing. While there are different interpretations of children's evolving cognitive capacities, research suggests very strongly that not only are teens exposed to more ads than younger children and remember them better, but also that they have more means. Teenagers who are 15 and 16 years of age often have more expendable or disposable income, act in a more unsupervised manner and are more likely to purchase unhealthy foods than children under 13, yet I think, due to pressure from the industry, that threshold was reduced to 13.

Although Bill S-228 did pass third reading in both the House and the Senate, unfortunately that bill died on the Order Paper due to a Conservative filibuster in the Senate prior to the 2019 federal election. That has left us where we are at today.

Private Members' Business

I would also comment that the Liberal government has made a number of commitments since it was elected in 2015 that remain unfulfilled on this issue. The former Liberal health minister, in her 2019 mandate letter, was directed to “introduce new restrictions on the commercial marketing of food and beverages to children”. That was never followed through with.

The current health minister's 2021 mandate letter instructed him to support “restrictions on the commercial marketing of food and beverages to children.” I suppose it can be said he is supporting that, in the sense that the government side is supporting this legislation, but we must remember there has been no action from the government. This is a private member's bill we are dealing with here, not a government bill.

What is the result of the inaction? It is not benign. Each year, the Canadian food and beverage industry spends over \$1.1 billion on marketing to children. This marketing appeals to children through product design, the use of cartoon or other characters, as well as fantasy and adventure themes, humour and other marketing techniques. Clearly these techniques work, with there being children as young as three years old who are brand aware and can recognize or name food and beverage brands.

This marketing to children means that over 50 million food and beverage ads per year are shown on children's top 10 websites alone. Their personal identifying information is collected from websites and apps for the purposes of further targeting online marketing. Children in Canada are observing an estimated 1,500 advertisements annually, just on social media sites alone, and nearly 90% of food and beverages marketed on television and online are high in salt, sugars and saturated fat. That is what we as policy-makers are faced with in the current situation.

• (1145)

Let us look at the facts. Poor nutrition and unhealthy food and beverage are key contributors to poor health in children. Good eating habits and avoidance of unhealthy food are key preventative elements of health policy. There is strong agreement among leading Canadian pediatric and allied health organizations that the impact of food and beverage marketing is real, significant and harmful to children's development.

Marketing to children has changed dramatically in the last 10 to 15 years. Today it is a seamless, sophisticated and often interactive process. The line between ads and children's entertainment has blurred with marketing messages being inserted into places that children play and learn. Marketing of food and beverages to children in Canada is largely self-regulated by the same industries that profit from the practice. Research reveals that these voluntary measures are not working. Numerous studies have found strong associations between increases in advertising of non-nutritious foods and rates of childhood obesity. One study by Yale University found that children exposed to junk food advertising ate 45% more junk food than children not exposed to such advertisements. In Canada, as much as 90% of the food marketed to children and youth on TV and online is unhealthy.

Three-quarters of children are exposed to food marketing while using their favourite social media applications. Again, the majority of those ads is for unhealthy foods that are ultraprocessed and bev-

erages that are high in saturated fats, salt and sugar. This does not just affect children. Canadians are the second-largest buyers of ultraprocessed foods and drinks in the world, second only to the Americans. The result is that nearly one in three Canadian children is overweight or obese. The rise in childhood obesity in recent decades is linked to changes in our eating habits. Overweight children are more likely to develop health problems later in life, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

Children are uniquely vulnerable to marketing manipulation until the point that they achieve two specific information-processing skills. The first is the ability to perceive the difference between commercial and non-commercial content, and the second is the ability to understand the persuasive intent behind advertising. Before the age of five, most children cannot distinguish ads from unbiased programming. Children under eight do not understand the intent of marketing messages, and they believe what they see. By age 10 to 12, children do understand that ads are designed to sell products, but they are not always able to be critical of these ads.

Canada needs to get in step with other countries in the world. Other jurisdictions have since adopted similar legislation, including Norway, the United Kingdom and Ireland. By the way, my Conservative colleague was questioned about Quebec earlier and the impact of their legislation, which has restrictions on advertising to children.

Here are the facts: Quebec's restrictions on advertising to children have been shown to have a positive impact on nutrition by reducing fast food consumption by 13%. That translates to 17 million fewer fast food meals sold in the province and an estimated 13.4 million fewer fast food calories consumed per year. Quebec has the lowest rates of obesity among five- to 17-year-olds in the country, as well as the highest rates of vegetable and fruit consumption in Canada. That is relative to every other province. Now, it is true that childhood obesity rates are rising everywhere, but I think the effect of this marketing is quite clear, which is that it has slowed the rising obesity and unhealthy consumption of food marketing in Quebec, partially at least because of their early and, I think, progressive adoption of legislation before the House now.

I would also point out that Quebec has prohibited all commercial advertising targeting children under the age of 13 since 1980, so it is very clear that it is the time for the rest of the country to get in step with this. I think most of us in here are parents, have siblings who are parents, or maybe intend to be parents at some point. Certainly, we were all once children. It should be non-controversial to say that marketing of unhealthy products to our children in this country should be something that we are vigilant on and that we should act to prohibit. I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation before the House today.

Private Members' Business

• (1150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have appreciated listening to the discussion and debate this morning. I want to thank my colleague and friend for bringing forward such important legislation.

A good percentage of us are provided the opportunity to introduce private members' legislation. My colleague has picked a substantive issue that impacts children from coast to coast to coast. I listened to the member speak to the legislation, and she emphasized that this bill is not about what food choices parents make. That is a very important part to emphasize.

I start off by saying that because, when I was listening to the Conservative Party's member talk about the legislation, they said, in essence, that the legislation is not good and they will not be supporting it. I assume that will be the position the Conservative Party might take on this as a whole. It is somewhat discouraging, and I will tell members why. When we think of sugar, salt and saturated fats, and the health consequences of the over-consumption of those products, one needs to realize that there is a substantive cost that goes beyond the health condition of the individual consuming the products.

I was a provincial MLA for just under 20 years. If we look at the greatest single expenditure that a province has, it is health care. Trying to marginalize, in any fashion, the impact that diets have on the health condition of our citizens is a disservice.

I thought it was interesting when the member opposite from the Conservative Party said that all children have to do is get out and play football, or get out of the house more. They said that the government needs to get less involved in issues such as this. The members have missed out on a wonderful opportunity. I would ask the member to review what he said and look at what the legislation would actually do.

This is substantive legislation. As the previous speaker from the New Democratic Party made reference to, we have to consider in the mentality of a child and the impact advertising has on them. The member from the Conservative Party is really out of tune.

In the areas I represent, it is not like someone can run outside to their front yard to play flag football in the traditional north end of Winnipeg. There are fields maybe down the block or around the corner, but there are all sorts of other things that factor into it. Some people have different opportunities than others do.

If we apply the very same principle that the government needs to be less involved to the issue of labelling, would the Conservative Party then reverse its course and its thinking on the importance of labelling to say the government should not be involved in it? I would argue that this is very much about consumer education. It is about the government providing assistance to consumers.

The member said that this is about advertising. For children under the age of 13, we would put in prohibitions to prevent excessive amounts of sugar, salt and saturated fats. We can look at the targeting that takes place in advertising today. It is significantly different than what it was 10 or 15 years ago. I will use Facebook as an example. I can target, through Facebook, genders and ages. I can

break it down into communities where I want to advertise. We can take a look at what children are engaged in today on the Internet and social media and how much more they are susceptible to advertising and promotions of unhealthy food.

• (1155)

I agree with the parenting factor. I am not going to tell members across the way what they have to feed their children, but I believe that at the same time, there is an obligation on government to look at ways it can promote and encourage healthy eating habits. Where there is a window for some form of exploitation that could ultimately lead to problems in our collective health, I think there is a responsibility for government. We know there are other governments around the world doing this, and it has already been highlighted that the Province of Quebec has been dealing, at least in part, with what this legislation is talking about for the last number of decades.

I would emphasize that things have changed. We have seen, through that change, a great deal more obesity within our younger population. It is not just because of computer games or being in front of the Nintendo, Atari or whatever else one wants to call it. Yes, it would be wonderful to see more children out in our communities playing and participating in physical activities. There are things we can do to encourage and support that. As a government, we have done that by working with municipalities and working with the provinces. However, here, within Bill C-252, we have something very specific that will in fact make a difference.

Take a look at what our children are viewing and watching and how advertisers can focus in. It is not just putting one ad on a TV network or one ad that goes in a particular book. Today, we can focus in on individual children under the age of 13 in promoting a product that we know is unhealthy.

At the end of the day, it is not about saying to a parent, "No, you can't give your child this." It is to ensure that a parent has more say, as opposed to child X seeing something on blog Y, because blog Y is about some game and is encouraging and promoting a particular product that is loaded with saturated fats, salt or sugar content.

All sorts of chronic health conditions are a direct result of the obesity taking place in our communities. This legislation would make a positive difference for our young people. I hope that members, in particular of the Conservative Party, understand and appreciate that they can contribute to healthier children by supporting this legislation.

• (1200)

[Translation]

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

STRENGTHENING THE PORT SYSTEM AND RAILWAY SAFETY IN CANADA ACT

BILL C-33—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-33, An Act to amend the Customs Act, the Railway Safety Act, the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, the Marine Transportation Security Act, the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

• (1205)

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in question period.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we go again. This is the 37th time allocation motion that the NDP has supported thus far, showing that it is yet again a willing partner to the Liberals, aiding and abetting them in pushing time allocation.

I did a little research comparing this NDP to the more historically principled NDP, from Tommy Douglas to Thomas Mulcair, and over the span of 17 Parliaments, it only supported time allocation and closure 14 times, averaging 1.2 times per Parliament. Here we are, for the 37th time, with the NDP supporting time allocation. Tommy Douglas must be rolling over in his grave.

Five hours of debate is all we have had on this consequential piece of legislation. Why?

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that each and every member of the House is elected by their constituents, and when the majority of the House of Commons is trying to advance bills that are in the best interests of Canadians, it is unfortunate that only the Conservative Party is standing in the way of this progress. Had the Conservative Party been more co-operative and willing to work together on advancing the public interests of Canadians, we would have seen the smoother passing and studying of bills.

Today we are advancing an important bill for improving our supply chains and enhancing transparency for port management and port congestion, and I encourage all colleagues to work together on making sure that we pass a good bill for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to express my disappointment with the closure motion on Bill C-33.

Government Orders

It is disappointing because I believe that this bill has some potential and could improve things to some extent. In the past, I have had discussions with the minister that seemed very encouraging. I hope that we can continue to work in that spirit. I particularly hoped that we, as parliamentarians, would have the opportunity to debate the bill before sending it directly to committee.

I have a simple question for the minister. Why did the Liberals think it was necessary to invoke closure for Bill C-33? Regardless of whether the bill is good or not, I hope that we will eventually have the opportunity to debate it.

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his work on the transport committee and his co-operative attitude in making sure that we work together collaboratively to ensure that all laws passed in the House of Commons, including Bill C-33, are intended to serve Canadians.

To his question, the answer is obvious if we follow the words of the leader of the official opposition. He publicly said that he is going to use all tools, tactics and tricks to delay our agenda, which is necessary to serve Canadians, from passing through the House of Commons. If the leader of the Conservative Party were following a co-operative and positive attitude to vigorously debate bills but ensure that we pass them for the service of all Canadians, we would not be here.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich hearing these protestations from the Conservatives regarding time allocation. If memory serves, the former Conservative government used time allocation 115 times. The Conservatives even had a cake in the lobby to mark the 100th time they invoked time allocation.

I understand that the Conservatives have already decided they are going to vote against this bill at second reading. Has the minister had any conversations with the Conservatives that convey an intention to work in good faith to improve this bill on behalf of all Canadians?

• (1210)

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his work and diligence at the transport committee. As he is the transport critic for the NDP, we have been working together on advancing the public interests of all Canadians, including on safety in the rail network.

I had conversations, including here in the House of Commons, in the chamber, during the first debate on Bill C-33 with my hon. colleague, the transport critic for the Conservatives. I encouraged him to work together on making sure that we pass a good bill for Canadians. Unfortunately, as my colleague said, I have seen no sign of their willingness to work together on a bill that is of paramount importance to Canadians and our supply chains.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could expand. When we look at the importance of the legislation to our ports and our rail yards, which are important to our whole supply chain, this is a critical updating of legislation that would make things that much more safe for Canadians from coast to coast to coast, quite frankly.

The fear was that, if we did not bring in time allocation, this legislation would never pass. At least, at the very minimum, it would not get through until sometime in 2024 or 2025, and only if the Conservatives were prepared to do so. That is the reason we had to bring in time allocation.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this issue back into focus.

Canadians know that over the last couple of years, because of COVID, extreme weather events, labour shortages and the illegal war in Ukraine, we have seen tremendous disruption in our supply chain. Our government established a supply chain task force last year, and it came back with a solid number of recommendations, 21 to be exact. Some of them were focused on port congestion. This bill would enhance the ability for ports to manage and ease congestion. In fact, it would enable ports to create inland terminals. Ports were not previously encouraged to do so. We are now empowering ports to manage vessel traffic in their jurisdictions.

Those who live on the west coast know about the issue of traffic jams along the west coast, where for a long time no one has had the responsibility of managing traffic. This bill would create that ability. It would also enhance rail safety. This is an important bill for the safety of Canadians and for the resilience of our supply chain.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, leave it to this minister to be the one to tell Canadians that they have never had it so good when it comes to our ports, air travel and rail.

Our airlines are still a disaster under the minister's watch. He is going to blame that on COVID. Our ports over on the west side of the country are the third worst and ninth worst in the world under his watch. That is his track record.

This bill is about 109 pages of nothing. All it would essentially do is establish a couple of committees that would not accomplish anything. It has nothing to do with setting up production. It is only about setting up more committees that would have more Liberal insiders to give more recommendations that are never going to be acted upon.

Why will the minister not do the right thing, scrap this bill, start again, actually listen to Parliament and give us time to debate it? Time allocation after five hours is brutal. This is a minority Parliament, and the Liberals think they still have a majority. It is time to get back to democracy. What does the minister think?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, Canadians would take that member seriously if he knew what he was talking about.

Canadians do not believe the Conservatives when they say the government is responsible for all of the problems happening around

the world. I would take the member seriously if he could provide some common sense in his questions.

Having said that, this bill has been tabled in the House of Commons for months. We continue to want to work with our colleagues across the aisle from all parties to make sure that the bill, when it is ready to pass in the House of Commons, has been fully debated. The committee would have the chance to welcome witnesses and experts to debate the bill.

I am looking forward to having a constructive discussion not only with members of the NDP, the Bloc and the Green Party, but also with the Conservative Party. That is what Canadians expect of all of us.

• (1215)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the benefits of having been in the House for a while is I do have recollection of previous Conservative governments. I watched the Harper government bring in time allocation time and time again. Therefore, it is quite rich to see Conservatives stand up in this House and complain about the use of time allocation. I would point out as well that the Conservatives are correct that time allocation can be an abused process by a government if it is using it to limit debate. However, of course, it is not abusive if it is doing it when the opposition is trying to filibuster and is trying to frustrate the legitimate business of the House, which is what Conservatives are doing in this House. Canadians need to know that.

I was in the House the other night when the Conservatives put up 15 speakers to debate their motion to strip the short title of a bill on child care. That was the entire debate. Therefore, when the opposition is using that kind of process to frustrate the will of the democratically elected majority in the House, which is what is happening in this place, that certainly justifies the use of time allocation. I wonder if my hon. colleague would agree.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, I agree. Do not take it from me; it is the leader of the Conservative Party who has publicly been telling Canadians that he is going to filibuster and delay and cause havoc here in the House of Commons, instead of focusing on the country's business and on what Canadians need and deserve.

This is an important bill for our supply chain. If hon. colleagues have any objection to some provisions of the bill, that is great; that is what the House of Commons debates are for and that is what committees debates are for. However, this is just to delay for the sake of delaying and just to filibuster for the sake of being unhappy about the fact that members of different parties are working together. What is wrong with that? When we see members from different parties working to advance the interests of Canadians, that is what Canadians expect.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the arguments from the government, the members of the Conservative Party and the NDP. I find them all interesting.

Government Orders

The government says that the Conservatives have been filibustering the whole time for a while now. That is true. I can say that I have seen the Conservatives filibuster a lot and try to slow down procedures over the past few weeks.

The NDP members are telling us that the Conservatives were worse than the Liberals and they too kept using closure motions. That is also true. The Conservatives used to impose closure motions all the time. The question is, what type of Parliament and environment do we want to work in?

I wonder if, given that the Conservatives abused closure motions in the past, the government really needs to do the same. We can also talk about what is happening now and wonder whether we should short-circuit procedure and the functioning of Parliament because the Conservatives are abusing procedure to slow down the work of parliamentarians.

Those are questions I have. The government may have some good answers for me because I am not convinced that the best way to deal with this is to respond with “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” and do the very thing they criticize.

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, I agree that this is not the idea of an eye for an eye at all. We continued to exhaust all options, including sitting until midnight. We have been providing members of Parliament here ample opportunities to debate, to express their opinion and express the opinion of their constituents on many occasions. MPs are working hard around the clock. We are also here in a minority Parliament; we need to work with other parties to advance the agenda of Canadians. That is why we have provided members of Parliament all opportunities to debate, to engage in a healthy and rigorous discussion. We are also working with our colleagues from other parties to advance and improve bills that go through the House to ensure that we address the pressing interests of Canadians today.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of this is quite interesting. Historically speaking, since the time of Tommy Douglas right up to Thomas Mulcair, the NDP has supported time allocation motions only 14 times in 17 Parliaments. If we multiply 17 Parliaments by four years each, that is a lot of years. It averages out to 1.2 times per Parliament, which is very reasonable.

Today marks the 37th time that the NDP has supported a Liberal time allocation motion in Parliament. I do not know what kind of bug bit the NDP, but, honestly, it was big and it bit hard.

A total of 37 times. That is pretty incredible considering that this political party used to have a very different sense of autonomy and political awareness than what we are seeing now. Can the minister tell us how it is that the NDP, an independent political party that very much leans to the left politically, can support the government in this kind of procedure so often and so consistently?

For years, the Liberals have said that the Conservatives abused this procedure. Now, they use it more often than we ever did.

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, we would expect Conservatives to at least use some humility when they talk about time allocation, because we know what the Conservative Party did when it was in power. How many times did it use or misuse time allocation? Now it is upset to see different parties within this chamber working together on a plan to improve the lives of Canadians.

If the Conservatives are serious about advancing the interests of Canadians, we would think that instead of filibustering for days on end they would focus on the agenda of Canadians. We would think they would work together with other MPs on making sure that the bills that come through the House of Commons are focused on what is best for Canada and Canadians.

Therefore, while I understand they are the official opposition, I would ask them to show a little humility.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonaville—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech on Bill C-33 on March 10 of this year, the member for Chilliwack—Hope remarked:

There is nothing in this bill about what would happen to our supply chains and our international reputation when there are labour disputes that impact the supply chain either at the ports or on our railways.

It sure sounds as if he wants the government to interfere in the collective bargaining process, which often happened when the Conservatives were in power.

Can you comment on this and, in general, on how they treated workers at our ports and railway systems compared to our government's approach?

The Deputy Speaker: I cannot comment on it, but I am sure the Minister of Transport could.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, it is really important to remind Canadians of what the Conservative Party stands for. The Conservative leader claims to speak on behalf of the working people. He claims to employ common sense. That could not be further from the truth.

The Conservatives are trying to undermine the role of unions in protecting the interests of Canadian workers. As my hon. colleague commented in his quote, it is clear they support the idea of limiting the ability of unions to negotiate their own collective bargaining agreements.

Our government has said before and will continue to say that we believe in the power of collective bargaining agreements. We believe that when the parties reach an agreement at the negotiating table it will last longer and be fairer for workers and our economy.

That is our position. However, the Conservatives have revealed that they do not believe in the power of collective bargaining agreements.

Government Orders

• (1225)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was in the Port of Vancouver this weekend, which is very concerned about the pending strike and what the government is going to do.

In light of this time allocation legislation, with only five hours to talk about the legislation, its impact on possible labour disputes going forward and whether that has even been talked about, could the minister bring us up to speed on what his plans are to date to make sure that a collective agreement is put in place so we do not face the charges in the supply chain that the parliamentary secretary talked about or a situation where people cannot get the goods they need for the summer?

As we know, not only could there possibly be a strike at the Port of Vancouver, there is a strike in Long Beach. That basically means that all of North America on the west coast would be shut down. Does the government have a plan, or is it just going to sit and watch and let its NDP partners sit and watch with it?

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, I deeply respect my colleague. I know he, as the former critic of supply chain, worked hard on the fluidity and health of our supply chains.

I am also concerned about the ongoing negotiations on the west coast with unions and the B.C. Maritime Employers Association. The last thing Canadians want is another disruption to our supply chain, but I believe the best way to avoid that disruption is to let the parties negotiate an agreement at the negotiating table, and we are not standing idly by. We are there. We will offer mediators at the table; in fact, federal mediators are helping, and we are reminding both sides of their obligations toward Canada, the Canadian economy and Canadians, but we believe it is best that the parties reach an agreement at the negotiating table on their own.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, to the substance of the bill, one of the changes proposed is to increase the local government representation on the boards of directors of Canadian port authorities. I think this is welcomed by the local governments I have spoken with. However, another group that deserves representation is the workers of Canada's ports. These folks are integral to the operation of our ports. They have specific knowledge, expertise and experience that can benefit the operation and management of ports. We would like to see a seat at the table for the workers of Canada's ports.

I wonder if the minister could respond to this proposal, which we strongly support.

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. Those who work in the labour sector and represent workers have a unique perspective that can benefit the operations of our institutions, including ports. I want to express to my colleague my willingness and our government's willingness to work with him on advancing this principle he talked about. I am looking forward to sending this bill to committee, where we will get a chance to have a fulsome debate and look for opportunities to improve it, to ensure we address the point he is raising.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I understand that Bill C-33 is the minister's baby. When ministers introduce bills that

fall under their department's jurisdiction, they are usually very eager to see the bill in question take effect. In a way, I think it is to the minister's credit that he is pushing to advance his files and that he is excited at the idea of seeing his bill passed.

However, it is important for the House to have the opportunity to properly debate the bill, propose amendments and thoroughly examine it. Personally, I do not think that five hours of debate was sufficient. There are all sorts of issues on which we might have liked to make adjustments or changes.

Take, for example, small ports. The minister can comment on that. There are new obligations for ports that may be a good way to increase accountability. However, not all ports have the same resources as the Port of Montreal or the Port of Vancouver. Other ports are a lot smaller, and it could make things difficult for them if the government imposes a lot more obligations on them than they had to meet in the past.

I would like to know whether the minister is open to making accommodations for these ports that have different realities.

• (1230)

[English]

Hon. Omar Alhabra: Mr. Speaker, let me make this point: I am enthusiastic about this bill, not because it is my baby, but because it would improve the lives of Canadians.

It would get things done; it would improve the congestion at ports; it would improve accountability and transparency; and it would address the climate issue. To my hon. colleague's point, I certainly have had a discussion with him and other colleagues about whether there is a way for this, because some of the provisions of this bill are intended to add accountability and transparency to ensure the ports are doing their job in consultation with local communities. However, I accept the fact that there are different circumstances for smaller ports, and we need to find a way to ensure that we uphold the principle but do not overburden these smaller ports. I am willing to work with my hon. colleague and other members of Parliament to ensure we find that balance.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the former party that used to represent labour, the NDP, no longer does. There is some laughter over there, but all the members need to do is talk to people in Skeena—Bulkley Valley, on the island and in the ridings they represent. I guess they are in for a rude awakening next election.

It is interesting that the workers at the Ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert have been without a contract for so long under the Liberal government. As these guys have been working together for the last number of years, we would think everything would be grand, but it certainly is not.

Government Orders

Meanwhile, we are trying to work out some those issues out in Parliament so that a good agreement can be made, and good legislation for workers is done. However, the minister insults the opposition by ramming it through anyway, even though the democratic process is part of what we do in this place. The minister is going to get up and talk about all the closure motions we did before, but he needs to get to the bottom of what we are asking him for, and that is the democratic process for a very important issue at our ports, especially at Vancouver and Prince Rupert. I wish he would talk specifically about that issue.

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Speaker, the democratic process will take its course in the House of Commons, but I wish the Conservatives were not filibustering. I wish the Conservatives were not putting obstacles against the interests of Canadians, against ensuring that ports are working better.

Every party in this chamber claims to represent the interests of workers, but Canadians are smart and they know what people are saying. If we listen to the words of the Conservatives, they are the ones who want to ram agreements through the negotiating table instead of allowing unions to stand up for their rights. Instead of allowing unions to have a full process of negotiating a contract with their employers, they want to force it upon workers.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the earlier intervention from my Conservative colleague, the Conservatives are happy to stand up for workers as long as they are not fighting for better wages and better working conditions. Otherwise they are okay.

I heard the Minister of Transport talk earlier about port congestion, and that issue is very near and dear to my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. For years, we have been dealing with the fact that the Port of Vancouver has been using our precious coastal waters as an overflow industrial parking lot. Transport Canada and the Port of Vancouver have treated my constituents, the first nations in my riding, with total indifference on this matter, despite repeated attempts to get it resolved.

I would like to hear this from the minister. What would happen in the bill that would allow this problem to be dealt with, and if it is not satisfactory, what action can he commit to so that my constituents can have peace of mind?

Hon. Omar Alghabra: Mr. Speaker, I often remind ports, including the Port of Vancouver, that they are public institutions. They are there to serve the public and they are there to ensure that they pay attention to their constituents and their stakeholders.

This bill would do several things, but let me address a couple of points the bill proposes that could help with the matter that my hon. colleague has raised.

First, the bill would require ports to establish advisory groups to ensure that local stakeholders are consulted formally and efficiently, instead of the ad hoc, insufficient ways that may have happened in the past. Second, the bill proposes that ports could create inland terminals. They would no longer have to build all their infrastructure on the coastline and would be able to look for other options.

• (1235)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion. If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes 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.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1320)

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

(Division No. 367)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos

Government Orders

Lametti	Lamoureux	Jeneroux	Kelly
Lapointe	Lattanzio	Kitchen	Kmiec
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Lebouthillier	Lightbound	Kurek	Kusie
Long	Longfield	Lake	Lantsman
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Larouche	Lawrence
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Lehoux	Lemire
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Lloyd	Lobb
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Maguire	Martel
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson	Melillo	Michaud
Mendès	Mendicino	Moore	Morantz
Miao	Miller	Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Murray	Motz	Muys
Naqvi	Ng	Nater	Normandin
Noormohamed	O'Connell	O'Toole	Patzner
Oliphant	O'Regan	Paul-Hus	Paupé
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski	Perkins	Perron
Robillard	Rodriguez	Plamondon	Poillievre
Rogers	Romanado	Rayes	Reid
Sahota	Saks	Rempel Garner	Richards
Samson	Sarai	Roberts	Rood
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Serré	Sgro	Scheer	Schmale
Shanahan	Sheehan	Seebach	Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Shipley	Simard
Singh	Sorbara	Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Sousa	St-Onge	Soroka	Steinley
Sudds	Tassi	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Taylor Roy	Thompson	Strahl	Stubbs
Trudeau	Turnbull	Thériault	Therrien
Valdez	Van Bynen	Thomas	Tochor
van Koeverden	Vandal	Tolmie	Trudel
Vandenbeld	Virani	Uppal	Van Popta
Weiler	Wilkinson	Vecchio	Vidal
Yip	Zahid	Vien	Viersen
Zarrillo	Zuberi— 174	Vignola	Villemure
		Vis	Vuong
		Wagantall	Warkentin
		Waugh	Webber
		Williams	Williamson
		Zimmer— 147	

NAYS**Members**

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback

PAIRED**Members**

Bergeron	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Liepert	Sajjan— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

**MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE REVIEW COMMISSION
ACT (DAVID AND JOYCE MILGAARD'S LAW)**

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill C-40, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, to make consequential amendments to other Acts and to repeal a regulation (miscarriage of justice reviews), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in this place today and speak to Bill C-40. The title of this bill, the miscarriage of justice review commission act, or David and Joyce Milgaard's law, says a great deal about what the bill intends and why it is so important.

[Translation]

Canada's justice system is one of the best in the world. However, it is not perfect; mistakes can be made. When that happens, the consequences are enormous, for the accused, the victims and the community in general.

The creation of an independent commission tasked with reviewing applications made on the grounds of miscarriage of justice was included in my mandate letters in 2019 and 2021. This is one of my major priorities as minister, and it is a priority for our government. It is also important to me personally. My mentor, former Supreme Court justice Peter Cory believed that changes needed to be made after reviewing the miscarriage of justice that led to the conviction of Thomas Sophonow in 2001.

In recent years, I have worked hard to develop a new approach that will improve the process for people who claim to have been wrongfully convicted. I have been working a long time to establish an independent miscarriage of justice review commission, as did the two individuals for whom Bill C-40 is named. I sincerely wish they could see us today.

[English]

David Milgaard spent 23 years in jail for a murder he did not commit. He maintained his innocence throughout his life, even after exhausting all his appeals. David's mother, Joyce, also believed in David's innocence. She made it her life's work to convince the justice system as well. Joyce advocated tirelessly for David's release, assembling a team of family friends and lawyers, many working for free. Together, they fought to have people listen and to look at David's case again. Through her persistence, she won her son's freedom. When David got out of prison, he became an advocate for the wrongfully convicted, helping others to seek justice. His mother did the same. They were extraordinary people. This bill, Bill C-40, is named the David and Joyce Milgaard act in their honour.

Canada has one of the best justice systems in the world, but David Milgaard's experience reminds us that it is not perfect. While mistakes are rare, they happen. The consequences for the accused, for victims and for the community are enormous. The reality is that, unfortunately, David Milgaard is not the only victim of a miscarriage of justice in Canada. There are several other well-known cases that resulted in commissions of inquiries being held following the discovery of their wrongful convictions. The commission of inquiry reports in the cases of Donald Marshall, Jr. in 1989, Guy Paul Morin in 1998, Thomas Sophonow in 2001, James Driskell in 2007 and David Milgaard in 2008 all recommended the creation of an independent commission to review miscarriage of justice applications in Canada.

Before I describe the proposed reforms, I want to provide a bit of background on this issue and why we need to modernize the existing process. The term "miscarriage of justice" is, perhaps, not well understood, and some may be more familiar with the term "wrongful conviction". A miscarriage of justice can encompass a broad spectrum of circumstances that call into question the reliability of a conviction or the process that led to it. A miscarriage of justice is one of the grounds of appeal in the Criminal Code.

Government Orders

Miscarriages of justice are often identified and corrected while a case is still making its way through the criminal justice system. However, sometimes, new information or evidence that calls into question the reliability of a conviction only comes to light after an individual has exhausted their rights to appeal. Since the Criminal Code was first enacted in Canada, the Minister of Justice has been empowered to review applications on the grounds of a miscarriage of justice and determine whether a matter should be referred back to the courts for a new trial or an appeal.

It is important to note that the miscarriage of justice review process is not an alternative to the judicial system, nor is it another level of appeal. Rather, it provides a post-appeal mechanism to review and investigate new information or evidence that was not previously considered by the courts.

● (1325)

[Translation]

As Minister of Justice, my priority is to ensure that the justice system is accessible, effective and equitable. Our criminal justice system processes hundreds of thousands of applications every year, resulting in approximately 250,000 convictions.

Considering this huge number, it is important to consider the possibility of wrongful convictions. Its consequences, as I mentioned, are enormous. A person can spend long years in prison before the mistake is found.

Many countries have independent criminal case review commissions, including England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Norway and, more recently, New Zealand in 2020. In these countries, the creation of an independent miscarriage of justice review commission led to a significant increase in the number of wrongful convictions identified. Also, since the commissioners appointed to make these decisions focus solely on this task, applications are processed far more efficiently, which means that people who believe they have been wrongfully convicted can have their file reviewed sooner. It is also essential to mention that the commissions take the decision-making process out of the hands of politicians.

[English]

There are likely many more wrongful convictions in Canada than those that are submitted for a ministerial review under the current process. No studies to date have identified an accurate proportion, in large part because it entails measuring the unknown. Some studies conducted in the United States have estimated that it may fall in the range of 3% to 6% in that country. An error rate in Canada of only 0.05% of people sentenced to custody would result in approximately 450 wrongful convictions per year. Since 2003, after the last reforms to this part of the Criminal Code were made, only 187 applications for review have been submitted. That is 187 total, not per year. This tells us that there are many more cases out there.

Government Orders

Given the disproportionate representation of certain populations in the criminal justice system, including Black, indigenous and racialized people, the impact of wrongful convictions is very likely more widespread in these groups. The consequences for the wrongfully convicted are huge: a loss of liberty, including years of incarceration and separation from family and friends, and negative impacts on reputation and employment prospects, just to name a few. Addressing miscarriages of justice more quickly would help mitigate the devastating impact they have not only on the convicted person and their family but also on victims and the justice system as a whole.

• (1330)

[Translation]

I would now like to describe the content of Bill C-40.

First, the new part XXI.2, which the bill proposes adding to the Criminal Code, groups together all of the provisions concerning the creation of the new commission, namely its mandate, its composition, the commissioner appointment process, the duration of a commissioner's term of office, and the qualifications required for a commissioner, as well as the commission's powers, duties and functions.

The new commission, called the miscarriage of justice review commission, would be a fully independent administrative body. It would not be part of the Department of Justice. It would completely take over the role I currently play in reviews, investigations and the identification of cases to be referred to the justice system on the grounds of miscarriage of justice.

[English]

The commission would be headed by a full-time chief commissioner who would be its chief executive officer. In addition, there would be between four and eight commissioners appointed on a full-time or part-time basis. The legislation would require that appointment recommendations reflect the diversity of Canadian society and take into account gender equality and the overrepresentation of certain groups in the criminal justice system, including indigenous peoples and Black persons. This is the first time in Canadian history that a requirement of this nature would be legislated. The commissioners would have to have knowledge and experience related to the commission's mandate, and, in order to ensure the diversity of lived experience, at least one-third, including the chief commissioner, but no more than half would have to be lawyers with at least 10 years of experience in the practice of criminal law. Others could be experts in various other disciplines, such as criminology or wrongful convictions.

[Translation]

The commission would also have a victim services coordinator to support it and make sure that the process complies with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Victims of the original crime are also significantly affected by miscarriages of justice. The review of a conviction can lead to shock and feelings of guilt, and prevent victims from moving on with their lives. Victims can therefore choose how they are notified and supported during the process.

Several measures in the bill would make the miscarriage of justice review process more accessible, transparent and open. Bill C-40 requires that applicants be able to contact the commission from anywhere in Canada. The commission will also have to inform the public about its mission and about miscarriages of justice in general on its website. It will have to make its decisions public while ensuring confidentiality and making sure not to interfere with the administration of justice. Obviously, it is essential that the commission process applications as efficiently as possible and that it provide applicants with regular updates.

[English]

When I was in Prince Edward Island a few weeks ago, I met with Ron Dalton, the co-founder of Innocence Canada. I was with my colleague, the MP for Egmont. In 2000, Mr. Dalton was found to have been wrongfully convicted. He told me how important the support of his sister and brother-in-law had been as he fought to have his name cleared for a crime he did not commit.

Not everyone is able to receive this kind of support, and Bill C-40 recognizes this. The commission would be required to adopt a user-friendly and supportive approach when dealing with applicants, in particular those who are vulnerable and face particular needs. Commission staff would provide individuals with information and guidance on applications at each stage of review. The commission would also have the ability to provide supports to applicants in need by directing them to services in the community, assisting them in relation to necessities such as food and housing, and by providing translation and interpretation services. If applicants are without means, the commission could also assist applicants with obtaining legal assistance, with making an application or with responding to the commission's investigation report before a final decision is made.

[Translation]

In addition to the provisions regarding the creation of the new commission per se, Bill C-40 proposes a complete overhaul of part XXI.1 of the Criminal Code, which contains the substantive provisions governing the miscarriage of justice review process.

In this part of my speech, I will focus on the elements that reflect a policy change.

With respect to the types of applications the commission might review, such as the current provision respecting admissibility in the Criminal Code, it will be able to review any convictions under a federal law or regulation. The text was slightly revised to clarify that this includes guilty pleas, conditional and absolute discharges, as well as convictions under the Youth Criminal Justice Act or the former Young Offenders Act. Verdicts of not criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder would also be added.

• (1335)

[English]

Investigative powers are an integral part of the postappeal miscarriage-of-justice review process. This aspect of the current scheme has generated a certain amount of confusion as to when the investigative powers may be used. Bill C-40 seeks to address what has sometimes been described as a catch-22 problem: In some instances, an application may appear to have merit but lacks the new evidence to support that a miscarriage of justice may have occurred, which is the existing basis to invoke the investigative powers. Bill C-40 seeks to resolve this problem by adding that the commission may conduct an investigation if it is in the interests of justice to do so. This would include considering the specific personal factors of the applicant as well as the distinct challenges that applicants who belong to certain populations face in obtaining a remedy for a miscarriage of justice, with particular attention paid to the circumstances of indigenous and Black applicants. This approach is used elsewhere: in Scotland, for example. This approach also dovetails with a new legal test for making referrals back to the courts. The existing test requires that the minister be satisfied a miscarriage of justice likely occurred, before referring the matter back for a new trial or a new appeal.

With Bill C-40, we are proposing to adjust the legal test for a referral, making it a two-prong test. Instead of requiring that the decision-maker be satisfied a miscarriage of justice likely occurred, the government proposes that the commission be able to refer a matter back to the courts if it has reasonable grounds to conclude that a miscarriage of justice may have occurred and that it is in the interests of justice to do so. Again, this is the test used by the commission in Scotland, and we think it strikes the right balance to allow the courts to consider and correct miscarriages of justice when they occur.

The existing factors to support decision-making would be retained and expanded in Bill C-40. Legislation would require that, in making decisions, the commission take into account any relevant factor, including whether there is a new matter of significance not previously considered; the reliability of the information presented; the fact that an application is not intended to serve as a further appeal and that any remedy is extraordinary; the “interests of justice” factors I noted previously, including the personal circumstances of the applicants; and finally, the distinct challenges applicants from certain populations face, again with particular attention to the circumstances of indigenous or Black applicants.

[Translation]

I sincerely hope that the commission will play a legal role, but I also hope that it will play a social role by raising awareness among Canadians. I have asked my parliamentary secretary, the superb member for Scarborough—Rouge Park, to talk in more detail about the educational programs we will be rolling out, because I wanted my speech to focus on the social impact of what we are proposing. We cannot claim that miscarriages of justice never happen. The toll they take on the wrongfully convicted, their loved ones, the community and society in general is far too high.

Government Orders

[English]

It is my sincere hope that members will hear directly from several people who have been wrongfully convicted in Canada. Their stories are tragic and troubling. They illustrate why it is so important we have a better understanding of the causes and consequences of wrongful convictions, how the justice system needs to be improved in order to address miscarriages of justice more efficiently and effectively, and, most importantly, how to prevent them from happening in the first place.

[Translation]

I think we can all agree that innocent people do not belong in prison. That is why I hope to have the support of all of my colleagues across party lines in both the House and the Senate so that Bill C-40 is quickly passed. Let us seize this opportunity to show Canadians what we can accomplish by working together.

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Justice a question specifically about those people in prison who are accessing medical assistance in dying. This is a concern, obviously. Those who are wrongfully convicted, and others, may, sadly, be in a situation where they are pursuing this. Reports indicate that concerns have been raised by various experts about this, that Canada is a leading provider of euthanasia to people in prison and that a very large proportion of those in prison have mental health challenges. With the government's proposed expansion, this is a further risk that would see more of this phenomenon going on.

Does the Minister of Justice think it is appropriate that people in prison are going in this direction? What safeguards does he believe need to be put in place given the high numbers in Canada relative to other cases?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that this question is on another file.

First of all, Canada does not have a euthanasia regime; we have an assisted dying regime. It is people deciding for themselves whether or not to seek medical assistance in dying according to the criteria elaborated on in the law. These criteria applies whether one is in prison or not, and one has to fall within the parameters of those criteria in order to be able to seek medical assistance in dying. It is not a euthanasia regime.

With respect to mental disorders, it is misleading, on the part of the hon. member or anyone else, to say that this is about mental health generally. This is about mental disorders that have been under the long-standing treatment of doctors and for which everything has been tried and nothing has worked. This is not about the case of being able to escape depression or other serious conditions that do not meet that standard.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for bringing this forward. It is something that we, in the NDP, have been pushing for for some time.

Government Orders

This issue brings to mind, for those of us in northwest B.C., the case of Phillip Tallio, a Bella Coola man who was convicted 40 years ago and whose case has been taken up by the Innocence Project at UBC. His appeal was recently rejected by the Supreme Court of Canada, but I know many people have been pushing for that case to be reheard in light of the inconsistencies during trial.

Given that only a handful of cases make it through the existing ministerial review process each year, do the Liberals share our sense of urgency about getting a better, more independent process for dealing with miscarriages of justice in place as quickly as possible?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, yes, we share that concern. We want this bill through the House of Commons as quickly as possible. I have mentioned my personal dedication to this cause. We are 30 years overdue. The commission has existed in England for 25 years and is working very well, and it exists in a number of other common-law jurisdictions.

I will not comment on the specific case the hon. member mentioned, but I will take this opportunity to say that there is a transition provision built into this piece of legislation, such that a person who has gone through the process would be able to ask that their file be looked at again by the commission. This is a deliberate transition measure, because we know that miscarriages of justice exist.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within the riding of Waterloo, constituents provide me a wide range of perspectives and experiences.

When it comes to our judicial system, it is something that we always want to have confidence in. We know we could always improve our systems, because they are not perfect.

My question kind of builds upon the last answer. I know we have been looking at other countries and I know that a lot has been gained, but what have we learned from the international experience? Who are we looking towards? What have we gained from them so that we could actually advance, because we know this is long overdue?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, we have a great deal to learn from other jurisdictions. Again, we are looking at other common-law jurisdictions in particular, where these kinds of commissions exist and have worked very well.

First, wrongful convictions exist in a far greater number in the U.K. experience than we are currently seeing in Canada. That tells us that there is something amiss with our current process, in terms of accessibility to people who believe they have been wrongfully convicted.

The second thing I would point out is there has been a great deal of learning from the standard that has been used in other jurisdictions. What we have found in studying the standard is that the current Canadian standard likely to have caused a miscarriage of justice is too high. The U.K. and Scotland have a lower standard. In some places it is simply in the interest of justice.

It is something that was outlined very carefully by two former justices that we asked to write a report. Justice Harry LeForme and Justice Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré prepared an exhaustive report.

They travelled to these jurisdictions, did the work and came up with proposals that inspired much of what we have done in this report. I want to thank them while I am here.

We have taken learnings from other jurisdictions. It is critical to do so.

● (1345)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that we are talking miscarriages of justice, because the fact that the Attorney General of Canada has not appointed enough judges, and violent rapists and murderers are going to go free because their time has been exceeded, is a miscarriage of justice. Would the minister agree?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question, which allows me to clarify a number of things.

I have appointed judges since my time as justice minister at a rate unparalleled in the last 20 years. We have created over an extra 100 positions. I agree that it is important. I will continue to appoint judges at a rate that continues to fill those vacant posts. We will continue to take that task very seriously.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Minister of Justice for tackling the issue of wrongful convictions at long last.

The name David Milgaard is one of many. Donald Marshall is another. Unfortunately, systems of justice that put the innocent in jail, despite the moment when they are released and celebrated, and apologies are made, can never make things right again.

I appreciate the focus on this. However, I wonder if the minister believes that a commission that looks at wrongful convictions would be faster and more open to change than having the traditional method of appeals to the Minister of Justice himself or herself?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her passion for this issue, which I share.

Let me give another statistic. Since I have been Minister of Justice, I have seen roughly one case and a bit per year. That is not the experience in the U.K. or any other jurisdiction that has set up one of these commissions. The kinds of cases I see tend to be homicide cases.

From all indications, particularly in other jurisdictions, there simply have to be other wrongful convictions that need to be addressed, where there has been an impediment, where it has not attracted the support of the Innocence projects, the very good support of those projects I might add.

This should be faster. With the investigative powers and the support powers that we are giving to the commission, it should be able to be done more equitably and fairly, with fewer barriers. I think this is an important aspect of this piece of law.

Government Orders

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about the two-step procedure under the new regime. Would he be open to having the lower standard, where miscarriage of justice may have occurred, for the first step, but the higher standard, where it was likely to have occurred, for the second step, before the commissioner sends it back into the judicial system?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member's question comes from a good place. The experience we have seen is that "likely" is too high a standard and has been identified by justices Westmoreland-Traoré and LaForme as one of the likely factors of why we get so few cases in our system. Our cognate jurisdictions, England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, have systems that are not unknown to us. We are in the same family of criminal law systems, and I think we should be comforted using the standards they are using, because they have had such a positive impact.

Having the word "likely" in there is not something I would like to continue with.

• (1350)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the police needed a conviction. There had been four widely reported sexual assault cases already in the city, and now a fifth one that ended with the murder of a young woman on her way to work on a cold January morning in 1969. She had been stabbed in the chest and her throat had been slashed with a knife that a city resident many years later reported as having gone missing from her kitchen. Mrs. Fisher suspected it was her husband who was the killer. She did not report that to the police. Although he was known to police officers to be a violent man, they did not pursue that investigation because they had another theory of what happened on that cold winter morning. That theory was based on evidence, which was confusing and contradictory, from a group of confused, impressionable and irresponsible young teenagers prone to doing stupid things like stealing cars, stealing gas for cars and committing petty theft to fuel their drug habits, but rape and murder was not a part of that.

At first these confused teenagers told the police officers that their friend David had been with them the whole time and he could not possibly have been the murderer. They did not believe them. They did not like that story or this alibi because it did not fit their theory of what happened that morning, so they brought these witnesses in again. This time they locked them up for 48 hours to sober them up. Then they started questioning them relentlessly, time and again. Finally, these confused, impressionable, irresponsible teenagers changed their story. They just wanted to get out of there. They decided to tell the officers what they wanted to hear so they would get out of there. They figured that David could stand on his own two feet, which would all probably work out in the end anyway, so they changed their story. David Milgaard was charged with murder and went up for trial.

Many years later, these witnesses changed their story again. They recanted. They apologized. Their excuse was that they were going through withdrawal symptoms, they just wanted to get out of there and felt the best way to do that was to tell the police officers what they wanted to hear to get out of there and move on. At the trial

they did not even give that evidence. However, the police, thinking ahead of time, had already taken their written statements, which were put before the jury. The jury accepted them and David Milgaard was convicted and spent 23 years in jail. He was 17 years old at the time and he spent 23 years in jail for a murder he did not commit while the real murderer continued terrorizing the neighbourhood.

Years later, it all seemed so obvious that this was a serious miscarriage of justice, but it did not seem that obvious at the time.

I do not have a policing background and have never had to look at the evidence of a crime scene, but I can imagine it must be very frustrating for the police authorities and investigators, particularly under a lot of pressure from the public and politicians to do something about it, to find a person to convict. It is like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. I am not very good at them, but there is always a piece that looks like it is going to fit and I just want to take my fist and pound it in to make it work. That is exactly what happened in the David Milgaard case. The piece did not quite fit, so the police used pressure until it finally did, which was a serious miscarriage of justice. David was convicted of the murder of Gail Miller by the jury on January 31, 1970. He appealed to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, which was denied a year later. He went to the Supreme Court of Canada, which refused leave to appeal. It did not even want to hear the case, and David Milgaard spent many years in jail.

Thankfully, he did not give up and finally there was a breakthrough. The law eventually caught up with Larry Fisher and he pleaded guilty to several sexual assault charges, and one of attempted murder. Some of these charges were around the events that took place at the same time as the murder of Gail Miller and in the same neighbourhood. This was the breakthrough that David Milgaard and his very determined mother Joyce were looking for and they pursued it. They had a lot of help from a lot of people, such as not-for-profit groups and lawyers who were willing to work pro bono, and they kept digging.

• (1355)

The evidence was so clear that David Milgaard had not commit the murder, but he had run out of appeals. There was nothing left that he could do but go the political route, and that is exactly what he did.

He went to the minister of justice, under section 690 of the Criminal Code, and he asked for a review. That was in 1988 after this evidence started becoming available. The minister of justice turned him down, but he and his mother Joyce were determined. The credit goes particularly to Mrs. Milgaard for her persistence.

One day in September 1991, Mrs. Milgaard held a vigil in front of a hotel in Winnipeg where the prime minister of the day, Brian Mulroney, was about to give a speech. She did not expect to speak with the prime minister; she was expected to maybe shout out at him and be recognized. However, Brian Mulroney walked over to her and asked her what her story was.

Statements by Members

This is what Prime Minister Mulroney said years later, which was quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press, “There was just something so forlorn about this woman standing alone on a very cold evening on behalf of her son, but in that brief meeting, I got a sense of Mrs. Milgaard and her genuineness and her courage. We all have mothers, but even the most devoted and loving mothers wouldn't continue the crusade for 22 years if there had been any doubt in her mind. So, I went back to Ottawa and had a much closer look at it. I told the appropriate people that I thought a review of this particular case was warranted and I wanted appropriate action taken to bring this about.”

It finally landed back on the desk of the minister of justice, and this time, with the evidence that was available then, she was convinced that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred. She referred it to the Supreme Court of Canada, which this time had to look at it and was convinced as well by the new evidence that a new trial should be ordered.

It went back to Saskatchewan, but the Saskatchewan attorney general decided that, with the intervening 22 years and witnesses maybe disappearing, evidence maybe disappearing, maybe it would not bother pursuing it, and it dropped the case. David was then a free man, but that was not the same as a finding of innocence or a finding of not guilty. It was just a suspension of further proceedings, and the cloud of suspicion continued to hang over David Milgaard.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ANTI-INDIA AND ANTI-HINDU GROUPS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak about a despicable float in a recent Brampton parade.

Anti-India Khalistan supporters in Canada have reached a new low by celebrating the assassination of Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi with her cutout in a white sari splattered in blood and the cutouts of her bodyguards, turned killers, brandishing and pointing guns.

Tolerating the glorification of terrorist acts goes against everything our country, Canada, believes in. Anti-India and anti-Hindu groups in Canada, with their recent attacks on Hindu temples and their mounting a campaign against public display of flags with the Hindu religious sacred symbol Aum, are sending a dreaded message to Hindu Canadians.

I again call on authorities at all levels of government to take notice and initiate action before this hatred escalates to real and deadly physical violence.

JUSTICE

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, I introduced my first private member's bill, called “Noah's Law”, named after 16-month-old Noah McConnell, who was mur-

dered alongside his mother, Mchale Busch, by a registered, repeat sex offender who targets women and children.

Cody McConnell, husband and father, along with Noah's law organizers, have been calling for legislative change because of these tragic murders, hoping that no other family will suffer like this again.

Mchale Busch and Noah McConnell will never be forgotten. Their murders should lead to meaningful change to strengthen the criminal justice system through Noah's law.

Once implemented, Noah's law will help empower the most vulnerable, especially women and children, by protecting them from violent offenders who live in our communities. Hopefully, Noah's law quickly passes to help strengthen our justice system and prevent this from happening again.

• (1400)

BIG DAY OF GIVING

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 24, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation held its second annual Big Day of Giving in Prince Edward Island.

The Big Day of Giving is a fundraiser for critical health care equipment and an opportunity to share stories from health care workers and patients across the island. This year's fundraising focus was on cancer care, mental health and addictions, and neonatal care.

I am honoured to inform the House that this year's Big Day of Giving produced a whopping \$861,000, over \$210,000 more than last year. This will help to pay for 14% of this year's equipment needs at the hospital. This resounding success speaks to the remarkable generosity of islanders and their dedication to our community.

I offer my heartfelt thanks and warm congratulations to all who helped to organize and deliver such a memorable event. I also offer much gratitude to each and every selfless donor. This is yet another example of what makes P.E.I. great and what makes me so very proud to serve them in this place.

[Translation]

CKRL COMMUNITY RADIO

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when just about every town had its own community radio station. Back then, people had access to more diversity in terms of music and news. One by one, community radio stations were replaced by commercial radio stations. It has now become virtually unheard of to have the opportunity, the good luck, dare I say, to have access to a community radio station.

Statements by Members

Limoilou is lucky enough to have a community radio station called CKRL, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. It also happens to be the oldest French-language community radio station in Quebec and Canada. It has been able to survive thanks to the dedication of its staff and volunteers, as well as the involvement of local business owners and the general public.

CKRL has given us 50 years of music of every genre and from every corner of the world. It has also given us 50 years of news, shared moments and pure joy for the ears and the soul. CKRL is the beating heart of our community. I would like to thank the whole team and wish them a happy 50th anniversary.

* * *

LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH IN CANADA

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I was supposed to lead off in the debate on Bill S-246, which seeks to designate November as Lebanese heritage month in Canada. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

I would like to point out the importance of this bill for Quebec in particular, because I am giving my speech today in French. According to Statistics Canada, Quebec's Lebanese community accounts for more than a third of all Lebanese Canadians. They chose Quebec because of the close relationship between the Lebanese people, the French language and the global Francophonie. Lebanon is a prime source of new immigrants, which is important because we need to offset the labour shortage and strengthen the vitality of francophone communities. Also, the first edition of the Lebanese Film Festival in Canada took place in Montreal, which is also home to the Saint-Marion eparchial seat.

I am eager to continue working with all of my colleagues so that we can all celebrate Lebanese heritage month in November.

* * *

[English]

GULF WAR VETERANS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the world watched with dread in 1990 as Saddam Hussein launched an unprovoked invasion of Kuwait. Thousands of Canadians were part of the international coalition that resisted that lawless invasion, fighting to drive out enemy forces and to restore Kuwaiti sovereignty.

The evil of a tyrant was opposed by the valour of those who fought in the Persian Gulf, and because of it, Kuwait remains an independent country to this day, yet also to this day, unlike most of our allies, the Canadian government refuses to recognize Gulf War veterans as having provided wartime service.

It certainly was war, and any of our Gulf veterans who stood on the front line, putting life and limb in jeopardy to defend freedom, can provide their first-hand testimony to that fact.

These heroes deserve our heartfelt gratitude and our recognition of their service in defence of liberty and Canadian values. I thank all those who served in the Persian Gulf War, and to all of our courageous Canadian veterans.

• (1405)

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada summer jobs program, or CSJ as it is known, is a vital initiative that serves as a stepping stone for youth, especially those facing employment barriers, and allows employers to expand their workforce. This program provides opportunities for young Canadians to equip them with skills, experience and confidence for their future endeavours.

In Oakville North—Burlington, businesses and non-profits have benefited enormously from this program, with young people bringing fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the workplace. I have heard from employers like Haltech that they use CSJ to build their talent in the organization. Students have said that they never expected to work in their field, but because of CSJ, they had the best work experience they have ever had.

The Canada summer jobs program is a catalyst for social change, promoting employment equity and youth empowerment. As youth begin their summer placements, I wish them well and cannot wait to visit them this summer.

* * *

PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in June, we come together to celebrate Portuguese Heritage Month, a significant occasion when we acknowledge the remarkable contributions made by Canadians of Portuguese descent.

Saturday, June 10, was Portugal Day, observed both in Portugal and around the globe. As Portuguese Canadians, this day holds a deep sense of pride for us and a great, deep joy.

This year also marks a significant milestone as we commemorate and pay tribute to 70 years of Canada-Portugal relations. As a testament of our friendship and strong ties, Portugal has contributed 120 Portuguese firefighters to join their Canadian counterparts' efforts to put out our wildfires.

Today, let us take this opportunity to celebrate and honour the accomplishments, rich heritage and seamless integration of our Luso community into Canada.

[Member spoke in Portuguese]

[English]

*Statements by Members***CANADIAN OPEN**

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “Good pace. Are you serious? Oh my goodness! Glorious and free!” That was the call by PGA announcer Jim Nantz as Abbotsford’s Nick Taylor made history yesterday by becoming the first Canadian in 69 years to win the Canadian Open golf championship, and he did it in spectacular fashion.

First shooting a course record 63 on Saturday, Nick then survived four sudden-death playoff holes and drained a 72-foot eagle putt to win his third PGA tournament. He joins Mike Weir, Brooke Henderson, George Knudson and others in the pantheon of Canada’s great golfers.

Nick and his wife Andie call Abbotsford home. In fact, he is proud of having honed his golf skills at our own Ledgeview Golf Club.

Other notable Canadian players in this year’s Canadian Open were Corey Connors, Mike Weir and Abbotsford’s Adam Hadwin.

I thank Nick Taylor for inspiring us. Oh, Canada, glorious and free, indeed.

* * *

SAM IBRAHIM CENTRE

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to celebrate a \$25-million investment for the creation of the Sam Ibrahim Centre for inclusive excellence in entrepreneurship, innovation and leadership at the University of Toronto, Scarborough campus. The centre will help young people pursue their dreams, while anchoring local start-ups to scale, grow, flourish and ultimately stay in Scarborough.

In addition to the new centre, the Sam Ibrahim Awards, the Gabriel Fanous Awards and the Shaemin Ukani Awards will provide supports so that young entrepreneurs can realize their potential.

Sam Ibrahim, an Egyptian Canadian, grew up in Scarborough and attended UTSC. He, along with his partners, started Arrow Group of Companies, one of the largest homegrown businesses in Scarborough with a global footprint.

I am so excited to welcome Sam and his partners, along with principal Wisdom Tettey, Andrew Arifuzzaman, Lisa Lemon and Neel Joshi from UTSC, to Parliament Hill today.

I thank Sam for believing in Scarborough. We know that this is only the beginning.

* * *

● (1410)

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the consequences of eight years of a Liberal government are painfully evident. The costs of food, housing and fuel have hit historic highs. Canadians are visiting food banks at record levels. Household debt in Canada has reached an all-time high, and now, amongst advanced economies, Canadians are the most at risk of

missing mortgage payments. Last week’s Bank of Canada rate hike will only make it more difficult for homeowners.

Canadians simply cannot afford the Liberal-NDP government’s inflationary deficits, yet these NDP-Liberals do not care. They have added 60 billion dollars’ worth of fuel to the inflationary fire while turning a blind eye to the pain and anxiety they are causing Canadian families. It is time to end inflationary deficits to bring down inflation and interest rates. It is painfully clear that only Conservatives have a common-sense plan to end the cost of living crisis and make life affordable.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the government, Canadian families are in more debt than any other country in the G7. Last week, with the passage of budget 2023, the costly coalition poured another 60 billion dollars’ worth of fuel onto the inflationary fire, sparking another interest rate hike from the Bank of Canada. Families with variable-rate mortgages, those who the Prime Minister encouraged to borrow, promising rates would be low for a long time, are seeing their monthly payments going up again. Even before last week’s hike, rate increases had already added \$1,000 a month to the average \$500,000 mortgage. In my province of B.C., the average cost of a home is \$995,000. We can think about how this rate hike will impact British Columbians.

Thanks to the government, families are worried about how they are going to pay for their groceries, day care, summer camps and everything else. Conservatives would put a stop to deficit spending, get inflation under control, create powerful paycheques and get homes built that Canadians can afford. For their home, my home, our home, Conservatives are going to bring it home.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRI-TOURISM IN GLENGARRY—PRESCOTT—RUSSELL

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, summer is almost here, and I invite everyone to visit our region. Beer drinkers can hit the microbrewery circuit by visiting Brauwerk Hoffman, the Broken Stick, Tuque de Broue, the Wood Brothers and Beau’s.

For those who do not like beer, that is not a problem. We also have wine. They can visit wineries such as the Domaine Perrault, Clos du Vully, Vergers Villeneuve, Stonehouse and Vankleek Hill vineyards.

Those who do not like grapes can try some apple cider at Domaine Cl  roux.

Agri-tourism is at the heart of our region. I encourage everyone to do the Popsilos circuit, which combines art and agriculture, and end the day with a culinary experience at one of our great restaurants, such as the Riverest, L'Original or Maker Feed.

[English]

That is not all. We have many fairs this summer, from Maxville to Riceville and Vankleek Hill to Russell. If one does them all, one can truly say, "I've been everywhere, man." Of course, let us not forget the Glengarry Highland Games.

[Translation]

It is likely going to be hot this summer. Cool off at the Calypso Waterpark, then enjoy a poutine in Saint-Albert and finish it all off with a gelato at Café sur la rive. Let us make the most of summer.

* * *

[English]

COMMUNITY TRAIL

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the volunteers of the Cycle 16 Trail Society. On Saturday, its members gathered with about 100 other Bulkley Valley residents to celebrate the completion of the first phase of a new off-highway bike trail between Smithers and Telkwa. These folks have a vision. It is a vision of local families coming together for healthy, active lifestyles; of clean, sustainable transportation; and of people building good projects together in the proud tradition of small communities everywhere.

I want to congratulate the society's executive, Allan Cormier, Jeremy Shriber, Mary Brise, Janet Harris, Dan Boissevain, Teresa Monkman, Sue Harrison, Alison Watson and Don Morgan. I also have a special tip of the bike helmet to my friend Tony Harris, who has been pushing on the pedals of this project since the very beginning.

I rode the bike trail with my daughter two weeks ago, and it is beautiful. I send my congratulations to all.

The Speaker: Before going to the next member for his statement, I want to remind everyone that statements are taking place. I am sure everybody wants to hear what is being said, so if they are talking to other members, I ask them to please whisper. Do not talk very loudly.

The hon. member for Drummond.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF ÉDITIONS DU BORÉAL

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for 60 years now, the Éditions du Boréal publishing house has been magnificently showcasing Quebec authors, writers and historians.

Gilles Boulet, Pierre Gravel, Jacques Lacoursière, Denis Vaugeois and Bishop Albert Tessier founded the Boréal Express in 1963. It would go on to publish an impressive collection of historical works from the front row of the Quiet Revolution and the social

Statements by Members

changes that were the driving force in Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s.

Boréal has a very rich history. It has published some Quebec's greatest literary giants, including Marie-Claire Blais, Anne Hébert, Gabrielle Roy, Robert Lalonde, Marie Laberge and Dany Laferrière. It has also published some prominent figures in English Canadian literature, including Margaret Atwood, Neil Bissoondath and Michael Ondaatje.

It is a long list, and one that will certainly continue to grow, because thanks to Boréal, our stories are being heard around the world. This also showcases the people telling these stories with their hearts, their souls and their words, words in the language we speak here, without which the stories would be less authentic.

Boréal, thank you and happy 60th.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are out of touch and Canadians are out of money. These inflationary deficits are causing Canadians to miss meals and use food banks, and young people are abandoning the hope of owning a home.

In a couple more weeks, a second carbon tax will kick in, further driving up the price of gas to add 61¢ a litre, pouring more gas on the inflationary fire.

Mortgages and rents have doubled. The combined carbon taxes will cost families \$4,000 extra per year. With all of the wildfires raging in Canada, there will be stiff penalties for the arsonists responsible, but what will the punishment be for the Prime Minister and the finance minister, who are deliberately setting the inflationary fire?

I reiterate my party's call for the Liberals to work throughout the summer to draft a budget that will combat inflation, reduce interest rates, axe the carbon tax and make it possible to build more homes.

For one's home, my home, our home, let us bring it home.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one week ago today, the Leader of the Opposition vowed to use all procedural tools to block the budget from passing, including 900 amendments and lengthy speeches.

Oral Questions

Despite his nearly four-hour-long speech last Wednesday evening, during which he talked about Winston Churchill, Henry VIII, favourite podcaster Jordan Peterson, the stonework in Parliament and why the floors here are green, never once did he mention how the budget will support Canadians through expanding dental care, creating the new first home savings account and investing in the clean economy, which will create thousands of jobs for Canadians.

Nonetheless, the very next day, the House passed the budget 2023 BIA, which will provide much needed supports for Canadians right across the country. While the Conservative Party continues to play procedural games, the government will continue to do the hard work to deliver results for Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has wasted eight months since Canadians learned of the extent of Beijing's interference, which helped the Liberals in both elections.

He appointed his ski buddy and member of the Trudeau Foundation as the special rapporteur to try to cover up this interference. Now that his rapporteur has resigned, we need a public inquiry. The Conservative Party is ready to work with all parties, including the government, to get the ball rolling.

Will the government announce a public inquiry so we can know every detail of Beijing's interference?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the collaborative tone of the Leader of the Opposition.

From the start, we have always said that a public inquiry was a possibility. Mr. Johnston did not recommend a public inquiry and explained why. It is a difficult decision to make in the circumstances for national security reasons.

However, we look forward to working with the opposition parties to discuss the next steps of a public process, such as the type of potential inquiries, the mandate, the people who could lead this inquiry. We look forward to having these conversations.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ever since this Prime Minister came to power, rent has doubled. Mortgages have also doubled since this Prime Minister came to power.

He spent half a billion dollars, which drove up interest rates and inflation. He is also giving money to local governments that are preventing affordable housing from being built.

Will the Prime Minister finally reverse his inflationary policies, balance the budget and get rid of the red tape so that we can finally build affordable housing?

• (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, we saw very dangerous forest fires across Canada. We saw the importance of climate action.

What did the Conservatives do? Did they work with us to support Canadians at such a critical and dangerous moment? Did they support our industrial plan to build a green economy? No, they played partisan games. It is irresponsible.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, doubling housing costs is not going to stop forest fires.

The Prime Minister has doubled housing costs with half a trillion dollars of inflationary deficits and by giving billions of dollars to local gatekeepers who block housing construction with the second-slowest housing permits of any country in the entire OECD. Now the deficits the Prime Minister is running risk increasing interest rates further and causing people to lose their homes to higher mortgage prices.

Will the government introduce a balanced budget to bring down inflation and interest rates so Canadians do not lose their homes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the OECD, what the Leader of the Opposition should know and should be sharing with Canadians is that last week the OECD forecasted Canada would have the strongest economic growth in the G7 over 2023-24.

What is truly appalling, and frankly really disappointing, is that these Conservatives, at a time when forest fires have been raging across our country, would prefer to play partisan games rather than support our sensible measures to build the clean economy we desperately need.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was about the doubling of housing costs. The Prime Minister has brought in half a trillion dollars of inflationary spending, which has doubled rent costs, mortgage payments and the down payment needed for the average house, and now the IMF says that Canada is the country most at risk of a massive mortgage default as our households have the most debt as a share of GDP of any country in the G7. That debt is about to collide with soaring interest rates, driven by the government's deficits.

Will they eliminate the deficits and balance the budgets to bring down inflation and interest rates before Canadians lose their homes?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the Leader of the Opposition cite the IMF, and I hope that means he is aware that it is the IMF that confirms Canada has the lowest deficit in the G7 and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 by some measure.

I really have to point out to the Canadians listening the appalling behaviour of this reckless and irresponsible opposition, which has been blocking sensible, important measures to support Canadians at a critical time.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just homeowners. Because the government has been giving billions to local gatekeepers who block affordable housing construction and because its inflationary policies have doubled rent, students are now living in squalor. One used to be able to get a full apartment for \$840 before the Prime Minister. Now CBC is reporting that a student from Guelph has had to pay \$840 just for a room in an apartment she shares with six other students that is mould- and insect-infested and does not even have running water.

Will the Liberals reverse their inflationary policies so Canadians do not—

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to point out to Canadians the utterly irresponsible behaviour of the Conservative Party in the House last week, which was blocking our budget legislation. The Prime Minister, over the weekend, made a very important trip to Ukraine to show Canada's support for Ukraine at this crucial moment. Meanwhile, do members know what the Conservatives were doing? They were blocking our legislation, which would indefinitely deny most favoured nation trading status to Russia and Belarus. Whose side are they on?

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, David Johnston made a dignified decision to resign in order to protect the public's confidence in democracy. However, he should never have been put in that situation.

Starting in February, the public and the majority of the House began calling for an independent public commission of inquiry into Chinese interference, to be led by a commissioner chosen by the House of Commons to examine both electoral interference and financing issues, threats of espionage and intimidation of the diaspora. It was the right choice. It is still the right choice.

Will the government launch this inquiry before we rise for the summer? Time is of the essence.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we look forward to working with our colleague from La Prairie, his leader and the other party leaders to strengthen Canadians' confidence in our democratic institutions.

Mr. Johnston's departure gives us all an opportunity to bring down the partisan temperature and discuss how we can work together on the next steps in a public process. We look forward to talking with the opposition parties to determine how we can do this in a responsible and serious way.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as far as the Bloc Québécois can see, Mr. Johnston's departure is not restoring public trust in democracy. The problem is his botched report. His suggestion to hold public hearings is nothing but a ploy to avoid a serious inquiry. This report proves that an independent public inquiry is essential.

Today, the government is finally showing some openness to the idea, and that is good news for democracy. However, the government needs to state its intentions first.

Does it want to relaunch David Johnston's hearings under a different name, or is it making a clear commitment to a genuine, independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said at the start of question period, that has always been an option.

I know that the Bloc Québécois will never form the government, but the Conservative Party is well aware that a public inquiry involving the most heavily protected national security information cannot proceed irresponsibly.

I think that everyone would benefit from a substantive discussion on how to approach the next steps in the public process and, if a public inquiry is the option chosen, how it will proceed, what its terms of reference will be and what the timeline will look like.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, interest rates have shot up so quickly that families are struggling to pay their mortgages. We can give an example of someone in Toronto. An average family that bought an average home a year and a half ago would have to find over an additional \$27,000 by the end of this year. That is a shocking amount.

What advice would the Prime Minister give to these families that are struggling with the cost of a mortgage for how they can come up with this additional amount of money?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely aware that housing is a significant challenge for far too many Canadians. That is why I am really glad that we have now put in place something we promised to do, which is the tax-free first home savings account. That is going to help a lot of first-time homebuyers save for that crucial home. I am also really glad that we have now put in place a \$4-billion housing accelerator plan.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, none of that helps a family that is struggling with the cost of a mortgage right now.

[Translation]

Here is a similar example. In Montreal, a family has to come up with an additional \$13,000 a year. That is crazy. Families are already struggling to make ends meet.

What advice does this government have for these families when it comes to paying their bills and their mortgage?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely agrees that housing may be the biggest challenge facing Canadians and Canadian families.

That is why we have already put in place a tax-free first home savings account. This will be important, especially for young Canadians.

We have also put in place a housing accelerator fund to help municipalities create more of the housing that Canada really needs.

* * *

• (1430)

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been eight months of denials, foot-dragging and cover-ups from the Liberals when it comes to foreign interference in our election. Here are the numbers: countless promises of protecting our democracy, hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Trudeau Foundation, one special rapporteur, zero answers and zero results. The Prime Minister now gets to go back to the drawing board, where he can keep delaying this investigation, continue his cover-up and find someone else to do his bidding.

The opposition has agreed to the new request. When will he give up the charade and finally commit to a public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we think that a discussion about issues as important as protecting Canadian democratic institutions from unacceptable foreign interference would benefit from all of us lowering the partisan temperature. That is why we believe the decision of Mr. Johnston to leave the special rapporteur role gives all of us an opportunity to discuss what the next steps are in a public process.

The opposition says it wants a public inquiry. What would be the terms of reference of that inquiry? How would they protect necessary national security information in the interests of Canada? What

would be the timeline? Those are the conversations we are anxious to have.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear: Canadians want a public inquiry, and this is the kind of thing we have been seeing for eight months. The party that unequivocally rejected a public inquiry and ignored the will of this Parliament just weeks ago now says one has always been on the table. It should have been the first resort, not the last resort.

It is very clear the Liberals have no plan and never intended to investigate foreign interference in our elections. When will they stop delaying this with their games and just call a public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it will not surprise members that I do not share some of the exaggerated premises of our hon. colleague's questions.

What we have said, and members of the Conservative Party know this well, including the leader of the Conservative Party, who sat in government, is that this was designed and decided to protect national security information from public release. The Conservatives know that. Saying they want a public inquiry right now is not, in fact, a responsible suggestion. They should tell us what the terms of reference would be, how they would protect the national security interests of Canada and who might lead this process—

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

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 31 weeks, more than seven months, since the news that the government knew about the PRC's interference in our democracy came to light. Since then, we have asked hundreds of questions in this House and in its committees, but we have gotten very few answers. The only thing we have gotten are a few answers here and there, heavily redacted documents and a mountain of process with NSICOP, NSIRA and a special rapporteur.

Will the Prime Minister commit to a public inquiry with the full powers of a public inquiry so we can get answers to exactly what happened?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the colleague across the way highlights the mechanisms that shine a light on how we are protecting our democratic institutions from foreign interference, including through the creation of NSICOP, a multipartisan endeavour; through the creation of NSIRA; and yes, through Mr. Johnston, who has now determined that he will not be carrying on and has charted out a course.

What is important is that we work together to address the concerns that have been raised with regard to foreign interference, but doing so in a way that is responsible to protect our national security. That remains the commitment of this government, and we look forward to taking the next concrete steps with all members in this chamber.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a related national security matter concerning the Winnipeg lab breaches, it was two and a half years ago that the House of Commons ordered the production of documents. The government refused to comply with the order. Then it hid behind NSICOP. Now, finally, two and a half years later, the committee that is looking at these documents has just been stood up.

We cannot wait two and a half years for more process to unfold to get the answers we need about interference in our democracy that affects all members and all parties of this House. Will the government commit today to a public inquiry so this democracy and Canadians across the country can get the answers they deserve about the PRC interference?

• (1435)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Justice Iacobucci and Justice O'Connor made recommendations about critical changes that needed to happen to make sure that parliamentarians could see into every corner of government, the Leader of the Opposition, as minister at the time, ignored that request. In fact, if the Leader of the Opposition had his way, there would be no way to look at any national security documents.

What we did with the Winnipeg lab is offer all of the documents to be seen at NSICOP. When the Conservatives refused, we created an alternate process with a panel of independent arbiters who could look at every redaction to make sure they were legitimate. It took them nearly a year to agree to that process. They finally have. They took a long time to appoint their members. I am glad they finally have.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why has the Prime Minister not already announced an independent public inquiry into Beijing's interference?

The Prime Minister wanted to sweep under the rug the fact that the Beijing regime helped him in the 2019 and 2021 elections, so he created a special rapporteur position and appointed his friend, a member of the Trudeau Foundation, to fill it. David Johnston resigned on Friday after failing to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the appearance of a conflict of interest between him and the Prime Minister was unsubstantiated.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, launch an independent inquiry today and finally work with the opposition to ensure that Canadians know the whole truth?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is always ready to work with the opposition, including the Conservatives. However, it was the Conservatives who refused to receive a briefing from the intelligence services. I hope that now, with a renewed spirit and this new opportunity for collaboration, we will be able to work with the opposition, because this is an extremely important issue. It is critical that we address the threats posed by foreign interference, and we need to work together to do that.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rather than making a decision immediately after David Johnston's resignation, as he could have done, why did the Prime Minister not announce an independent public inquiry? Instead, he sent another friend, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, to make political statements to the media.

When will the Prime Minister realize that he cannot take help from a foreign country to win elections and decide on the inquiry process? His plan to lie low and buy himself time has failed. When will he stop the cover-up and immediately announce an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is telling is that our colleague opposite believes that it is petty politics for a government minister to say that he wants to consult the opposition parties and collaborate on such a crucial issue as protecting our democratic institutions.

On the contrary, there has frankly been too much petty politics on this issue, including on the part of the Conservatives. We want to work together to find the best way to move forward, and we look forward to substantive discussions with the opposition.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, David Johnston was trapped. From day one, the mandate he received from the Prime Minister went against the will of the public and the House. Now that he has honourably stepped down, the government is signalling openness and is asking us to suggest candidates to lead an inquiry. The Bloc will collaborate, but first the government needs to clarify what kind of inquiry it is talking about.

Is it talking about a public and independent commission of inquiry, or is it talking about restricted hearings with no power or independence? In other words, does the government want the names of potential commissioners, or does it want the names of people it can trap like Mr. Johnston?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the outset, we have always been willing to work with the Bloc. We invited the Bloc, and all members of Parliament, in fact, to receive a briefing from the intelligence services so that we could make fact-based decisions. Yes, another opportunity is now presenting itself to work together. All the options are on the table. We must do this work together to better protect our democratic institutions.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, now that David Johnston has stepped down, we are back at square one. The government has been trying to avoid an inquiry for almost four months now. The Bloc Québécois salutes the fact that the government is showing signs of openness today, but after four months, the government really needs to get its act together.

We need an independent public commission of inquiry. The commissioner must be selected by the House and must have enough leeway in setting the terms of reference to answer all of the public's questions.

Is the government prepared to launch such an inquiry before the House rises, yes or no?

• (1440)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, we are not back at square one. A lot of work has been done and a lot of meaningful action has been taken by this government, including the creation of a new national coordinator's office, public consultations on the creation of a registry, and investments in budget 2023 to add resources to the RCMP to protect Canadians. There are plenty of examples to show that we are in a very good position.

Now, we need to ask some serious questions and consider this matter very seriously and attentively. We are always willing to work with the opposition.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about this every day since February. Everyone is calling for an independent public inquiry.

That includes Canada's former chief electoral officer, former intelligence officials and senior officials, not to mention the public, minorities threatened by the Chinese regime and the House of Commons. Of course there will be in camera meetings, as is the case with any inquiry that involves sensitive content.

It is not the means to responsibly investigate that is lacking; it is the will of the government.

Will there be an independent public inquiry, yes or no?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by our colleague's comments about the kind of public inquiry that will have to be considered by the government and by the House of Commons.

She specifically identified one of the challenges when it comes to top secret information, which is so classified in order to protect the safety of Canadians and those who work for our security agencies.

Rather than simply repeating the call for an independent public inquiry, it would be helpful to hear exact terms and conditions, specific suggestions on how to protect top secret information, the ideal person to conduct that kind of discussion or public inquiry, and the timelines.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last eight years, the Prime Minister has racked up more debt than all other prime ministers combined. That is not just a shocking fact; the real-life consequence is that massive Liberal deficits raise the inflation rate. This forces the Bank of Canada to raise the interest rates, forcing Canadians to default on their mortgages.

Canadians are going bankrupt because the Liberals cannot control the government's spending. When will they get their spending under control?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has the privilege of representing Edmonton Mill Woods, a riding in a fabulous city that is lucky to have a large Ukrainian Canadian community. I hope that the member opposite is embarrassed by and ashamed of the childish filibustering of the Conservative Party, which blocked crucial support from our country to Ukraine. That party also blocked the denial of most-favoured-nation trading status to Russia. Those members should be ashamed of themselves.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, almost half of Canadians say that they are having a difficult time now managing their mortgage payments. More and more Canadians are taking on credit card debt just to pay for basic necessities, such as groceries.

Will the Liberals work with us to draft a new budget that will stop the deficits and inflation, stop rates from going up and stop the mortgage default? Will the Liberals cancel their vacation, work with us and help Canadians to save their homes?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite the childish, immature and irresponsible games of the Conservatives, the House actually passed the budget last week. It is a good thing we did that, because there is real help for Canadians in the budget.

Let us talk about the grocery rebate that is going to reach 11 million Canadians as of July 5. The first home savings account is also part of the budget and the investments in clean technology, which are going to help us not only fight climate change but also build the economy of the 21st century. This side of the House passed that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, the government's reckless spending is causing serious problems across the country.

A few days ago, the Bank of Canada had to react to this Prime Minister's inflationary spending by raising interest rates for the ninth time. Canadians are struggling to stay warm, to buy food and to pay their mortgages, which, I would remind members, have doubled. Some Canadians are even in default.

Will the Prime Minister immediately put a stop to his inflation-causing deficit spending and table a plan to balance the budget as soon as possible?

• (1445)

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, I know that the Conservatives would rather forget about the past few years and all that Canadians have been through in recent months and years, like the pandemic.

I know they would love to overlook the fact that the government decided to be there for Canadians in their hour of need with the necessary assistance to avert business bankruptcies and prevent people from losing their homes when they could not work.

How ironic to hear them admit today that Canadians are still struggling. Instead of helping Canadians in practical ways, they are trying to block the budget and prevent help from reaching Canadians. That is irresponsible.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, today I stood with the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario, which is trying to negotiate to keep its communities safe. The government is trying to enforce policies that were found to be discriminatory by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. It is fine with letting funding for first nations policing run out. This would never happen in major cities.

Why is the government forcing the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario to accept a contract that goes against reconciliation?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her advocacy in the space of first nations policing. I want to assure her that I have had constructive discussions with Chief Kai Liu over the course of the

Oral Questions

weekend, and I want to assure all members in this chamber that we are committed to resolving this situation as quickly and as respectfully as we can.

The statements made by the community earlier today have merit. It is a reminder that we have a long way to go when it comes to reconciliation; that is why the government remains committed to doing that work in partnership based on respect for the community.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, international students who have been defrauded by crooked consultants should not be punished with deportation and inadmissibility based on misrepresentation. They have invested everything they have for a better future. They work hard and study hard, and they do so under very difficult conditions. They are under enormous strain, and their lives are in limbo. The Liberals can eliminate this uncertainty by allowing them to stay in Canada and build the lives they dream of.

Will the minister do the right thing, the compassionate thing, and grant these international students a pathway to permanent residency?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with much of my hon. colleague's question. I am glad to share that we have been working very hard, as we discussed in a recent meeting just a little more than a week ago.

We are working to develop a process to ensure that those innocent students, who are the victims of fraud, will have an opportunity to remain in Canada. However, to the extent that people committed fraud, or were complicit in a fraudulent scheme, they will bear the consequences of choosing not to follow Canada's laws. I am hearing stories of students who are dealing with serious mental health concerns because of the uncertainty they are struggling with. We will put a process in place to allow them to prove that they were taken advantage of and provide an appropriate remedy for them.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, as Ukrainians continued to fight valiantly for their freedom and for ours, our Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister made another visit to Kyiv to meet with President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Shmyhal.

For more than a year, Canada has remained a steadfast ally of Ukraine, with significant military aid, financial aid, sanctions on Russia, supports for Ukrainians fleeing the war and much more.

Oral Questions

In light of the Prime Minister's visit, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs share with Canadians some of the latest measures the Government of Canada has announced to support the Ukrainian people and hold Russia to account?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was a great question. While in Kyiv, the Prime Minister announced \$500 million more in military support, including that Canada will help train Ukrainian fighter pilots. We also announced the seizure of the Russian Antonov plane stranded at Pearson Airport. This is the first physical asset. With our new seizure powers, we will be the first of our allies to make sure that we are using these powers into the future.

We know that we have to do more, and we will do more. There will be nowhere to hide for those who profit from the illegal—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister said that she would end her inflationary deficits and balance the budget by 2027. Just months after that, she admitted that she will run deficits forever and balance the budget in the year never.

Eight years of massive Liberal deficits have given Canadians the highest bank interest rate hikes seen in the last 20 years. Now, the International Monetary Fund is reporting that Canada is at the highest risk of a mortgage default crisis.

When will the finance minister end her inflationary spending and give us a date for when she will balance the budget so that Canadians will not lose their homes?

• (1450)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative finance critic is a serious adult. That is why it has been so embarrassing, frankly, to watch juvenile staffers from the Conservative leader's office bully him and other Conservative members of the finance committee, forcing them to play juvenile partisan games and filibuster on legislation that will provide Canadians with the supports they need right now. It was embarrassing to watch, and it shows how irresponsible these Conservatives are.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is embarrassing is that, while Canadians are suffering, the finance minister dumped a \$60-billion jerry can of fuel on the inflationary fire she started.

Liberals do not understand that reducing the deficits would reduce inflation, bank interest rates and the risk of a mortgage default crisis. The interest rate hikes will cost an extra \$1,300 a month for Canadians, who are already struggling to pay mortgages that cost \$3,000 on average.

If the Liberals do not have any plans to reduce this deficit, will they at least get out of the way, so Conservatives can save Canadians' homes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really astonishing that the Conservatives would have the temerity to talk about fires burning in Canada.

The fact is that fires have been burning in Canada. They have been burning in Quebec, Atlantic Canada and the finance critic's home province of Alberta.

What have Conservatives done in response? They have fought a price on pollution, which is the best way to fight climate change. They have fought our budget, which has a clear plan to fight climate change and create great jobs for Canadians. It is appalling—

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has run massive deficits for eight long years, and, as predicted, inflation has soared, leading to unaffordable mortgage rates for households across this country.

Canadians have the highest household debt in the G7, and today, we now have the highest risk of mortgage default in the OECD nations. The solution is obvious: It is to end deficit spending, stop inflation and help Canadian families.

Will the Prime Minister and his government commit to ending his inflationary spending to prevent a fiscal crisis?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to be absolutely clear, in the hon. member's question, when he refers to deficit spending, he is largely referring to the supports that kept families fed during the pandemic.

The programs that we put forward helped keep a roof over the heads of kids in my community. They helped small businesses keep the lights on and the doors open.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Sean Fraser: They can jeer during my response as they may, but Conservatives know this is true. In fact, they knew that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. minister.

We were doing so well. I am not sure what is going on, but the volume seems to be going up. So that the member for New Brunswick Southwest can hear the answer to his question, I am going to ask the Minister of Immigration to go ahead.

The hon. Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, the deficit spending Conservatives are talking about included the pandemic supports that made sure that families in my community could keep food on the table and a roof over their kids' heads. Those supports helped small businesses keep the lights on and the doors open. Now they are blaming the Canadians who availed themselves of those pandemic benefits for the deficit spending they now are attributing inflation to.

The reality is they do not support this spending now, and, at the time, their leader held a press conference in which he said that, as a Conservative, he did not support those big, fat government programs. However, I support them, because they kept my neighbours fed when they needed it.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absurd. During the pandemic, \$200 billion was spent that had nothing to do with helping Canadians. The current government just added another \$60 billion to its inflationary bonfire, and it now has deficits for as far as the eye can see.

Canadians are struggling to put food on their tables. They are cancelling their summer vacations because of the Liberal-caused inflation. On our side of the House, we are willing to work all summer to fix and pass a budget that will bring down inflation, bring down deficits, and make home ownership and hard work affordable again.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his summer vacation? Will he get to work, or are surfboard—

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is saying is absolutely false. What we did during the pandemic was support Canadians. When he is talking about that additional funding, he is talking about things like child care, \$30 billion that is helping Canadians access child care.

We do not know how the Conservatives are going to vote on it, but what we heard during their speeches in the House is that they are pretty against affordable child care. They are pretty against Canadians having access to thousands of dollars in their pockets at the end of the year, that is helping them pay for the high cost of groceries, that is helping them with their mortgages, that is helping them take, maybe, a family vacation.

Let us see what they do. Let us see if they truly care about—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when our farmers used the emergency account during the pandemic, they could not have anticipated all the other misfortunes that would follow.

The war in Ukraine has driven up input costs. The inflation rate is more than three times higher than in other industries. There is \$8

of debt for every dollar of income, and the policy rate continues to rise. I could go on all day. As a result, one in 10 farm businesses are worried about having to shut down within a year.

Will the Minister of Finance allow farmers to defer their emergency account repayments without them losing the subsidy portion?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

We are working with the agricultural sector to ensure that farms can make a fair and equitable profit. We have increased the advance payment interest-free limit from \$250,000 to \$350,000. This will help our farm families across Quebec and Canada.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question about the emergency account was for the Minister of Finance. It would be nice to get some answers. At a minimum, could repayment of the emergency account be extended?

Agriculture has been hit harder than other sectors, especially the next generation of farmers. That is why other groups are taking action. Other governments are also taking action. The Americans have invested \$22 billion in agriculture. Quebec has provided emergency assistance through Financière agricole. It is now Ottawa's turn to collaborate. Current programs do not provide assistance for this exceptional crisis, which requires exceptional assistance.

When will the government finally support our farmers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the daughter of a farmer, I understand very well the importance of our agricultural sector.

I agree with my hon. colleague that our farmers are exceptional. They are very important for our communities and our economy. That is why our government was there during the pandemic. Yes, there was significant spending, but it was essential to support our farmers.

We will continue to support them.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that the government's record deficit spending has shot inflation through the roof. As a result, Canadians are spending more on food than ever before. This is particularly marked in rural communities like my own, where higher shipping costs add on to the cost of the end product and will only continue to get more expensive with this government's carbon taxes.

Will the government finally acknowledge the damage its lavish and out-of-control spending is having on the kitchen table?

Canadians are needing help. It needs to end its inflation-inducing monetary policy. Will it do it?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadians will not receive any help from the Conservatives, because their plan is austerity, austerity, austerity. In opposition, our government is committed to supporting Canadians.

In fact, inflation is a global phenomenon. A recent report noted that Canada actually has the second-lowest food inflation in the world. It does not mean that Canadians are not hurting. That is why we brought forward the grocery rebate that, as of July 5, 11 million Canadians are going to receive.

That is in addition to the Canada child benefit, early learning and child care, the rental benefit. We have been there for Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the federal government, struggling Canadians cannot simply print more money. They need to manage their budgets and spend within their means. They cannot impose a series of punitive taxes on their neighbours to balance their books. They need to manage their finances with the added hurdle of reduced spending power.

When will the government stop spending, reduce inflation and lower massive grocery bills?

• (1500)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in this House, I think we can all agree that affordability is an important issue. That is why there is a rebate with respect to the price on pollution to ensure that we are actually addressing this in a thoughtful way. As we are seeing the evacuations of people across this country, it is time that the Conservatives start to think about climate change. I do not know whether they do not believe it is real or they just do not think it is important, but Canadians certainly do.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this government, many families across the country are struggling to put food on the table. Now, mortgages, car payments and credit card interest are rising again. The cost of everything is going up under this Prime Minister. The Liberal government's deficits are to blame, but the government refuses to take responsibility. Food prices will continue to skyrocket if no one takes action.

When will the Prime Minister wake up and propose a real solution to this crisis?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that more and more people who are watching at home are totally mystified at the fact that the Conservatives have nothing to say about the climate crisis. Over the past year, we have experienced the worst tropical storm on the east coast of Canada and the most severe flooding in the history of our country, and now we are dealing with the largest wildfires in Canadian history.

What do the Conservatives say about climate change? They say that they do not believe in it or that we can make it all go away with a wave of some magic wand.

That is not how it works. On this side of the House, we believe that the climate crisis is real and we are working—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the 31st National Public Service Week, which reminds us of the valuable work that our federal public servants across the country do year after year. Can the President of the Treasury Board tell us more about the important role that the public service plays in Canada?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for his important question and especially for the hard work that he does for the community.

As President of the Treasury Board, every day, I see the dedication of federal public servants, who ensure that the government acts in the interests of Canadians. I thank them for that. Canadians are well served by our professional, committed and hard-working public servants, whether they are issuing benefit payments to seniors or protecting our borders. I hope that everyone will have a wonderful National Public Service Week.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious problem. Massive Liberal deficits are fuelling inflation. Inflation causes interest rates to go up. Higher interest rates lead to higher mortgage payments and more mortgage defaults. To stop mortgage defaults, we need to balance the budget, end the big deficits and reduce interest rates.

Will the Prime Minister end his inflationary deficit spending so Canadians can afford to live?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is time for Conservatives to be honest and transparent with Canadians. They have to tell us what they would cut.

Would they cut the \$200 billion that we are investing in health care? I sure hope not because Canadians need a health care system they can rely on.

Would they cut the \$30 billion we are investing in early learning and child care? I sure hope not because that is making a real difference for families across our country and helping our labour market to boot.

Would they cut dental care? Would they cut removing interest on federal student loans?

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is certainly not a very serious answer.

The bank governor is working to rein in inflation by increasing interest rates. At the same time, the Prime Minister's massive \$60-billion spending spree is fuelling inflation and has caused yet another interest rate hike just last week. While the Liberals are making the Bank of Canada's job even harder, it is ordinary Canadians who will be dropping their keys off at their banks and saying goodbye to their homes.

Will the Prime Minister put an end to his inflationary deficit spending and let Canadians keep their homes?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, I reminded the Conservatives that their leader, at the beginning of the pandemic, held a press conference where he decried our pandemic benefits as big, fat government programs. If members watch that video on the Internet, the member who posed the question is standing behind him.

The reality is the spending we put in place has supported people through the pandemic. The Conservative solution to the cause of inflation is to spend less money on supporting the households that need it.

We are going to continue to be there for Canadians to support health care, to help protect our environment and to make life more affordable. It is a shame the Conservatives will not join us.

• (1505)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister is running deficits like there is no tomorrow and that has driven up inflation.

Inflation prompted the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates nine times over the past year. Homeowners who are making mortgage payments know all about it. The International Monetary Fund has warned Canada: The country is at risk of defaulting on its payments. That is where we are. It is very unfortunate, but that is how it is.

Will the Prime Minister stop with his inflationary deficits?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago, the Minister of Finance was talking about a juvenile attitude on the part of the official opposition leader when he refused to work on passing the budget last week.

Oral Questions

The good news is that our colleague has a juvenile population as well. In his riding, he has roughly 12,000 children who receive the Canada child benefit, which will go up in a few weeks, and nearly 600 children who have been receiving the Canada dental benefit since December.

Does he think that the children in his riding do not deserve help from the Canadian government?

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and continues, sadly, to kill 48,000 Canadians each year.

Marginalized and underserved populations, such as people with low income, racialized people, indigenous people or those with a mental health diagnosis, experience even higher rates of tobacco use and greater tobacco-related health gaps.

Could the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions update this House on how our government is using every evidence-based tool at our disposal to help protect the health of Canadians, especially young people?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her tireless advocacy.

It is essential that we take bold action to help people stop smoking, and to help young people live healthy, tobacco-free lives. Canada has recently made cigarette health warnings unavoidable by becoming the first country in the world to require they be printed directly on individual cigarettes.

This, along with updated and periodic rotation of health messages on tobacco packaging, will ensure that we reach our target of less than 5% by 2035.

* * *

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, families have been struggling to keep up with growing food prices, forcing kids to turn to school lunch programs.

The Breakfast Club of Canada now provides breakfast for more than 600,000 students. Two years ago it was just over 250,000. Canadian nutrition programs cannot keep up with the demand or the cost to feed students as grocery prices soar.

Business of Supply

The Liberal government needs to stop dragging its heels. Will the Liberals make sure our students are fed by immediately setting up the national school food program?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with my hon. colleague on this important issue.

We know that because of high food prices right now many school food programs are struggling to keep up with the cost. We know how essential school food programs are to children right across this country. That is why, over the past year, I have been engaging in consultations with schools, school food providers, stakeholders and children, to gain input into how we could bring forward a national school food policy.

I look forward to sharing the results of those consultation with this chamber shortly.

* * *

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the climate crisis demands of us action that is twofold, first, to end our addiction to fossil fuels so we could avoid the worst and, second, to prepare for what we can no longer avoid.

We had an excellent non-partisan briefing from the Minister of Emergency Preparedness for all parties. Today, as I read that California's insurers are no longer prepared to insure for fires and floods, we know what is coming. Yet, we are not prepared.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Can we prepare, as we would in wartime, the equivalent of a war cabinet of all parties together, taking this seriously, to protect Canadians?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we see an increase in the severity and frequency of weather-related disasters, we recognize the importance of ensuring that Canadians have access to affordable and accessible home insurance.

It is why we have been working with the insurance industry, first of all, to develop a national flood insurance plan, but also to ensure that Canadians have all of the tools that they need to manage risks, including home insurance.

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion:

That the House: (a) stand in solidarity with and express its support for all those affected by the current forest fires; (b) acknowledge that climate change is having a direct impact on people's quality of life, and that it is exacerbating the frequency and scale of extreme weather and climate events, such as floods, tornadoes, forest fires and heat waves; (c) recognize that the federal government must do more to combat climate change, prevent its impacts and support communities affected by natural disasters; (d) call on the federal government to take concrete action in the fight against cli-

mate change, which is at risk of becoming increasingly expensive for both the public and the environment.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move that the House call for the immediate return of vile serial killer and rapist Paul Bernardo to a maximum security prison, that all court-ordered dangerous offenders and mass murderers be permanently assigned a maximum security classification, that the least-restrictive-environment standard be repealed and that the language of necessary restrictions that the previous Conservative government put in place be restored.

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

An hon. member: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CLIMATE CHANGE

The House resumed from June 8 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:12 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Be-
loeil—Chambly relating to the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

Call in the members.

● (1540)

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

(*Division No. 368*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan

Business of Supply

Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garon
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Rayes
Rodriguez

Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers

Romanado
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Sahota
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 210

NAYS**Members**

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Berthold
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
d'Entremont
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrerri
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Soroka
Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bezan
Bragdon
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmieć
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lobb
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley

Government Orders

Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 115

Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lobb
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seebach
Shipley
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrice
Motz
Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 114

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Liepert
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Sajjan— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

The House resumed from June 8 consideration of Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the report stage of Bill C-35.

[*Translation*]

The question is on Motion No. 1.

● (1550)

[*English*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negatived on the following division:)

(*Division No. 369*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultair
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Berthold
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
d'Entremont
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Gallant
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmiec
Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bezan
Bragdon
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Casey
Chagger
Champagne
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Chabot
Chahal
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin

Fragiskatos
 Freeland
 Gaheer
 Garrison
 Gazan
 Gill
 Green
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Idlout
 Jaczek
 Joly
 Jowhari
 Kayabaga
 Khalid
 Koutrakis
 Kwan
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Larouche
 Lauzon
 Lebouthillier
 Lightbound
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacGregor
 Maloney
 Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKay
 McLeod
 Mendès
 Miao
 Miller
 Murray
 Ng
 Normandin
 Oliphant
 Paupé
 Petitpas Taylor
 Powlowski
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Sahota
 Samson
 Savard-Tremblay
 Schiefke
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Sudds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Van Bynen
 Vandal
 Vignola
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Zahid
 Zuberi— 211

Fraser
 Fry
 Garon
 Gaudreau
 Gerretsen
 Gould
 Guilbeault
 Hanley
 Hepfner
 Housefather
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Ien
 Johns
 Jones
 Julian
 Kelloway
 Khera
 Kusmierczyk
 Lalonde
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lattanzio
 LeBlanc
 Lemire
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Martinez Ferrada
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McPherson
 Mendicino
 Michaud
 Morrissey
 Naqvi
 Noormohamed
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Perron
 Plamondon
 Rayes
 Rodriguez
 Romanado
 Saks
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Singh
 Sousa
 St-Onge
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thompson
 Trudel
 Valdez
 van Koeverden
 Vandenbeld
 Villemure
 Weiler
 Yip
 Zarrillo

Government Orders

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
 Liepert
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Sajjan— 4

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated.

• (1555)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: 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. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote, please.

• (1605)

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

(*Division No. 370*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albas
 Alghabra
 Allison
 Anandasangaree
 Arnold
 Arya
 Atwin
 Badawey
 Baker
 Barlow
 Barron
 Battiste
 Beech
 Bennett
 Bérubé
 Bibeau
 Blaikie
 Blanchet
 Blaney
 Blois
 Boulerville
 Bragdon
 Brière
 Brunelle-Duceppe
 Cannings
 Carrie
 Chabot
 Chahal
 Champagne
 Chatel
 Chiang
 Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
 Cooper
 Coteau
 Dalton
 Dancho
 Davies
 Deltell
 Aitchison
 Aldag
 Ali
 Anand
 Angus
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Bachrach
 Bains
 Baldinelli
 Barrett
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beaulieu
 Bendayan
 Berthold
 Bezan
 Bittle
 Blair
 Blanchette-Joncas
 Block
 Boissonnault
 Bradford
 Brassard
 Brock
 Calkins
 Caputo
 Casey
 Chagger
 Chambers
 Champoux
 Chen
 Chong
 Collins (Victoria)
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 Damoff
 Davidson
 DeBellefeuille
 d'Entremont

Government Orders

Desbiens	Desilets	Nater	Ng
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Noormohamed	Normandin
Dhillon	Diab	O'Connell	Oliphant
Doherty	Dong	O'Regan	O'Toole
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Drouin	Dubourg	Pauzé	Perkins
Duclos	Duguid	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Plamondon	Poilievre
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Powlowski	Rayes
Ellis	Epp	Redekopp	Reid
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Rempel Garner	Richards
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Roberts	Robillard
Fergus	Ferreri	Rodriguez	Rogers
Fillmore	Findlay	Romanado	Rood
Fisher	Fonseca	Ruff	Sahota
Fortier	Fortin	Saks	Samson
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Freeland	Fry	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Gaheer	Gallant	Schiefke	Schmale
Garon	Garrison	Seeback	Serré
Gaudreau	Gazan	Sgro	Shanahan
Généreux	Gerretsen	Sheehan	Shields
Gill	Gladu	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Godin	Goodridge	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Gould	Gourde	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Gray	Guilbeault	Small	Sorbara
Hajdu	Hallan	Soroka	Sousa
Hanley	Hardie	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hepfner	Hoback	Stewart	St-Onge
Holland	Housefather	Strahl	Stubbs
Hughes	Hussen	Sudds	Tassi
Hutchings	Iacono	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Idlout	Ien	Therrien	Thomas
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Thompson	Tochor
Johns	Joly	Tolmie	Trudeau
Jones	Jowhari	Trudel	Turnbull
Julian	Kayabaga	Uppal	Valdez
Kelloway	Kelly	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Khalid	Khera	Van Popta	Vandal
Kitchen	Kmiec	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Koutrakis	Kram	Vidal	Vien
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Viersen	Vignola
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Villemure	Virani
Kwan	Lake	Vis	Vuong
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Wagantall	Warkentin
Lametti	Lamoureux	Waugh	Webber
Lantsman	Lapointe	Weiler	Wilkinson
Larouche	Lattanzio	Williams	Williamson
Lauzon	Lawrence	Yip	Zahid
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Lehoux	Lemire	Zuberi — 325	
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)		
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)		
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Maloney		
Martel	Martinez Ferrada		
Masse	Mathysen		
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)		
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)		
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty		
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)		
McLean	McLeod	Nil	
McPherson	Melillo		
Mendès	Mendicino		
Miao	Michaud		
Miller	Moore		
Morantz	Morrice	Bergeron	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Morrison	Morrissey	Liepert	Sajjan — 4
Motz	Murray		
Muys	Naqvi		

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-41.

• (1615)

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

(Division No. 371)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry

Government Orders

Gaheer	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lantsman	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Muys	Naqvi
Nater	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	O'Toole
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Paupé	Perkins
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Poilievre
Powlowski	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Ruff	Sahota
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seebach	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard

Routine Proceedings

Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Sousa
Ste-Marie
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Thériault
Thomas
Tochor
Trudeau
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zuberi — 299

Small
Soroka
Steinley
Stewart
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Thompson
Tolmie
Trudel
Uppal
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zimmer

NAYS

Members

Angus
Bachrach
Blaikie
Boulerice
Collins (Victoria)
Desjarlais
Gazan
Hughes
Johns
Kwan
Masse
McPherson
Zarrillo — 25

Ashton
Barron
Blaney
Cannings
Davies
Garrison
Green
Idlout
Julian
MacGregor
Mathysen
Singh

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Liepert

Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Sajjan — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1620)

[English]

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise for the last time in this chamber.

It has been the honour of a lifetime for me to serve Durham in Parliament, my hometowns of Bowmanville and Port Perry, Oshawa and dozens of small towns and hamlets. However, these are just names on signposts. The real honour has been working with and learning from Durham's people—the volunteers, the young

people, the civic leaders, the business leaders, indigenous leaders and first responders. It has been a joy to work with them.

I want to start my remarks by thanking my incredibly supportive and patient wife Rebecca. You are my true partner in all things, my rock and my biggest supporter. We dedicated our family to public service, and I think we made a real difference. Thank you; I love you.

I am also incredibly proud of our two children and will retain special memories of my time with them, like running in Stanley Park with Mollie and fishing for crabs on Vancouver Island with Jack. Thank you for serving Canada, and I love you too.

They are here today with my parents and one of my siblings. I want to thank all of my family for your love and support.

I want to thank my political family, my friends and family here in the Conservative caucus, my best friends from the military, from law and from the corporate world. You were with me throughout this journey. How many first-time candidates can say they had Wayne Gretzky show up at their first fundraiser? How many candidates have little platoons of veterans knocking on doors with them in every election? My success is due to you; you know who you are. Thank you very much.

I give a special thanks to my incredibly dedicated staff. The compassion from the number of people who have worked with me over the years in Durham has helped hundreds of families in our community. The incredibly bright women and men who came to work with me in Ottawa in my office as Minister of Veterans Affairs and as the leader of the official opposition often left good jobs in the private sector or elsewhere to take a chance and face immense challenge. You did this because you believed in me and in this country. Thank you. I will never forget your efforts.

I am also incredibly proud of the accomplishments we made together, both in government and in opposition. The last full sitting day of 2012 was when I first entered this chamber. Actually, it was not this chamber, but the real one up the way. I had the pleasure and honour of being escorted in as a by-election winner by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the late Jim Flaherty. Jim Flaherty was a political mentor to me and a colleague of my father's from Queen's Park, and to have my family in the audience that day as I was taking my seat for the first time is a memory I will never forget.

A few months later I had the honour to then work with my friend the hon. member for Abbotsford as his parliamentary secretary for trade, at a time when Canada had its most ambitious trade agenda in history, helping to finalize our free trade agreement with the European Union, travelling to Seoul, South Korea, to help drive home a final deal for our first free trade agreement with Asia, and while in Seoul taking the time to lay a wreath for the hundreds of Canadians who died helping that great country earn its freedom, as well as working with our friends, the United States of America and other countries in the Americas. What an exciting time for a brand new MP.

I will never forget the day I was sworn into cabinet. The memory of Mollie explaining to her three-year-old brother Jack that we were going to Rideau Hall, that it was kind of like the home of the Queen's friend in Canada, and then an hour later seeing Jack, knowing it was the Queen's friend, standing on the couch in his shoes is a memory Rebecca and I will always keep.

● (1625)

What an honour for a Canadian Armed Forces veteran to be able to expand mental health treatments for our veterans, to reduce wait times, to start to win trust back from a generation of Afghanistan war veterans who were already feeling forgotten.

I travelled to more Legions than anyone in Canada at that time, and I can tell the House that I was yelled at in more Legions than anyone in Canada at that time, but sometimes listening, tough talk and humility are ways to start to earn back trust.

From restoring the memory of World War I soldier and MP Sam Sharpe to expanding benefits for veterans and their families to forging friendships with the Equitas veterans who had been suing our government, I gave it my best in the time we had, and I truly believe that we made a real difference.

Getting the chance to serve as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, the party of Confederation, the party of the bill of rights, of leading the global fight against apartheid, of calling out, at an early time, the aggression of Vladimir Putin—this was the zenith of my time in politics. Given the pandemic, polarization and uncertain prospects at the time, I took that responsibility very seriously, and I do believe that we made a real difference.

[Translation]

I am proud of my team and the work we did for the country on the economy and on innovation, mental health and reconciliation, and I am proud of our values and our interests on the international scene. We have proposed intelligent policies for our future.

It was an honour for me, an anglophone member from Ontario, to honour the Quebec nation and participate in debates on its culture, language and identity. These debates are important to Quebec.

When I was leader, I often said that we must preserve the only francophone nation in North America. There are seven million francophones in Quebec and across the country living in an ocean of nearly 400 million people in North America. We must recognize that that is very special, and we must protect it. It is a patriotic project. It is a truly Canadian project.

[English]

I now end my time in this chamber as it began: as the member of Parliament for Durham, as a husband, as a father, as someone who believes deeply in Canada. This is why, in my final moments, in my last time in the chamber, I want to share my thoughts with my fellow parliamentarians.

Over a century ago, as war raged in Europe, Prime Minister Borden said this about a Canada coming together to meet the challenges of its age: "In the awful conditions which confront the world today, why should the political future of any individual or the polit-

ical fortunes of any party stand for one moment across the path of a great national purpose?"

War is again touching Europe and democracy is being strained in many parts of the world. With this in mind, all of us in this chamber must ask ourselves this question: What is our great national purpose at this critical moment in history?

There will be an important counteroffensive from Ukraine in the war this spring, and Canadian soldiers have helped train our friends in the Ukrainian army, but just last week we learned that Canadian soldiers in Latvia were forced to buy their own helmets.

This news came mere weeks after learning that the Prime Minister had told other world leaders that Canada had no intention of paying its fair share in NATO. The country that in Borden's time secured victory at Vimy Ridge now has its soldiers buying their own kit. The country that helped draft the NATO charter is now saying it is not willing to pay and support it.

● (1630)

This chamber should always ensure that the men and women have the equipment they need to do the job we ask them to do and that our country never wavers from its commitment to peace, security and living up to our word. That should be our national purpose.

There are indigenous youth in Canada who voted for the first time for people here in this chamber, yet some of these Canadians have never been able to drink the water in their communities. It is our job to ensure that every child has access to clean drinking water and a fair chance to succeed in life. That should be part of our national purpose.

It takes a decade to get a pipeline built to tidewater in this country, and two decades to get a mine into operation. Canada has been slowing down at a time when the world is asking us to speed up. Getting Canadian resources to global markets, both for our economy and for our environment, should be our shared national purpose.

There are many challenges facing Canada at this time, but there are also incredible opportunities waiting to be seized. However, that is not happening today. Instead of leading, instead of debating our national purpose in this chamber, too many of us are often chasing algorithms down a sinkhole of diversion and division. We are becoming elected officials who judge our self-worth by how many likes we get on social media, but not how many lives we change in the real world. Performance politics is fuelling polarization, virtue signalling is replacing discussion, and far too often we are just using this chamber to generate clips, not to start national debates.

Routine Proceedings

Social media did not build this great country, but it is starting to tear its democracy down. If we are not careful, there will soon be a generation of young voters who have never even heard a point of view different from their own. I fear that ignorance of the views of others will slowly transform into a dislike of others, and we can see that starting to happen.

Canada is a frontier country. We were built on the strength of the fur trade, a country where going hunting with our grandfather or an elder is as quintessentially Canadian as the backyard hockey rink, but today hunters are often demonized as a threat to society by politicians who know that this is not true. Whole rural swaths of our country are being held up as the problem, just to secure a few political points in the suburbs.

We are a country that sent our citizens far from our shores several times to fight for liberty alongside other countries in multilateral efforts. Canadian diplomats, including a future prime minister, helped draft the agreements built on that sacrifice to give us decades of peace and security, creating NATO, the United Nations and the Commonwealth, but today, too often, we are allowing conspiracy theories about the UN or the World Economic Forum to go unchallenged, or we attribute sinister motives to these organizations or people in a way that is simply not true or not fair. If we do this more, we are allowing others to define the debate for us and we risk allowing others to set the course for this country, because too many members on all sides of this chamber—and from time to time I have been guilty of it myself—are becoming followers of our followers when we should be leaders.

One member from the other side of the House told me that they no longer speak to their brother because of the divisive nature of the vaccine debates in the last election. Canadian families are, in some cases, finding it difficult to talk to each other about important issues. If we ever want to change this and begin to have respectful and serious discussions again, that change needs to start right here in Canada's House of Commons.

• (1635)

Why should the political future of any single member of the chamber or the electoral success of any one party stand in the way of our unity and of the prosperity we want to give to our children? Preserving these things and rising to meet the unique challenges facing Canada and the world today needs to be our national purpose.

As members of Parliament, we must always put the country first. We must lead and not just follow. We must strive to inspire and be careful not to incite. We must debate with insightful reason and not just tweet out of frustration. If we do not, decades in the future, Canadians will point to the current Parliament as the time when our national decline first began. However, I say to my colleagues that I do not think that will happen. I am an optimist, and I hope all members reflect on some of these things over the summer, because I believe that Canada's best days are actually ahead of us. I believe in this great country and its people, and I believe in each of my friends. It has been an honour to serve with them.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to thank my good friend from Durham. I believe there are a few other comments to be had.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak about a neighbour and long-time colleague, a friend who, while we disagree vociferously on many different issues, always had the interests of Durham and his country in his heart. I want to start by thanking the member for Durham for his service to Durham, to our community and to our country.

We do not often enough rise in our place to recognize the contribution that people who have different opinions from us make. When the member for Durham talks about the darkness that is casting a shadow over this world right now, it is remarkable that we live in a country where, when we say goodbye to one another and thank one another for our service, we can recognize that which is good in the other person. We can recognize that the debate we have, the differences we have and the ways we exchange those differences in this place, is what makes Canada so very special and is at the core of much of what the member talked about.

I had the opportunity to meet the member for Durham in a way that is most fitting: out giving back to the community. This was well before he was in elected office. He was giving to charity, active in his community, involved in the legion and involved in any important cause. He was somebody who, like John, his father before him, served our community admirably. I knew I could go to him and have a conversation about what mattered for our community and where we needed to put aside partisan differences. The member for Durham did not just serve the House or serve his community as a volunteer; he also served in the military, where he went as far as becoming a captain. He put his life on the line for our country, which is something we are profoundly grateful for.

He was also a lawyer and, as mentioned, a minister of the Crown, which is a remarkable accomplishment. It is one that I know he holds deep in his heart. I want to talk about that and what he did, partnering with Senator Roméo Dallaire, to raise awareness for Samuel Sharpe, not only with the memorial here, but also with the memorial in Uxbridge, really bringing attention to the issue of mental health in our armed services generally. That was something he took from his time serving in the military and attacked with great passion in his time as a cabinet minister. It is something I am deeply appreciative of, and it is a conversation we have to continue.

He also had a real sense of fun and was somebody who was up for the challenge of doing something different. I was just talking to the Minister of Families. When she was the minister of democratic institutions, there was an event most of us attend called Politics and the Pen. He was asked to dance publicly, which is something he had never done before. He was there doing a 1940s-style swing dance. He did it because he wanted to help out. I do not know that I am big enough to put myself on display like that and dance publicly, but he did, for something he cared about.

Routine Proceedings

Most of all, as members heard in the member for Durham's speech, he is first and foremost a father to Mollie and Jack, a husband to Rebecca, and a son to John, whom I know well so I mention him specifically. He is somebody who has really had family at the centre of his life. As somebody who knows deeply the sacrifice of public life, I want to say to the member's family that I thank them for their sacrifice so he could be shared in this place and so he could share his voice and his service. I cannot imagine the level of sacrifice needed and the level of scrutiny one goes through when one is the leader of a party. I do think we have to pay particular respect to those who would step forward into the space of leadership, particularly in this time. The member talked about the destructive power of social media and the nastiness that is going around. There is not a member of the House who is not subject to it. There is not one of us who has not had to look at something and have it strike us in our heart as being deeply cruel and mean. To have his family subjected to that as well is incredibly difficult.

He stood and fought for what he believed in. We have a democracy that we can thank for that. Perhaps, that is something we can be called to in this moment when we talk about former prime minister Robert Borden's call to a greater purpose.

• (1640)

That greater purpose is our democracy. It is the respect we show for one another, that, as we have debates and differences, we recognize that those differences are so small compared to the love we have for this country and the love we have for serving our community. In our words and in our differences of policy, the member for Durham and I had very vigorous debates and disagreements, but in one another's eyes we see a love for our community, a love for our country and a desire to serve.

I thank the member for Durham for his service to this place and to our country. I wish him every success in the days ahead.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in praise of a life of service to Canada. The member for Durham is a Canadian first, and a Canadian servant above all.

He started his adult life at military college. He went through law school and had a successful career in law, but then, instead of turning that success simply into personal riches for himself, he turned it into generosity towards others. He became known for his commitment to philanthropy and volunteer work, sitting on the board of True Patriot Love Foundation, where he raised countless dollars to help wounded veterans. This was something already close to his heart because, of course, he himself had served in the armed forces. It was in the forces that he learned about loyalty, discipline, planning and strategy, which are all qualities that he would put to successful use in his service toward others.

He would go on to follow in his father's footsteps, with his father, John, having been a very respected member of provincial Parliament, acting as a great mentor to his son. The member for Durham would present himself in a by-election, and I think we can all agree he was someone who was elected locally not on a party brand but on his personal notoriety around the community. People of places, streets, community halls and coffee shops he had frequented since childhood came out in droves to elect him to be their

servant in this place. After being elected, he would make great sacrifices, for which I not only thank him but also want to thank his wife, Rebecca; his daughter, Mollie; and his son, Jack, who had to spend weekends and often evenings without him as he was travelling on the road.

He was very quickly elevated to minister of the Crown. In fact, he was in cabinet with lightning speed as then prime minister Harper recognized his ability, his knowledge and his prior experience, making him minister of veterans affairs. This was a difficult time in that portfolio because Canada was grappling with a new generation of veterans. We had, prior to then, all known of the great veterans of the Second World War, of the Korean War and of peacekeeping and other missions throughout the latter half of the 20th century. However, for the first time in a very long time, we were dealing with the new challenges of young men and women who had served on the battlefield in an extremely dangerous and violent place, southern Afghanistan, and who were coming home with new problems with which we were not yet equipped to deal. The member's role was to transform and modernize programs so they could serve those veterans who had suffered so greatly and whose needs were so grand.

I remember the time when he was minister and he would be on the road, up until late at night and sitting in a legion hall, hearing the concerns and sometimes even the complaints of military veterans who were feeling strangled by a bureaucratic program or that they were not getting a prompt response to their concern, and to deal with others who were there to say thanks for the excellent service that the member had managed to turn around in his, at that time, very short time as the veterans affairs minister. I remember the stories of him being up late at night on those famous Facebook chat groups, which he described as the virtual legion hall. He would sit in front of his computer until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. Veterans who were up late as well could ping questions and comments, complaints and suggestions off him, and he would respond personally, not through staff, and in real time, sitting, I imagine, in his family living room in darkness but for that screen glowing on his face. In these moments, we saw a true public servant.

The member would go on to run two very impressive leadership campaigns, one of them successful and by which he became leader of, at that time, Her Majesty's loyal opposition and of the Conservative Party of Canada. He ran a spirited election campaign in very difficult circumstances, constrained by a pandemic that prevented the normal human interaction that typifies election campaigns. However, he came through it and remains a statesman in our party.

Routine Proceedings

• (1645)

He has loyally served the people in his community and the people of Canada. We know that wherever he goes, whatever chapter he decides to write in his life, one thing is for sure, and that is that it will be consistent with the life of service that has personified everything he has done to date. I look forward to watching that service and learning from his wisdom and experience.

On behalf of His Majesty's loyal opposition, all Conservatives, and I think I could say all Canadians, we thank the member for his incredible service. If I could be allowed, I will break the Standing Orders to say, "Thank you, Erin O'Toole." I thank the entire O'Toole family. The nation is deeply grateful, and we will always be in their debt.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to honour the member for Durham. I had the pleasure of getting to know him more personally during a mission to Washington in May 2022. We had a great time chatting over glasses of wine and beer during an embassy reception and later at a wonderful restaurant, the Old Ebbitt Grill, which is an institution in Washington. I highly recommend it to all members heading to Washington.

Before that, I only knew him politically. I must admit that he annoyed me during the 2021 election campaign because he came to visit my riding often. He wanted to win it, so he kept visiting to show support for his candidate. At one point, he promised \$7 million to create an agri-food research and development centre. I am sure members can imagine how well this idea went over in Saint-Hyacinthe. I did not feel much affection for the member for Durham when he proposed that. Democracy is democracy, of course.

I am forced to admit that the departure of the member for Durham clearly marks the end of an era. For him, it is the end of a decade as a member serving his constituents, first and foremost, and as minister of veterans affairs, the position he held under the former Harper government.

However, it is probably not the end of his public service or his service to people in general. I recently ran into him on the outside, and he told me what field he would be working in. I will no doubt have to work with him again. As he lives in Ottawa, we will be able to go back to our old habit of chatting over a beer. We may not be able to change the world that way, but we might make progress on some issues.

As everyone knows, he previously served in the armed forces. Let us be honest, the member seems both too young to retire and maybe too old to change his deep-rooted nature. People are saying that he has not left public service and never will. I am convinced that public service will catch up with him at some point, no matter what field he goes into.

His departure marks the end of a certain era for the Conservative Party. He was elected leader in 2020 ahead of a general election that would take place on September 20, 2021. I was listening to his speech earlier and that reminded me of another speech, his first in

the House as opposition leader in September 2020. As we say back home, it was long but good.

I remember that even though his vision for Canada's future was obviously incompatible with our vision for Quebec's future, and even though we disagreed with some of his public policies, I recognized those he was speaking to. He was talking to the people. We all remember the famous contract with Quebec he proposed during the 2021 campaign—he is giving me a thumbs-up. That famous contract did not get signed in the end, but not for a lack of understanding of the differences that characterize Quebecers nor for highlighting commonalities that could have proved promising. He even repeated that in his speech just now.

Although his choice of themes did not necessarily align with the Bloc Québécois's priorities, we must admit that on some issues, such as the need to stand up to China, he was ahead of many people here in the House. I congratulate the member for Durham for that.

Let us look back at his first speech as leader of the opposition in 2020. We realized right away that we were in for some really great debates and that the bar was being set pretty high, because we were dealing with such a fine political opponent.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then, perhaps even a torrent, the hon. member might say. Through it all, the member for Durham has remained unchanged, as he demonstrated just a few days ago in his speech on Chinese interference, which targeted him directly. He spoke eloquently and had the decency and the statesmanship that he was obviously proud to uphold.

Indeed, many Hill commentators have commended his speech and how he managed to rise above the fray. Some even called it the best plea for an independent public inquiry. Ultimately, what we will remember about this member's time in politics is that he was able to put his country before his party, that he was concerned about the future of all his fellow Canadians, and that he was as humble about the importance of the elected role as he was uncompromising when it came to protecting democracy. Simply put, he is a good and decent man.

• (1650)

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to thank the member for Durham for his years of service in the House of Commons. His party will miss him. For some people, it may take a little longer to miss him, but they will eventually miss him, too.

He will be missed in the House and certainly by his constituents, although we know he will not be too far away. We wish him all the best in his future challenges. I say to him thank you and congratulations.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Calgary Centre, Taxation.

• (1655)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to pay some words of tribute to the member of Parliament for Durham, who I first encountered when I was a newly minted MP. The member for Durham was his party's critic at the time for Bill C-7, which had to do with RCMP collective bargaining.

It was my first assignment on a bill. I sat in on the public safety committee, and I have to say that debating that bill with the member for Durham gave me an unrealistic expectation about debate in this place because it was principled, sophisticated and well executed. Even though we did not agree on all of the points of that bill and, in fact, disagreed on many of them, he carried out parliamentary debate in the style I thought was appropriate. Things got so downright collegial that it earned him a quote in one of my very first householders. It was not an authorized quote, but it was on the public record, so it was fair game. Now that he is leaving public life, I feel it is time to reciprocate, so I may have a few nice things to say.

That relationship further developed later in the 42nd Parliament when I had the honour of sitting in on a study of Canadian sovereignty in the north. We were able to travel to northern Canada together. That was a great trip in its own right and I learned a lot, but one of the things I really enjoyed about that trip was the opportunity to get to know the member for Durham better and to discuss some of the issues of the day in a less public forum. That was certainly a pleasure.

One of the lessons of that experience for me, and for the folks who looked at that report or the joint all-party press conference we did at the end of that study, was that it was a fine example of when parliamentarians, who come from different political movements with different ideas about where the country should head, roll up their sleeves and immerse themselves in the study of an important issue together, they can find ways to find common ground instead of just finding ways to wedge and divide. That report showed nicely how the priorities of maintaining Canada's sovereignty in the north and some of the military components of that can dovetail nicely, with an emphasis on investing in the people of the north and making sure that their needs are met. I was very proud of the work that we all did together to make that case to Parliament and, more widely, to Canadians.

As I say, one of the great contributions, which was demonstrated later when the member for Durham became leader of the Conservative Party, was his ability to state differences of opinion in a principled way and in a way that promoted the kind of debate that Canadians want from their politicians. They do not need to see us agree on everything all the time or to cover over important differences, but to explore them in ways that are far more constructive than we sometimes explore those differences in this place.

He talked earlier about the tendency toward division that we are witnessing in politics right now and the dangers of performance politics. I think we can say with hindsight that the member for Durham exhibited a refreshing lack of demagoguery in the way that he presented the Conservative position, and for that I am grateful,

Routine Proceedings

as I know many Canadians are. There are a lot of lessons for all of us to learn in how we carry ourselves in public debate.

I know that can be a difficult thing to do, not just for members themselves but especially their families, so I too want to add my voice to the chorus of thanks to Rebecca, Mollie and Jack, who supported their husband and father through this journey. I thank, on behalf of New Democrats, the member for Durham for his service in this place, and I offer my well wishes for what awaits him as he exits public life.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place to add the voice of the Green caucus in saying farewell to the hon. member for Durham, and he exemplifies the term an honourable member.

There are a lot of my colleagues in this place. If I were asked when I first met, for example, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, who just spoke, I cannot remember the first time we met. We have known each other forever. When was the first time? How would we know? The same thing applies to many friends around this place.

However, I remember, and the hon. member for Durham knows this, with crystal-clear clarity, the moment we met. It was right after his election in the 2012 by-election, and he won me over forever. He came up to me and said, "I want to say hi. I went to Dal law school too."

Those of us who went to Dalhousie law school hold that in common, although, not that I need to mention it, the member for Durham did graduate 20 years after me. Therefore, we were not classmates, although we would have had fun if we had been.

I also want to add my thanks to Rebecca, Mollie and Jack. They will probably remember a candid and fun moment we all had together at the Billy Bishop Airport. There is nothing like making friends across party lines and truly meaning it.

The hon. member for Durham has stood for what I think is the best about this place and the best of being Canadian, which is to be able to disagree without being disagreeable. He has conducted himself in this place with the gravitas that comes with being a party leader and with speaking across party lines, while, again, having differences but not descending into what he mentioned in his speech, and I appreciated it, which is the business of manipulating algorithms. No one could accuse the hon. member for Durham of being interested in rage farming.

Privilege

I will end here, because we have had a lot of speeches and I think the whole family is probably keen to get going and do something more fun. I hope the rest of their lives together will be more fun, that they have time to be together as family. I hope he can continue to contribute to our country and the life of it, as he has done in the military and as he has done in this place. The country and those of us appreciate the way in which he has conducted himself in politics. We will all be able to reflect that the time together as family, and the good times, is well deserved and well received.

God bless you and thank you.

• (1700)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we close, I will use a bit of the Speaker's prerogative as well.

Knowing the member for Durham and Rebecca for probably close to 20-some years now, I have been honoured to work with him and alongside him. I thank him for his service on behalf of the House of Commons. I hope he does not go too far; Canada still needs him. We do hope he comes to visit us on occasion and keeps us up to date on what is going on, because his friendship is always very important to many of us. This is for Mollie, Jack and Rebecca as well.

I thank you very much.

* * *

• (1705)

PRIVILEGE**ALLEGED INTIMIDATION OF MEMBER**

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ordinarily I often start my speeches with it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. However, I am not going to say that today, because this is not something I relish, frankly, having to rise on a question of privilege.

I am rising on a question of privilege concerning an effort by the Attorney General of Canada to retaliate against me, in my eyes, or in the lexicon of parliamentary privilege, to intimidate me for sharing and supporting my party's position that the toxic mix of overlapping conflicts of interest involving the former special rapporteur required the calling of a public inquiry and his dismissal, as was voted on by our House.

During Thursday afternoon's question period, my colleague, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, asked this question at 2:46 p.m.:

Mr. Speaker, it seems to be a comprehension issue for the minister. The question is about levels of conflict of interest with the government. We have the Prime Minister, who hired his friend, paying him \$1,500 a day. That friend then hired Liberals. He hired Frank Iacobucci, from the Trudeau Foundation. He hired Liberal insiders, such as Sheila Block, and now we have this rapporteur, who is taking the same communications advice as the member for Don Valley North is getting. It is conflict of interest after conflict of interest.

Fire the rapporteur. Call a public inquiry. Will the Liberals do it today?

I pause here to note that the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes asked another question but it was not related to Justice Iacobucci in any way.

I stood along with many of my colleagues to applaud that question, as I agreed that there should be a public inquiry called. It zeroed in on a genuine issue of foreign interference that our nation was currently dealing with. Of course, since Thursday things have changed now with Mr. Johnston's resignation.

I now return to the events of Thursday. The Attorney General sent me an email stamped at 2:49 p.m., and I note that my recollection is that the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes spoke at 2:46 p.m., so it was three minutes later. It said, "See you clapping on attacks on Frank Iacobucci's Integrity. I will let the community know." This was not a situation wherein the hon. Attorney General spoke to me privately after question period or sent me a note asking to chat. It was not a casual text or even a note signed with his initials or his first name. It was simply a signature block that said this was from the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. Typically, obviously in the House, I will speak with anybody at any time when appropriate.

The message might sound innocuous enough, but I worry and I do not take it that way. I reacted to a question put forward by one of my colleagues. The Attorney General said that he would take action by letting the community know. Therefore, the question I have is: What action and to whom? The community in question is presumably the legal community. We are obviously both from legal backgrounds. It does not matter whether he was referring to the legal community, the Italian community or my home community of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I have two law degrees. I was trained as a lawyer and I currently have a non-practising status with the Law Society of British Columbia. I served and was proud to serve the people of British Columbia as a former Crown prosecutor, and, like the Attorney General, I taught at a law school. I tried to teach students to weave ethics into their everyday decision-making as a lawyer. I believe that this is our role as lawyers. I know that the House of Commons is different and sometimes we will do things differently here, but it was something I really did strive to do, and that was the feedback I did receive from my students. I hope and presume that the Attorney General did the same when he taught students in his prior career.

What is this about? I take this to be about reputation. The Attorney General did not like that I clapped in response to a question. He said that he would let the community know, presumably the legal community.

• (1710)

I pause here to note that a lawyer's reputation is really everything. I may go back to the practice of law. I am still a non-practising member. I am less than 44 years old. There is a lot of time left in my career.

I have therefore concluded that the Attorney General communicated that my reputation would be damaged and that he would be the communicator of the information to do so.

This is problematic on two levels. First, there is an issue of parliamentary privilege, which I am raising now to you, Mr. Speaker. Second, in my view, the Attorney General got this wrong. The question did not question or impugn the reputation of Justice Iacobucci. I will be very clear. It called on him as a member of the Trudeau Foundation, which I understand to be a fact. I do not know Justice Iacobucci. I have never met Justice Iacobucci. I have always respected Justice Iacobucci.

We cannot forget the dynamic here. The Attorney General is a third-term parliamentarian. He has been a minister of the Crown for longer than I have been elected. He decides serious justice matters. He makes all federal judicial appointments. He is senior to me at the bar by nearly two decades. This is my first mandate. My party is not in government.

To be direct, this is the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and he is telling a non-governmental MP that he will take action to diminish another member's reputation in the community. Surely he is aware, or should be aware, that his word as Attorney General will have significant weight. That is a problem on many levels. This behaviour, I respectfully put forward to you, Mr. Speaker, is a misuse of his office as the country's top lawyer.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, states, at page 107:

In order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, Members should be able to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed.... Any form of intimidation of a Member with respect to the Member's actions during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.

This is a long-standing and well-established principle in the law of parliamentary privilege, tracing its roots back to an April 12, 1733 resolution in the British House of Commons:

That the assaulting, or insulting, or menacing any Member of this House in his coming to, or going from the House, or upon the account of his behaviour in Parliament, is a high infringement of the Privileges of this House, a most outrageous and dangerous violation of the rights of Parliament, and a high crime and misdemeanour.

Bosc and Gagnon observed, at page 109:

In order to find a prima facie breach of privilege, the Speaker must be satisfied that there is evidence to support the Member's claim that he or she has been impeded in the performance of his or her parliamentary functions and that the matter is directly related to a proceeding in Parliament.

Here are the words endorsed by the Speaker in a landmark ruling on May 8, 2023. He endorsed, as I understand it, the words of Speaker Lamoureux at page 6709 of Debates on September 19, 1973, who said:

I have no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation.

Meanwhile, on May 1, 1986, Speaker Bosley held, at page 12847 of Debates:

If an Hon. Member is impeded or obstructed in the performance of his or her parliamentary duties through threats, intimidation, bribery attempts or other improper behaviour, such a case would fall within the limits of parliamentary privilege.

Bosc and Gagnon explain at pages 81 and 82:

The House of Commons enjoys very wide latitude in maintaining its dignity and authority through the exercise of its contempt power. In other words, the House may consider any misconduct to be contempt and may deal with it accordingly....

Privilege

This area of parliamentary law is therefore extremely fluid and most valuable for the Commons to be able to meet novel situations.

Throughout the Commonwealth most procedural authorities hold that contempts, as opposed to privileges, cannot be enumerated or categorized.... The United Kingdom Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege attempted to provide a list of some types of contempt in its 1999 report....

assaulting, threatening, obstructing or intimidating a Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties....

assaulting, threatening or disadvantaging a Member, or a former Member, on account of the Member's conduct in Parliament....

• (1715)

While I hope to enjoy my electors' confidence for many years to come, I am also young enough that I could find myself practising law before I retire, or even by choice after retirement from the House or after any election that could come. That is the case for anybody here in this place. Remaining in good standing within the legal community is central to that potential path. An attack on my integrity impedes me as a parliamentarian, as a future practising lawyer and as a non-practising lawyer at this time.

It is my view that the House must take a firm stance against actions like this, and as the defender of the House's rights and privileges, it falls to you, Mr. Speaker, to signal that this kind of conduct among hon. members or by the hon. Attorney General will never be tolerated.

I do not relish this one bit. I never thought I would have to rise on a point of privilege. I certainly do not enjoy doing this, but this email struck me and I felt it was inappropriate.

If you agree with me, I am prepared to move an appropriate motion.

• (1720)

The Deputy Speaker: We have a couple comments on this.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, right offhand, I categorically deny what the member is trying to imply with his statement. However, I will take note of what the member has said and then come back to the House.

If we are going to continue to have this discussion, members should be better focused on what the privilege is.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no implication here. It is very clear what happened. I happened to be sitting beside the member when he received that text, in real time, from the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Privilege

He is a member of the Law Society of British Columbia, as am I, and we both had legal careers before being in this place and may after. As the member mentioned, there was a time when I was not re-elected to this place, in 2015, and returned to my profession. I then came back again in the subsequent 2019 election.

If a member of the law society or a member of the legal profession does not have their integrity and reputation, they have very little. These things, for a member of Parliament, are extremely important. They are also extremely important for a member of the legal profession and for members of their respective law societies.

In my case, I am a King's Counsel. I have also been a minister of the Crown. I understand the duties of a minister of the Crown, and I very much understand the duties of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, having been a parliamentary secretary of justice myself and understanding that the Attorney General of Canada is the most prominent position that a lawyer can hold in this country.

To uphold the integrity of that office must also be about treating other members of the House as honourable members. To even contemplate that the Attorney General of Canada would threaten the reputation of an hon. member of this place, knowing that it would not just reach this place but could reach into the outer profession and into his life following his time in this place and during his time in this place, is egregious.

The member opposite suggests that this is not what the message says. I have read it and have read the email in real time when sitting next to the member. My reaction was exactly his: The Attorney General of Canada is threatening to harm the reputation of a sitting member of the House because he stood in his place and clapped for a member of his caucus during question period.

This is a fettering of his privilege. This is a fettering of his ability to vote and express himself in this place as a member of Parliament. It is not implied. It is explicit and is beneath the dignity of the Attorney General of Canada. It should be sanctioned.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to add a few brief comments to my colleague's intervention, because it is very important to underscore the way this message was transmitted to my colleague.

We have all been in the House when people say things after emotions get the better of them, and we might chalk something like that up to a heat-of-the-moment exchange. However, what the Minister of Justice did was write a message intimating a threat to my colleague's reputation and his standing in the legal community and then sign his full signature block to it. In other words, it was not just a message from one colleague to another or from one opposing side to another. This was a message delivered by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. That was at the bottom of the email. The minister was exercising an action with his Attorney General hat on. That was him in his office as Attorney General, the highest legal office in the land, and as Minister of Justice.

That is the context in which it was sent. It was an official communication from the member, acting in his capacity as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. However, do not take my

word for it. We will table the email so the Chair can see what was said and understand the point we are making.

I want to make a comparison, if I could. Imagine a similar scenario. We have members of this House who, before they were elected, were in the armed forces. Some of them may have intentions to go back to the armed forces. We have a colleague who is a reservist. Imagine the Minister of National Defence writing, in the capacity of Minister of National Defence, a similar message to a member saying they saw their actions in QP or they noticed something and are going to make sure the rest of the member's fellow servicemen and servicewomen know what they just did, or saying that based on what was done, they are going to make sure the member's regiment understands what just happened, doing so as Minister of National Defence. It is egregious. That is the context in which we are raising this point.

I also want to make the point that in Canada, these threats of disciplinary action are increasingly becoming the fashionable way of imposing political uniformity and enforcing political viewpoints within the country's self-governing professions. Members of the Ontario bar have, over the past half-decade, been having a back-and-forth battle about whether to oblige lawyers to adopt statements of principles, whereby they must profess to hold certain beliefs, whether or not they actually do, the failure of which would lead to disciplinary hearings. We all know what is happening to well-known commentator Jordan Peterson, who is defending against disciplinary proceedings with the College of Psychologists of Ontario for, among other things, re-tweeting the words of the Leader of the Opposition and posting criticism of the Prime Minister's former principal secretary, Gerald Butts.

However, let us not mistake the power and gravity of an attorney general's efforts to stir up a disciplinary complaint from within the legal community. An attorney general is not just some random person, a random lawyer or even a random Liberal off the street who might muse about such things. Any lawyer who aspires to a judicial appointment to a superior court, the Federal Court, a court of appeal or even the Supreme Court of Canada must have the favourable recommendation of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to advance through the cabinet appointment process.

I just want to add a couple of points. Paragraph 15.14 of Erskine May, 25th edition, says:

To molest Members on account of their conduct in Parliament is also a contempt.... [T]hreatening a Member with the possibility of a trial at some future time for a question asked in the House...or proposing to visit a pecuniary loss on them on account of conduct in Parliament have all been considered contempts....

To attempt to intimidate a Member in their parliamentary conduct by threats is also a contempt, cognate to those mentioned above. Actions of this character which have been proceeded against include impugning the conduct of Members and threatening them with further exposure if they took part in debates... [and] summoning a Member to a disciplinary hearing of their trade union in consequence of a vote given in the House....

It is a well-established principle that witnesses appearing before parliamentary committees largely enjoy the same privileges as members. The jurisprudence concerning witnesses threatened for their participation at committees would also be relevant to consider in the circumstance. Indeed, in our own House, Mr. Speaker Fraser, on December 4, 1992, at page 14631 of the Debates, found a prima facie case of privilege after the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation threatened a witness with a lawsuit concerning the evidence she gave to a subcommittee.

Erskine May, 25th edition, meanwhile, explains at paragraph 15.21:

On the same principle, molestation of or threats against those who have previously given evidence before either House or a committee will be treated by the House concerned as a contempt.... Such actions have included...censure, punishment or dismissal by an employer.

● (1725)

In relation to that latter proposition, I would refer the Chair to paragraph 40 of the fifth report, in the 2003-04 session, of the U.K. House of Commons Committee of Privileges, which states:

We do not accept Mr Hewson's evidence that Ms Weleminsky's evidence to the Constitutional Affairs Committee was not 'the final straw'. Mr Hewson, with the active encouragement of the majority of his Board, sought to initiate the formal disciplinary process against Ms Weleminsky after the 17 June Board meeting as a result of the evidence she gave to the Constitutional Affairs Committee. We do not believe that a code of conduct or Board rules can override the rights and obligations of witnesses to select committees, a view in which we understand the Attorney General concurs. Mr Hewson's attempt to 'call Ms Weleminsky to account' for the evidence she gave was, in our view, a contempt of the House.

I would argue that the justice minister's intention is patently clear. Disciplinary proceedings will be encouraged to be brought against my colleague because he dared to speak out about or show support for the Conservative Party's position that the Liberal government's special rapporteur process was a monstrosity of compounding conflicts of interest.

The House must take a firm stance against egregious actions like this. As the defender of the House's rights and privileges, it falls to you, Mr. Speaker, to signal that this kind of conduct will never be tolerated here among hon. members.

I thank you very much for considering the opposition's points on this.

● (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank hon. members for bringing this issue forward. We will be reviewing it closely and getting back to the House as soon as possible on the findings of our review.

Also, as a quick reminder, when presenting a question of privilege, members should stick to the facts as much as possible to keep it as short as possible.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 32 petitions. These will be tabled in an electronic format.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration relating to Bill S-245, an act to amend the Citizenship Act (granting citizenship to certain Canadians). The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "National Housing Strategy".

I would like at this time to acknowledge and thank the clerk and the analysts of the committee for preparing the report and attached copies.

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

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities to table a dissenting report to the main report of the committee with respect to the national housing strategy.

We all know that when the national housing strategy was presented by the government some years ago, it was described as a transformational plan. Of course, we all know that despite that and the work of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, rents have doubled and mortgages have doubled. This has driven Canada to a high risk of mortgage defaults and has allowed the number of persons experiencing homelessness to grow significantly.

Conservative members also wish to highlight that the person ultimately responsible for these failures of the CMHC is the Minister of Housing, along with the government. He is responsible for the massive increase in the government fees the CMHC has just introduced on multi-unit residential housing. He is responsible for the complex paperwork that stalls so many applications. He is responsible for the crisis that is unfolding today.

Routine Proceedings

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented to the House on Monday, June 5, 2023, be concurred in.

It is a pleasure for me to rise to be able to speak to this important committee report, which deals with the House's ongoing condemnation of the Taliban for its horrific violence against the Afghan people. While I am moving this concurrence motion, I want to say that I am going to be sharing my time with the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I am very much looking forward to his comments, as he is someone who has served this country in uniform.

So many Canadians served in uniform in Afghanistan: 158 Canadians gave their lives, and more than 40,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces served. The blood, treasure and time Canada invested in Afghanistan has established a special bond and commitment that we have with that country. It is felt particularly deeply by those who served, but it is felt in some sense by all of us who have seen the sacrifices and known people who have participated in those sacrifices.

This House has rightly just passed Bill C-41, a bill that will enable development assistance to get into Afghanistan and create an authorization regime whereby that can happen. I think passing that bill was the right decision to create that framework whereby this development assistance can be delivered. However, at the same time, we should be clear in our denunciation of any normalization of the Taliban or any recognition of legitimacy of its control over Afghanistan, and we should be firm and clear in our commitment to the fact that the Afghan people deserve freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This is the birthright of all people. Canada has been particularly engaged with, and it has sacrificed for, the people of Afghanistan. We need to hold on to, and be steadfast in committing to, the principle that Afghans, in particular, deserve the protection of these fundamental rights. Therefore, we reject any kind of normalization or recognition of the Taliban, and we believe that it is important to engage with pro-democracy opposition groups, with the goal of restoring freedom, democracy and fundamental human rights to the people of Afghanistan.

The motion that Conservatives brought to the committee and that was unanimously adopted by the committee says:

That the committee report to the House that it firmly denounces the Taliban and rejects any recognition or legitimization of their control over Afghan territory. In particular, the committee denounces the Taliban system of gender discrimination, systemic violence targeting minority communities, reprisals against former members of the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces, attacks on freedom of the press, and other violations of fundamental human rights. The committee believes that the Taliban must remain a listed terrorist organization.

Parenthetically, I want to mention to the House that there are a number of cases of terrorist listings that the government has been behind on. We are at about the five-year anniversary of the House adopting my motion calling on the government to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. At the time, the government actually voted for that motion. That was five years ago; the government said it was being studied and considered, but it still has not listed the IRGC as a terrorist organization, in spite of the escalation in horrific violence from the Iranian regime.

Conservatives have also called for the listing of the Wagner Group as a terrorist organization. There was a unanimous consent motion in the House a number of months ago. It has not been five years, as it has been with the IRGC, but it has still been a number of months. The Wagner Group is involved in the genocidal invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime. It is also active in parts of Africa. It has been active in Syria, using horrifically violent tactics with complete disregard for civilian life and acting as an agent of the Putin regime's foreign policy.

We have called for the listing of the IRGC and the Wagner Group, and the House has called for the listing of the IRGC and the Wagner Group. These are two terrorist groups that have not been listed as terrorist entities under the Criminal Code. The Taliban is listed, and, through this motion, we are highlighting the importance of the Taliban remaining listed.

When we list an organization under the Criminal Code, it is not merely symbolic; of course, it is very significant. It is a way of most clearly denouncing these groups and shutting down any possibility for them to operate in Canada. It means that, when an organization is a terrorist group, it cannot recruit, be present or fundraise here. In the absence of a terrorist listing, groups have more room to manoeuvre. This is why we think it is important to shut down these groups in Canada.

• (1735)

I will return now to talk specifically about the Taliban and Afghanistan. After the September 11 attacks in the United States, there was a global coalition that came together recognizing that Afghanistan had become a haven from which terrorist attacks could be organized, as well as that the Afghan people were victims of horrific, ongoing violence.

We could detail those violations of human rights then and now. We have seen the horrific targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, such as Christians and the Shia Muslim community. The Hazara community has faced multiple ongoing genocides, as have the Sikh and Hindu communities in Afghanistan, which I and other members have advocated for. There has also been targeting of other minorities and all Afghans, particularly in terms of the situation of women in Afghanistan. I think it is quite correct to say that there is a system of “gender apartheid” in place in Afghanistan, and that is part of the system of human rights violations that we are seeing.

Routine Proceedings

The motion highlights the system of gender apartheid, as well as the violence against minorities, attacks on freedom of the press, the targeting of those who have been involved in Afghan national security and defence forces and those who were involved in supporting Canada. They are all victims of Taliban violence. Many of these groups were victims of Taliban violence during the initial period of Taliban control of Afghanistan, and it is with this in mind, as well as the threats to our own security, that Canada stepped up and joined our allies in fighting to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban and support the Afghan people in realizing their desire for freedom, democracy, human rights and rule of law. Many Canadians participated heroically in that effort.

I believe that the pullout from Afghanistan was a big mistake. It would have been better for western troops to be able to continue to play a supportive role as Afghans were heroically fighting the Taliban. The pullout was poorly managed and poorly executed, and it was really done in a way that gave the Taliban the greatest opportunity to be able to take over the country. The sad reality is that the Taliban has taken over Afghanistan. However, I think it is crucial for the House, for us here and for the Canadian people to remain engaged with events in Afghanistan. We must honour the sacrifices that have been made and the ongoing desire of the Afghan people to have change in their country.

There are many Afghan civil society groups, opposition groups, pro-democracy groups and diaspora groups in Canada that are working to envision and to plan for a brighter future for Afghanistan. The foreign affairs committee recently heard testimony from a representative of the National Resistance Front, who said that the Taliban rule in Afghanistan is clearly not working. It is causing all sorts of problems, including a humanitarian crisis, and, in his view, it is realistic to hope for a collapse of the Taliban administration that would open the door, again, for a new alternative Afghan government that aligns more with the hopes and values of the people of that country, which is what we would hope for here in Canada.

We should be continuing to engage, to support the opposition and to tighten sanctions against the Taliban oppressors of the Afghan people. It is not a lost cause; far from it. There are many reasons to hope that a brighter future is ahead, but Afghanistan's friends around the world must continue to be engaged in that hope. That means firmly holding the line against the Taliban, preserving its terrorist listing and looking for opportunity, if anything, to tighten the sanctions that apply to the Taliban. That is our position, and I hope this is a position that is shared by the House.

• (1740)

Finally, on immigration measures, Canada had and continues to have an obligation to support those who stood with Canada and fought with Canada, as well as the most vulnerable minority communities, and to support their ability to make application to come to Canada. Sadly, the government was far behind on making that happen. We had been calling for measures in the lead-up to the fall of Kabul. In fact, on the day Kabul fell, the Prime Minister should have been at his desk; instead, he was at the Governor General's, calling an election.

It is a shame that the government was not more focused on responding to events in Afghanistan. Instead, it was making calculations about its own political future. Conservatives believe that this whole House should stand with the people of Afghanistan and seek that brighter democratic future.

• (1745)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note that Bill C-41 passed in this place this afternoon. It is a very important piece of legislation ensuring that aid goes from Canadian sources and agencies to Afghanistan. I want to acknowledge the work of the member opposite on this file.

I also want to question something. Today, when we have the passage of Bill C-41, when I think we are all quite united in condemning the Taliban and all that it stands for, why are we taking valuable House resources away from Bill C-40, an act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to the miscarriage of justice? It is an act that has been sought by many victims, who have come forward to ask the justice system to respond to their needs.

Why are we spending so much time on something that we all agree on?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, as it relates to the government's management of its legislative calendar, I think that is more a question the member can direct to his House leader. The government can call any bills that it wants at any time during Government Orders.

I understand that the House is going to be sitting until midnight to consider Government Orders. However, we are now in the rubric of motions, where members are able to move motions that are important to them. Clearly, it is important to use that time to move concurrence on committee reports that are important and deserve consideration in the House.

The committee, with the exception of NDP members, agreed on the importance of Bill C-41. It also, in that context, felt it was important to send this message condemning the Taliban, condemning the ongoing violence and emphasizing the need to continue to list it as a terrorist organization.

Therefore, it is important that the House make these two statements: It should state the importance of allowing in humanitarian and other forms of assistance, and it should also recognize that we should not, in any way, legitimize the Taliban's position in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, as the critic for status of women, I am obviously looking at this file from that perspective. In that capacity, I have been often approached about this report and the situation in Afghanistan.

Routine Proceedings

The situation of women in Afghanistan remains very uncertain and extremely worrisome. I think we need to be extremely vigilant and monitor the situation on the ground very closely. There is humanitarian aid and ministerial authorization. In short, the international community is asking us to allow rights organizations to continue operating on the ground in Afghanistan so that they can monitor the situation of women closely and help advance their rights. Right now, it seems as though Afghanistan is back in the middle ages, where women are seen as being worth less than nothing. Their rights are seriously threatened. Personally, I have met people in my riding who are very worried about that.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I share the member's concerns about the situation of women in Afghanistan. I have appreciated having the opportunity to meet with Afghan women's organizations here in Canada and hear them share first-hand some of the things they are hearing. I salute the organizations in Canada that are working hard on behalf of women who are victims of gender apartheid.

We should be doing all we can to support democracy, women's rights and other groups working for the advancement of freedom. I think we also need to explore ways that we might be able to make educational resources available to women who still want to be able to access those resources in spite of the repression that exists. We may also explore other ways people can access those materials, while avoiding detection, in Afghanistan.

There is a lot of work that we need to do to support women in this situation. I want to encourage the House to remain seized with these events, to honour the commitments made in the past to Afghanistan and continue to be seized with these events going forward.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for providing me the opportunity today to do something that I have no problem doing, and that is bashing the Taliban. I have zero time for the Taliban regime. For those who may not be aware and might be listening today, I had the privilege to serve this country in uniform and spent 14 months of my life in Afghanistan.

I will offer what I have offered before. The Afghan people are no different from any other people around this world. They are no different from Canadians. They are people who just want to live in peace and have a chance to provide their families, relatives and friends with a better life. Unfortunately, under the Taliban, people, especially women and girls, do not have the same opportunity as those of us in the west and in Canada, in particular.

I want to share a bit history of Canada's involvement, my personal experiences and where we got things right and where we got things wrong. I honestly believe when Canada first got involved in Afghanistan shortly after 9/11, it was much needed. We needed to do something in a country that was harbouring terrorist organizations like al Qaeda that helped perpetrate the attack on 9/11. Canadians were, right from the get-go, in the Kandahar region, but, more importantly, there were Canadians involved in Kabul, the capital city, right from the beginning, trying to make fundamental changes

to the way that country worked, by a mentoring and strategic advisory team that was in Kabul.

The focus was on that training for quite some time, until about the 2006 time frame, when the Canadian Armed Forces were then deployed and the Liberal government of the day decided it was time for Canada to step up and engage in the fighting that was going on in the south and, in particular, in the Kandahar region. Our Canadian Armed Forces soldiers did themselves and this country proud with the incredible service and sacrifices they made.

Around the 2011 time frame, we transitioned from the south, back up to Kabul, and focused our efforts and the Canadian contribution as part of the NATO training mission to again try to build institutional capacity. This was all while we were still fighting the Taliban and trying to create a situation of long-term success for the country and the people of Afghanistan. Canada then decided in 2014 to withdraw our Canadian soldiers on the ground, with the exception of a minor detachment that was still supporting our embassy. Ultimately, what we saw happen was the fall of Kabul and Afghanistan back to the Taliban in 2021.

Before I get into the specifics of that, though, I want to highlight the incredible sacrifices 158 Canadian soldiers and seven Canadian civilians made in that country. Some of them I knew very well and personally. I lost six of my own soldiers while I was there, and it was the crappiest day of my life. The only day that was tougher was when we were communicating news to family members after the fact. Unfortunately, we are still losing Canadians to this day because of that mission, due to post-traumatic stress and suicide, which are things we should be doing our darnedest to prevent.

I want to explain a little about who the Taliban are and why I have so much, dare I say, hatred for them and why Canada needs to do more in opposing that regime. As I mentioned already, cattle and sheep get better treatment than the women and girls in Afghanistan.

I moved my combat team in 2007 up to Ghorak to escort an Afghan army company up there to reinforce an Afghan national police outpost. We got there about 24 hours too late because a young, seven- or eight-year-old boy and his father were beheaded and hanged 24 hours earlier because they dared to provide local food and bread to those Afghan police forces.

● (1750)

This is a Taliban regime and if girls try to go to school, they get acid thrown in their face in the streets. They do not respect human rights. This is why I have no problem speaking out against them. This is why the motion is so pertinent today.

The member for Shefford identified the issue of Afghanistan going backwards. I could not agree more. This is why this motion is pertinent to be brought forward and debated today in the House, and why I thank the committee for actually moving this motion. It does allow us to continue to bring attention to the horrific issues that are going on in Afghanistan.

What happened in 2021 is where, again, we saw the fall of Kabul. Instead of us, as a country, focusing all efforts to get those Afghans out, especially those Afghans who helped Canada, in a timely fashion, unfortunately, the government of the day was more focused on calling an election and campaigning, and was not focused on putting all our assets forward.

What really irritates me even more is the signals, the intelligence that was publicly available months and months ahead of what happened in August 2021. As soon as the U.S. government signalled they were going to withdraw their support, there were indications that this was likely going to happen. There are a lot of experts out there who predicted that maybe it was not going to happen as quickly as it did, however, the signs were there and we needed to do more, sooner.

I am frustrated even to this day. I have the privilege to work with members across all parties. We have been working since last October to get former Afghan women members of Parliament out of that country. We started that initiative last October. Unfortunately, we needed to go public in January of this year, because one of those women, a former MP, was killed, just because she represents everything that the Taliban detests. Again, this is why it is so important that we continue to do more.

I have had frank and honest conversations with the Minister of Immigration and I believe his heart is in the right place, but we are not doing enough. Canada is committed to bringing 40,000 Afghans to Canada. I think we are at around the 30,000 mark now. I am still critical that the efforts are in the wrong place, they are on Afghans who have already gotten out of Afghanistan. They are not focused on those who are still stuck in that country, and their situation is getting worse by the day.

We have former Afghans, who have helped Canada and who are here in Canada, who are literally protesting out in the streets this past week and in weeks past, because they cannot get their family out. The bureaucracy behind it drives me nuts.

I just want to say that Canada continues to need to do more. It cannot just be about keeping the Taliban listed as a terrorist organization. As the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who spoke before me, mentioned, we have a government that refuses to list some organizations as terrorist organizations. However, in the end, that is not enough.

We need to do more to put pressure on the Taliban regime to respect human rights, to respect women and girls. If we do not do that, things will continue to slide in the opposite direction.

I will conclude. I do have hope. I have hope that, thanks to the better parts of almost two decades of Afghan women and girls getting educated and seeing that they have a better hope for the future, one of them, one day, would be back in Afghanistan, leading that country. Maybe we will see a day in the not-too-distant future where Afghanistan is a democracy.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague gave an interesting overview of the issue. He talked

Routine Proceedings

about post-traumatic stress disorder, an issue I have been interested in since the early 2000s. He also talked about the Canadian government's commitment to Afghan interpreters.

In the summer of 2021, I discovered a large Afghan community in Shefford. Afghan men came to my office asking me to do something because their wives and daughters were being threatened. They feared for their sisters and aunts left behind in Afghanistan.

Women who practise certain professions related to image or appearance, such as cosmetics, are receiving outright death threats. Anything that contributes to portraying women as having greater freedom is condemned. All the previously won rights in Afghanistan are being rolled back.

I would like my colleague to comment on the Canadian government's commitment to these interpreters and the consequences for the women and girls left behind in Afghanistan.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I talked about that at length. That is the challenge. The Afghans do not treat women and girls to the same level as everybody else. They literally will put controls in place. We have seen in the last year alone, that they took away the right for elementary-school-aged girls to go to school and, as we just saw the last six months, all university education opportunities for women to be educated in the least.

The good news is that there are still women getting educated. I am well aware of this, through contacts at education, training and opposition and protests going on.

I have a final, quick comment. I do not know if it was the member or maybe the translator, but afghani is the currency in Afghanistan, not the people. It is always "Afghan". Use the term "Afghan", not "afghani".

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the member indicated, one of the issues that I certainly have a lot of problems with, in terms of the government's inaction, is Afghans who served Canada, who helped Canada to fulfill its missions, now have been left behind. Particularly, their family members and their loved ones have been left behind.

The government put in an arbitrary quota for the number of Afghans who can be brought to Canada, to safety.

Would the member support the NDP's call for the government to lift the cap?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, the short answer is: absolutely. I do not think it should be about numbers. I spoke about how we are focused on the wrong things. What I am scared of is that the government turns around, hits that cap, that quota of 40,000 Afghans, and then it shuts it off.

In the end, we need to get those Afghans who are at the greatest risk, those who helped Canada, who helped the west and who are still stuck in Afghanistan, out. We have got to be committed to that.

Routine Proceedings

As a nation, if we want to be able to leverage local populations, and to have interpreters, cultural workers, people who will help us when we deploy either our military, our diplomats or our non-government organizations around the globe, they need to trust that, by them stepping forward and helping us, when they are in trouble, we are going to be willing to help them.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that this motion was passed at the justice committee, right after we passed Bill C-41, and today we were able to pass that bill here in the House.

I wonder if the hon. member could talk about the importance of getting aid into Afghanistan, because not everybody can leave, and how important it is for that bill to get passed.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I totally agree. That is the challenge. To be frank, and I have said this in the House before, I was split on Bill C-41, because I know that some of the money is going to end up in the Taliban's hands. It is the nature of the beast. The world is a complicated place and that is why I actually have concerns with it. I know I disagree with some of my colleagues who have been working on these efforts behind the scenes, who do not think that the bill goes far enough in providing safeguards that the government has put in place.

Ultimately, we do need to do it. That is why I voted in support of it but we need to get that aid in. At the same time, it cannot be getting overly abused and misused. That is the challenge here. It is a messy situation. I really feel we could have done more sooner and I really wish the west had never pulled out completely, because, ultimately, this is an example of where we, as the west, failed. We need to do more in the future.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time this evening with the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park.

For those who might be tuning in, we are now on a concurrence motion that falls under Routine Proceedings in the House. Conservatives have chosen to put forward a motion that will basically consume about three hours' worth of the debate time today on this particular committee report.

Normally when these come forward, they are for reports that perhaps were contentious or perhaps had a lot of committee disagreement on how to proceed. Usually those end up on the floor of the House and consume about three hours' worth of debate. Then a question is put on the motion.

However, with this particular motion, I do not think that there will be much debate because my understanding is that everybody within the committee agreed to this motion. It is certainly something that seems extremely reasonable. It is something that has come out of the committee. In the interests of those who might be watching, it is the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, specifically on the study of the Taliban regime and human rights. As it is just one or two sentences, I will read the committee report to the House in its entirety. It reads:

That the committee report to the House that it firmly denounces the Taliban and rejects any recognition or legitimization of their control over Afghan territory. In

particular, the committee denounces the Taliban system of gender discrimination, systemic violence targeting minority communities, reprisals against former members of the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces, attacks on freedom of the press, and other violations of fundamental human rights. The committee believes that the Taliban must remain a listed terrorist organization.

As I indicated moments ago, my understanding is that the entire committee voted in favour of this. Now that this has been brought forward as a motion, I anticipate that all members of the House will likely be voting in favour of it. It is even more perplexing, I guess I could say, coming on the heels of the fact that we just voted on Bill C-41, and Bill C-41 is an act to specifically empower the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and the Minister of International Development to have the ability to allow funds to flow into Afghanistan, in particular those that are aimed at supporting humanitarian needs and the people who really need those funds.

That is something that passed in the House. We heard the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound say a few moments ago that he thought at times it might go too far, whereas others in the House thought that it did not go far enough. However, it sounds like it was a very collegial discussion and debate, and that a genuine consensus was formed at committee where they could adopt the report but still have this important caveat added to it so it came through as a report from a committee to the House.

I genuinely think that the democratic process was served very well in how this report got to the House. I am a little bit more concerned or confused that we have this motion to concur it in right now, given that we know there was very little disagreement over it, notwithstanding the fact that it is a very important issue. It is also an issue that is very well identified within the report that is being concurred in now.

As we heard a number of discussions about the supports going to the Afghan people, we did just pass Bill C-41. This report basically came to the House at the same time. Bill C-41 is a bill that:

amends the Criminal Code in order to create a regime under which the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness may authorize an eligible person to carry out, in a geographic area that is controlled by a terrorist group and for certain purposes, activities that otherwise would be prohibited under paragraph 83.03(b) of that Act (which becomes subsection 83.03(2)). It also makes consequential amendments

● (1805)

To put it in context, there is, for obvious good reasons, limits to where public money can flow. In particular, we have very stringent rules around it getting into the hands of those terrorist organizations. We certainly do not ever want to see that happen, but we also respect the fact that there are a number of organizations that are providing humanitarian needs in certain parts of the world that might need to have access to money to support the work they are doing, which genuinely drives that humanitarian effort. This is what Bill C-41 would do, and it was the genesis behind Bill C-41.

I am very pleased to see that the bill passed through the House earlier today. I think it gives us an opportunity to reflect, perhaps, but I hope this does not have to go on for the entire three hours. I will keep my comments short, but I genuinely do believe that we need to move forward with some of the other very important pieces of legislation that we have before the House today. Therefore, I hope that we can come to a conclusion on this particular concurrence motion relatively quickly so that we can move along.

● (1810)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the issue around Afghans and bringing them to safety is something that is top of mind for many of us. In fact, just outside of West Block, there is an individual whose family members are being left behind. He was someone who served Canada, but is still not able to bring his loved ones here.

The government put a cap on the number of Afghans, who had helped serve Canada to complete our missions. As a result, many people have not been able to bring their loved ones to safety. Would the member support the call that the government should lift that arbitrary cap that it put in place?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I heard this question being asked of my Conservative colleague before me.

I recognize that my NDP colleague refers to it as an “arbitrary cap”. However, I do not know that to be a fact. I do not believe that the government would just arbitrarily pick a number out of a hat. I imagine that there is some logic to it and some thought that went into it.

Having said that, I certainly support doing as much as we absolutely can in getting as many people out as we absolutely can. If there is the availability to do more than what we have been able to do at this point, then I would certainly support that. I do respect that the government makes decisions based on various reasons and, notwithstanding that I have not heard all of the reasons, I will prevent myself from commenting too much on exactly where I believe that number should be without having heard all of the arguments.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask the member a procedural question because I know that he is quite active in the legislative process.

We were supposed to debate Bill C-40, which is an important bill. We call it David and Joyce Milgaard's law as it is meant to review convictions for those who were wrongly convicted. I am wondering what kind of an impact a motion like this, at this late hour, would have on this bill.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I guess my biggest concern is what other tactics the Conservative have lined up. We know from last week that they said they would do whatever they could to prevent the budget from going through. Typically speaking, and I really hope this is not the case with such a sensitive and important issue like this, when the opposition puts forward a concurrence motion, it is done under the guise of trying to delay the House and the work that the House has to do.

I really hope that is not the case, and I take it at face value that it is not the reason the member for Sherwood Park—Fort

Saskatchewan brought it forward. However, knowing that we all agree with it, I also really hope that we can vote on it quickly and then get back to the regular business of the House.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, this motion deals with the listing of a terrorist organization, the Taliban, and highlights that, in the context of recognizing the need for special provisions to bring in humanitarian assistance, we also need to be firm in denouncing the Taliban. It is saying that, while we want to find ways of getting humanitarian assistance in, the Taliban needs to continue to be a listed terrorist organization.

At the same time, there are other organizations that the House has called on the government to list that it has not listed, and I am thinking particularly of the IRGC. It has been five years since the House voted to list the IRGC. The passage of Bill C-41 may, from the perspective of the government, remove a potential impediment. Is the government open to now moving forward with listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization, as it voted to do five years ago?

● (1815)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I read out the entire motion in my speech. I am not sure if the member heard it.

I am fully aware of what it is. It is a report that really only contains two sentences. I support it, and I understand that all committee members support it. I understand that this was one of the ways that Conservatives were able to come around to supporting the bill. That is important. The committee did its work and worked collaboratively together to find common ground where everybody could accept what the committee was doing and report it back.

The member wants me to comment on some hypotheticals he is proposing. I will wait for the government and those who are following up on this and who are responsible to make the various recommendations. We will then make our decisions at that point.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am here to speak on the concurrence report with respect to the Taliban.

This afternoon I was very pleased to see Bill C-41 pass in this House. It is a very important bill, one that many people have been working on for several months. Most notably, it is something that the justice committee has been working on for the last several weeks.

I believe Bill C-41 is a very important step toward ensuring that those in Afghanistan are supported through the many incredible aid agencies that work in the region, including organizations that have an international span as well as those that are regional. I think it is an important step toward supporting Afghanistan in this moment.

Routine Proceedings

With respect to the Taliban, I think it is very clear that it is an organization that offends many aspects of human rights. I can enumerate the various challenges the Taliban poses, not just to the people of Afghanistan but also to the world. It is an organization that is brutal in its force. It is one that has summarily killed so many people. It is one that limits access to education for women. It certainly limits dissent of any sort, and by no means is it democratic. For it to form government in Afghanistan is deeply troubling and deeply problematic.

The reasons that the Taliban are there today are historical. In part, it is because the west just left overnight. I think history will judge that as a failure of the western world. In many ways, we can go back in history and say that the region of Afghanistan is one that has been impacted by colonialism over the centuries. In the last 50 or 60 years, it has been impacted by the Cold War. In this particular case, the departure of the United States in August 2021 certainly enabled the Taliban to take hold of Afghanistan and cause it to regress back into an autocratic state that violates the human rights of its citizens.

Canada's response, it is fair to say, has been quite challenging, in part because of the complexity of the government structure in Afghanistan, which limited our ability to bring people out, but I am very pleased to see that the number of Afghans who have been resettled in Canada over time is in excess of 35,000 people. I think it is a remarkable number, given that this is probably the second-highest number of resettlements we have ever done, the first one being the Syrians right after we formed government in 2015.

I would say Canada is among the top countries in the world to resettle so many Afghans. Of course, there are good reasons for that. Apart from the presence of many family members here and the needs of those Afghans who were directly supporting the Government of Canada, there is a humanitarian reason that this type of resettlement is so critical. Resettling 35,000 within a period of under two years is a remarkable achievement. It may not seem fair to those who may be languishing in different parts of the world or those who are struggling to get out and rightfully should be able to come to Canada. It may seem frustrating that we took two years to do that.

I can give some examples. This morning, I had a call with my office. We do a weekly meeting at 9:00 a.m. every Monday to talk about casework. One of the cases approved today was a resettlement of a group of five Tamil refugees. They had been in India for the last 13 years. This application took 13 years to process. That is the nature of many cases in the resettlement process, although Canada is the number one resettlement country in the world for refugees.

● (1820)

Notwithstanding that, it was a 13-year process, and we can understand how difficult it is for people like that to resettle, especially those who are fleeing conflict. While the two-year mark may seem long, in the broader sense, it is important for Canada and our government to achieve. There is no doubt that we will achieve the 40,000 mark as set out by the Minister of Immigration, as he enumerated a number of different times. We have seen people arrive at our airports and planes full of Afghan refugees who have come

here and are settled. I have met many over the last two years and I have met family members of my friends who have come here as part of the resettlement. It is fair to say that Canada is doing its part and is doing its part disproportionate to our involvement in Afghanistan. It is the right thing to do, and I certainly support the government's efforts. I want to reiterate that I am deeply offended by the Taliban and all that it stands for.

Having said all of this, this is a concurrence motion that forms part of a report from the justice and human rights committee, one that is five lines and is quite simple. It basically denounces the Taliban regime, the Taliban administration and the Taliban itself. As such, we generally have unanimous consent from all parties on this language that was passed by committee. I certainly hope it does not take us a full four hours to have the debate here. I would suggest at this point that we go on to what was in the Order Paper and debate Bill C-40.

If I may, I will highlight why it is so important that Bill C-40 be debated and passed. It is a priority bill for the government. Over the past 30 years or so, it is an issue that has offended Canadians, which is that those who may be wrongfully convicted are spending time in jail and unfortunately have no recourse, or the recourse that is available through the process of ministerial relief is quite arduous. We know the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada has outlined the frustration he has faced during his tenure as minister in reviewing those cases.

It is important that we debate this bill and ensure the justice and fairness for which Canada is known and ought to be known. One of the reasons that people of all backgrounds come to Canada would be reiterated through the passage of this bill and would ensure that there is an outlet available for people to seek redress when they are wrongfully convicted. This is not about opening the doors—

● (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is rising on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The interpretation is not working.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it working?

It is working now. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, let me conclude by saying that it is quite important for this House to debate Bill C-40. I know the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada started the debate today. We would have preferred constructive debate from the Conservatives, which we saw at the outset. I know that both the Bloc and the NDP would also constructively contribute to this very important discussion. It is one I believe we have consensus on and can build on to better the bill as we move it forward. It is paramount that those who are languishing in prisons right now who may be wrongfully convicted have the possibility of a review process that would enable them to have an independent arbiter who can speak to the original case itself.

With that, with the disappointment I expressed for the delay, I want to reiterate my support for this motion and also ask that we move to other business at some point, as soon as possible.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his comments, but I do think this is an important debate. Of course, the House will be continuing debate until midnight, so the government will have an opportunity to bring forward Government Orders. This is a motion that is important to discuss.

I want to ask the member about testimony we heard from representatives of the National Resistance Front. There are various opposition groups and pro-democracy groups that are organizing right now and are looking for support. They are also hoping and expecting that the Taliban may collapse sooner than people expect.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could share the government's position on engaging with and supporting these various opposition groups.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that our government will always support democratic movements and will always support democracies around the world and those that are emerging as democracies.

I think Canada is known for this over the modern history of Canadian foreign diplomacy. It has been a paramount component of our foreign policy. I know that in many countries, as we speak, we are supporting the voices of dissent and the voices of democracy that continue to inspire us and that continue to inspire the world. We know that democracy is the way towards the future and we will continue to support those voices.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed working with my hon. colleague on a number of different things and I want to echo his concerns. I was prepared to debate Bill C-40 today. I think it is very important legislation and something that we really should be discussing at this point.

I also want to go back to some of the discussions the member brought forward with regard to Bill C-41. The member would know that I did not vote in support of this bill for the simple reason that I find that there are some real challenges to this legislation. As much as we were able to work together with members of his party and members of other parties to fix parts of this bill, there are still some really outstanding challenges within the bill that I think make it dif-

Government Orders

ficult for civil society organizations and non-profit organizations to work within. It is overly bureaucratic, of course, and has some big challenges on definitions.

One of my big concerns is around the potential for politicization, knowing that a future government could use this legislation to act punitively towards the charitable sector and the international development sector. Does the member have those same concerns? Would he like to comment on that?

● (1830)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her thoughtful comments.

I can assure the member that this bill has come forward after extensive consultation with and support from the sector that works in Afghanistan and internationally. I am very content that we are going in the right direction. Of course, with every bill that we pass, there are always questions. None is perfect. Bill C-41 is a good compromise that has the broad support of all the parties in this House.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1,446 to 1,457.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the motion is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 26—AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That:

(a) the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders, laid upon the table on June 8, 2023 (Sessional Paper No. 8525-441-30) be adopted and the said standing orders shall come into force on June 24, 2023, or upon the adoption of this order, whichever is later;

(b) the provisional changes made to Standing Orders 104, 108 and 114, adopted on December 2, 2021, shall remain in effect for the duration of the 44th Parliament;

(c) the order made on April 6, 2022, concerning witnesses appearing before any committee be rescinded as of the coming into force date of the said amendments to the Standing Orders; and

(d) the Clerk of the House be authorized to make necessary editorial and consequential alterations to the Standing Orders.

Government Orders

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to speak to this very important series of changes to the Standing Orders. Let me start by thanking members of the procedure and House affairs committee for their excellent work. The changes that are before the House are representative of the recommendations from the procedure and House affairs committee, and would amend our Standing Orders.

Maybe I will go back, if I could, to where this came from. March of 2020 was the beginning of the pandemic. It signalled the start of a period of time none of us could have imagined. At that moment in time, the House was confronted with an enormous challenge: the realization that we were going to have to do our work at a distance, remotely. I was the whip at that point in time, and I recall asking for the pandemic plan, to see what exactly was put in place as a provision if the House needed to operate at a distance. Of course, there was no plan. Like so many aspects of what we faced in the pandemic, it had to be invented.

I want to start my comments by thanking the House leaders and whips of the other parties, and in some cases there have been several House leaders and whips as they have changed roles. At the beginning of that process, they came together and found a way to get on the same page and imagine a new way of doing business. It was quite remarkable, because it was done unanimously. It was an arduous process, but we worked to put aside partisan differences and find a new way to do business.

That leads me to a second and equally important thank you, which is to all of those within the House administration who were responsible for helping us author these changes and for finding the technological means to ensure that Canada's Parliament could continue to do its work even as a pandemic ravaged our country, which meant that we were forced to stay at home.

Maybe I will talk at first about what has not—

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order from the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, on the matter of the consultation requirements, the House leader said that House leaders were consulted. He did not consult with our caucus in the drafting of this at all. He consulted with the NDP maybe—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is a point of debate. The government House leader does not have to indicate whom he consulted with.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to say that I am talking about March of 2020. At that moment in time, the whips and the House leaders for the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc all joined together to have a conversation about how we were going to do the business of this country. I thought that maybe for a moment we could put the partisan swords down and talk about what we did in the pandemic and how we came together in that dark moment, because I think it was a proud moment for Parliament. It was a moment when we set aside our differences, saw the challenge that was

in front of this country, understood the need to be able to do our work as Parliament, and envisioned a way of doing that business totally differently. I am surprised at the member opposite; because he is a long-standing member, he would remember that his party absolutely agreed at that point in time that we had to work at a distance, that it was impossible to be in the chamber, and that it was not safe, unfortunately, to be in public spaces.

What ensued thereafter was a debate; there were disagreements, and there continue to be some disagreements, about the use of these provisions, and I will speak to that. However, I think it is important that the work that was done was done on the basis of unanimity and in collaboration, to find a way through that dark hour. That it is why I started my comments by rooting them in this fact. That is why I thank all parties for the work they did in that difficult moment. I think it is an important starting point, and it is important for us to remember that the provisions we are talking about today were born from that process of co-operation.

I would like to speak about a couple of the points that may have prompted the member to rise on his point of order. There are a number of points that have been made in criticism of the hybrid system, so I am going to start with those. Then I am going to talk about many of the advantages I feel it does confer.

One of the arguments made is that members of Parliament will not show up, that we are going to see Ottawa be empty. Of course, we have had these provisions for almost three years, and at the height of the public health emergency, that was true; it was impossible for members of Parliament to show up, but thereafter, we have seen the House populated as it always has been. We recognize in this place that every member is honourable, and hon. members want to be here. They want to do the work of this country, and they have done it. The hybrid provisions allow for greater flexibility, which I will speak to, but the work of Parliament has continued. Committees have met. The House has met. The work of Parliament has been conducted, and it has been conducted very well, I might add.

[*Translation*]

There are a few issues around interpretation. It is essential that the debates are held here in both official languages, and the quality of interpretation is very important.

In committee, with or without the hybrid system, interpretation is necessary. For the witnesses who appear in committee, access to the interpretation service is essential. That is why the issue of interpretation is important with or without the hybrid system. Interpretation is now available remotely, outside the House, and it is very important that we continue to ensure the quality of interpretation and the health of the interpreters.

[English]

With respect to holding the government to account, over the last three years, I do not think we could have imagined a time that has been more challenged and a country that has been seeing the rise of very unfortunate trends in the social media space that are incredibly aggressive and, sadly, sometimes amplified by the opposition, particularly by the Conservatives. We have had very vigorous debate, and that debate is appropriate. The ability of the opposition parties has been in no way curtailed by the use of hybrid provisions. Accountability has been evident and in full force. Not much has changed with the use of the hybrid system, in terms of what was lost, but I think we need to take a moment to think about what was gained and what was changed for this place in the experience we have had over these last three years. I will start, frankly, with my own errors, in looking back over my career.

● (1840)

I was elected nearly 20 years ago, as next year it will have been 20 years since I was given the opportunity to take my seat in Parliament for the first time. I came a bit earlier than I might have intended. When I was 29, a new riding was created in my community. It was always my dream to serve my community in Parliament; it was a dream I had held since I was 12 years old. This has been a great passion in my life. I believed I could hold those responsibilities and the responsibilities of being a father and the responsibilities of my family, and hold them intact and find balance. There are a lot of reasons why I did not get that right and that I allowed too much of my life to be taken over by this job and the priorities of it.

This is not a job in a normal sense; it is an incredible calling and privilege. We meet all the people in our constituencies and we want to serve them well. We hear wrongs that are happening in the country and we want to stand up for them. However, without any of the provisions that exist in the hybrid system, there were many moments that were extremely important in the life of my family for which I was not able to be there, which I sincerely regret. I want to make sure we do not do that again and that, in the key and most important moments in members' lives, they are able to be there for their families, for the people they love and for their friends, because those moments are essential. I will speak to that in a number of different ways, but we have to remember the most important reason that is true, which is that this is the House of common people. We are supposed to understand common people, and common people spend time with their families. Common people make space for important life events for their families. Common people take jobs that respect their families and the obligations towards their families, and it is high time that Parliament were a place that respects those values.

I want us to think not just about the justice that is done to a family. Let us think also about what happens when we attend that really important moment in our family's life or in the life of somebody who is very close to us. First, when we get an opportunity to be at the graduation of a child, or when we get an opportunity to be at the bedside of somebody we love, it changes how we see issues. When we get to be there in those really critical moments, it reminds us of why we do the job, what we care about, and, frankly, how the people facing those issues are also feeling. It is just as important to have time away from the work we do as it is to be in the work we

Government Orders

do, so we can get the context and we can remember what we are debating. So often it is said that we in Ottawa live in a bubble. If we do not have the opportunity to connect and to be with those whom we love, and be in the real world, then it is no wonder we are in a bubble.

It also reminds us of what is real and important, and I am sure we will all have had this experience. It is one of the reasons that weeks in the constituency are so important. When I take a moment to step out of this place and the debates we are having, sometimes debates that I think are really big and important, I get home to friends and family and they say, "What are you talking about? That is not on our minds. You are completely missing it." Sometimes there is something small that we may not be seeing here or feeling in the same kind of way, but when we go home to our constituencies and are with our friends and family, they remind us how important it is.

However, there are two other things that I think are even more important than all of that. One is energy. Members can see I have a lot of vigour today. That vigour comes from a very direct place; it comes from having my needs met. Although on the weekend I had a lot of events, I also took really important time with people I love. That reinforces me. It changes the person who I am here.

This leads me to my last point about spending time in those key moments, which is that when someone has the opportunity to be there in moments that are really important and regenerative to them, they make better decisions. All the worst decisions I have ever made in my life, and I have made some bad choices, have come from a place of deprivation, from not taking care of my needs. They have come from extending myself too far and from losing that sense of what the priorities are. Therefore, taking care of those things is no minor thing.

● (1845)

Let us be really honest. The problem we have today in Parliament is not that MPs are taking too much time off or are going away to relax and rest. I was whip for over three years. I can tell members that this is not reflective of the life of a member of Parliament. The life of somebody who decides to serve, as every person in the House or any person who has served and is listening to this would know to be true, is one of tremendous service and sacrifice.

When we are not here serving in the House, we are asked to be in a committee. When we are not in a committee, we are asked to be at a reception or a meeting with stakeholders, or we are returning constituent calls. When we get to our ridings, we are asked to serve on behalf of our constituents at events and to represent them, meet them, hear their issues, hear the things that are bothering them and be there for their cases.

Government Orders

We are asked to do things for our party: to raise money, organize and make sure we are ready for the next election, that our riding associations are well taken care of and that we have called all of the volunteers and people who have been helping out at community events and stakeholder events. Heck, when we go into Shoppers Drug Mart sick at midnight, we are talking about an immigration case. That is the life of a member of Parliament. That is not a Liberal member of Parliament. That is not a Conservative member of Parliament. That is every member of Parliament.

There is always somebody somewhere, I suppose, who is not doing what their job is, but we have democracy and votes to sort that out. In my experience, they do a very effective job. However, sitting in here and pretending that hybrid is somehow shirking our responsibilities or that members of Parliament are not rising to the responsibility of serving their communities is putting a wilful blindfold over one's eyes and missing the essential work that every member is doing in the House.

I would submit that we have the opposite problem. Hybrid is an opportunity to make a cultural statement, one that I wish, in retrospect, was made to me when I entered the House in 2004. It was not to work harder. My dear God, I had no time in my calendar for anything else. It was to say no. It was to learn to create boundaries and space and make sure we were there for the most important moments in our lives.

When it all washes away, this opportunity to serve comes down to this: a name printed on a paper card that could be changed in a second. That is it. Somebody is going to say it is a prop. That is fair. That is my name. It is on a piece of paper. I can read it—

An hon. member: Prop.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do not know about the member saying his name, but I know the hon. member cannot name other people.

I would just remind members that they are well aware of what they can and cannot use in the House or show in the House. Even though it might be a paper from the House, it still would be considered a prop if a member is making a direct point about it.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I make the point because all of our time here is temporary, and that is important to remember for two reasons. I lost once and felt it viscerally. When we leave this place and the comma is no longer after our names and we are no longer members, what we are left with is our families, friends, passions and, frankly, the relationships we made here. Those are the things that matter. That is the glue that binds us. It is and should be a cultural statement to every person in this place. No job we take should ever ask us to put the job ahead of family or those we love.

Service is deeply important, but we have to put that service, first and foremost, toward those we love. There are a couple of reasons for that, aside from it being the right thing to do. It is also because, in my darkest moments, in the moments when I most lost myself and most lost my way, it was the love of my children that pulled me from that darkest spot. When I faced some of the toughest elections I ever fought, leaning in for my values and fighting for what I cared about, my mom was on the street knocking on doors hundreds of

nights in a row and being there for me in all of those moments. It was seeing her strength when she is not even serving that fortified me.

That is what happens. We are facing dark, hard times. There is not a member in this House who, when turning on social media, is not filled with hate and contempt as darkness is thrown at them. If we are not given time for those we love and if we are not given the opportunity to be fortified by that, then we will not be equal to the hour in front of us.

We overcome darkness with perseverance. Anybody can stand up at a moment and be strong, but to do it for days, months, years and decades takes an internal fortitude that comes only from having the strength around us of those who love us and will be with us when we put down the sword and someone else picks it up. They will need it as well.

I do not know, but in all likelihood, this speech will be a text somewhere in a book that is mostly used as wallpaper and will be forgotten. However, when we speak here, hopefully it is a microphone to history. I would say to anybody who is newly elected to take rest and make time for things outside of this place, as no one else will tell them to do that. Everyone else will tell them they are not doing enough, they have to work harder and they have to go to more places. The honourable people who fill this chamber actually need to be told the opposite of working hard. They need to be told to take a break and make sure they are getting what they need, that they are with their families and that they are restoring for the big and hard battles ahead.

What happens when we do not get our needs met is we walk into the room as robots and ghosts. We do not come here with the strength of our convictions or the ability to fight for what we care about. We drag ourselves from one room to the other, exhaustingly shaking hands and trying to remember talking points. I will hold out that I work less today, and I am proud to admit it. I work much less today than I worked in my first three terms, and I would say that I am much more effective. I ask less of my staff today, and I would say they are much more effective. This does not just make sense because it is the right thing to do, but because when people have energy, context and space, they can see what is important and have energy to do it.

If it is not enough to talk about giving members of Parliament a bit of space and a bit of a break to be at those really important events, then I am going to end by talking about Arnold Chan.

Arnold was one of my closest friends in this world. He managed every election day that I was in. He was my political mentor. Watching Arnold die of cancer was one of the most viscerally painful things I have ever gone through. However, what made that so much harder was watching this man, who loved this chamber, who loved this House and who loved the opportunity to serve, have to drag himself in here to participate in debate and to vote. Seeing him in the chamber that lies just behind this chamber, doubled over in pain and in an absolutely horrific state because he did not want to let his constituents down, was ridiculous. If we had had hybrid then, he could have done that from his home.

• (1850)

Unfortunately, as whip, I know there are way too many situations like this, where health affects a member's ability to be here, and not just their health but potentially the health of their loved ones. It would seem to me that at the very least, even if members are not compelled by the other arguments, like being there in major moments of our families' lives, remembering the memory of a Mauril Bélanger or an Arnold Chan should inspire some sympathy for the pain we cannot see and the struggles that are not so visible that need to be attended to.

I know in my heart that a hundred or a thousand years from now, the changes we are putting in the Standing Orders will continue. I know this, as I move these changes here today, not because they cannot be changed. They can. Another government of another day could reverse them. They will not be changed because I can already see all members of the House using them and using them judiciously and appropriately. I have talked to members in the corridors from every single party. They have talked to me about how these provisions have been a total game-changer for them, their families and their ability to do their jobs.

This is the right thing. It is not just the right thing for the people who are here. It is a siren call to all others that this is the House of the common people. I am certain that some people will see these changes, people who did not see themselves being able to step forward and live a public life and thought it would be impossible to serve in Parliament, and say that it is possible and they can come forward and serve. Perhaps there is no more important thing than that. Hybrid makes this Parliament a little more accessible, a little more open and that much more representative of the country we are so lucky to serve.

I hope all members really consider the last three years, consider the work that was done by the procedure and House affairs committee and consider honestly the toll of this job and the message it sends to adopt hybrid: what it says now and what it will say to the Parliament of the future.

• (1855)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to draw out a point the government House leader made and challenge him on it. He used a few times in his speech language about unanimity and consensus when it came to drastically overhauling and changing the Standing Orders of this House. It is a very important point, because historically and traditionally, major changes to the Standing Orders have come through consensus and often unanimity.

Government Orders

What the government has done today, though, is break with that tradition, because there are many things within this package of Standing Order reforms that the official opposition objects to. In the spirit of finding consensus, we would have agreed with some of the points we might not have preferred to have in there if there had been a sunset clause in this package.

We are entering into a new world. Even though we have been operating under many of these provisions for some time now, it still remains to be seen what the long-term impacts of these major changes will be. Our proposal was to agree to this package but have a sunset clause so that after the next election, within about a year, we would require a positive action for the House to continue with this.

I wonder why the government House leader chose to ignore the very reasonable request to have this package expire and to force a future House to make a positive decision about whether to continue with these changes.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, first of all, on the question of unanimity, let me be very clear that unanimity existed for a brief period of time, and for a very focused reason. Unanimity existed when the pandemic first began. We all agreed, rightfully at that moment in time, that it was going to be impossible for Parliament to operate in person. It was time-limited, but it is important to understand that those changes and that work were done with the cooperation and unanimity of all parties.

In terms of why we do not just put in a sunset clause, I have a couple of points. The first point is that every time we started a session of Parliament over the last number of sessions, it began with a very long, protracted debate about whether or not we should use these provisions. We debated them extensively, and we are seeing them work. This brings me to my last point in response to the opposition House leader, which is that the unanimity that exists here is in watching the provisions be used.

I found it very ironic, for example, that the Conservatives who had a position against the voting application, when there was a vote on the voting application, mostly voted using the voting application. It is an inconsistent position to be against the voting application, but then use the voting application; to be against the utilization of hybrid, and then to watch Conservative members even today participating in debate virtually, as one member did. So, when there is a use by all parties of the provisions, it makes it sound like the opposition is more partisan in nature and cares more about posturing than it does about what I think the hon. member knows, which is the fact that these provisions work, they are used judiciously and, lastly, they could be changed at any time by a government in the future having a majority by changing the Standing Orders.

• (1900)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government leader says that he has a message for MPs who want to join parliamentary life. The person who makes us work until midnight every day is telling them to rest.

Government Orders

I listened to him speak. I think that his whip lacked compassion. I do not know who his whip was, but when I heard that, I found it difficult. I followed what he said, but I thought it was very sad. I will not say what I think of that.

I want to know how he will react. The Liberals will not be in power forever. Even though that is what they believe, at some point, the Conservatives will be in power. What will happen the day that the member is in opposition and sees a Conservative government, probably with a majority eventually, unilaterally, on its own, decide how Parliament will work? The Conservative prime minister will say that from then on, the parliamentary rules will be the following. The government leader has created a precedent by proceeding according to the will of the majority instead of obtaining unanimous consent.

How will he react when that poor example is followed by the Conservatives?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate my hon. colleague's question.

That is the case every summer. Parliament sits later than usual. It is normal to sit until midnight before rising for the summer. However, there has been a major change: It is now possible to work virtually. With the hybrid system, it is easier to manage the situation that the member opposite described.

Second, there is something very different about the current situation. It is possible for a majority government to change the rules, but in the current situation, another party, the NDP, supported the amendment.

Also, the change to the Standing Orders was originally supported by all parties. In fact, every party uses this system every day here in the House.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, about the fact that everyone uses the provisions that are already before us. I look forward to sharing the numbers for this use in the speech I will give later.

[English]

My colleague did touch, I thought, very profoundly on the issue of members being sick and still representing their constituents, and members having family crises or family emergencies and still representing their constituents.

We live in a vast land. My commute is 5,000 kilometres to get to Ottawa as I am at the other end of the country in beautiful British Columbia. However, we have seen wildfires hitting throughout the middle and northern parts of our country: northern Alberta, northern Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, northern Ontario, northern Quebec and Nova Scotia. How important is it for members of Parliament to be able to be on the ground during those emergencies in their ridings and still advocate for the kinds of supports that the federal government needs to be providing in those crises as they are occurring? How important is that element as far as the hybrid—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for all of his work. He was there from the beginning of this debate and from the beginning of trying to find a solution, first in the pandemic and now looking at how we might use these provisions outside the pandemic.

I have had the opportunity, really the honour, of being the chief government whip for over three years. One of the things that was remarkable about that, that was really eye-opening to anyone who has spent time as a whip, is to see just how difficult it is being a human being. There are many difficult things that hit the lives of everybody.

It was difficult for me, before hybrid, to look people in the eyes who had massive needs to be at home. That was very evident to me seeing what was happening in their personal lives, or the types of events that the hon. NDP House leader is talking about.

Some people would say, "I need to be in my community, there is a disaster there," but I had to say, "Sorry, we need you for this vote." Members would say, "I need to be home, there is a critical situation with my family," but I had to say, "Sorry, you have to be here for a vote." It broke my heart to do that and it is unnecessary. We have proven it is unnecessary.

● (1905)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. government House leader for his speech and for sharing this evening. It was very touching. I am struck with the reality that every party in this House has used hybrid over a period of time. It has become a useful tool for a lot of different reasons.

Can he speak to the diversity of reasons one might choose to or need to engage virtually?

Can he also comment on the willingness of some parties to look forward rather than backward when making decisions?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I will give some direct circumstances that some people may not think about. One is talking to a parent whose kid is going through something really hard in school and really needs mom or dad to be there for a few days. That is going to make a huge difference in their mental health and development. I hear from members who have a loved one who just got terribly devastating news, and they are able to leave immediately to be there for that and still uphold their responsibilities.

That is not something I have seen one party use; that is something I have seen every party use. That is why I would ask members to reflect on how they have used these provisions, how important they are, and to set aside the politics, do the right thing by supporting this motion and these changes so we can continue with hybrid.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to start off by setting a bit of context about how the Liberals treat Parliament in general.

Government Orders

We all remember the 2015 election campaign when the Prime Minister pretended that he cared about things like accountability, transparency and the supremacy of Parliament, and the fact that we come to this place from all corners of this country to hold the government to account. That is not just a phrase that one might hear in a political science class or a high school civics class. Holding it to account is not just some kind of bookkeeping exercise where we make sure the numbers add up. Yes, that is part of it, but it is really about litigating the decisions of the government to ensure that Canadians get only the best. It is through the rigour of parliamentary debate, committee investigations and the daily questioning of the Prime Minister and cabinet that the facts emerge and Canadians are able to make informed decisions when it is time to vote.

I was House leader back in 2015 right after that election, right after the Prime Minister said he would respect the role of Parliament, that he would always defer to the important role that the House of Commons plays in our democracy. Something happened in that first few months after the 2015 election that totally showed what a phony comms exercises all of that rhetoric was. There was a bill before the House back then; I believe was Bill C-10. The Liberals had trouble counting their caucus members one Monday morning. There was a vote that the Liberals were not expecting on that day and they almost lost it because they did not have enough members in town. They still had members back in their ridings perhaps or on international junkets, or on any number of other things. There was a tie-vote in the chamber. A piece of government legislation was almost defeated and the Speaker had to break the tie at that time and, as was the convention of the Speaker, broke the tie in favour of continuing debate and allowed the bill to pass at report stage, so the bill continued on.

They were so rattled by that episode that just a few days later the government House leader came into this chamber and proposed Motion No. 6. Motion No. 6 was a complete defanging of the opposition, a removal of most of the tools that opposition parties use to hold the government to account, to draw out those details, and to litigate the government's course of actions and its legislation. It gave the government unprecedented power to move legislation along quickly and to prevent the opposition from using its very legitimate tools to hold up debate, not just for the sake of filibustering or delay for the sake of delay. It is in that delay that members of Parliament find those details, find the mistakes that the government makes or hear the stories from witnesses about how those unintended consequences might do more harm than good.

The government's reaction at that time to a tie-vote on a piece of legislation was what might be called a parliamentary hissy fit where it just completely lost its temper and tried to take away all of the things that the opposition party could ever hope to use to hold the government to account. Thankfully, the opposition parties understood what was going on.

It is always amazing when parties with as wide a variety of views as the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP can find common ground, but the Liberals are good at doing that. When the Bloc, the Conservatives and the NDP can find something to be such an affront to parliamentary democracy and everything that we are supposed to do here that we join forces together, and put our differences aside to protect this institution, it is actually a terrible

indictment on the Liberal Party, and so often we have had to do that. For the sake of our institution, for the sake of future generations of Canadians, for the sake of future Parliaments and future members of Parliament to be able to have those very important tools to do the job on behalf of their constituents, we have had to join forces. I remember being there when the House leaders from all the recognized parties, along with the Bloc Québécois, told the story. We all told the story to Canadians about the motives and the consequences of what the government was doing. We were able to push back on that, whether due to the effective communications of all the opposition parties or due to the fact that in those moments, the Prime Minister lost his temper.

● (1910)

The Prime Minister actually injured an NDP member of Parliament, when he elbowed an NDP member and forcefully grabbed the Conservative whip at the time. He completely lost his temper and physically manhandled a member of Parliament. Maybe that is why he finally backed down, but I like to think that it was at least in part because of the important points we were making as opposition parties to defend our institutions.

We see this time and time again. Every time the Liberals do not get their way, they try to change the rules of the game. It is important to note that the tools that are available to the opposition to delay, to propose amendments and to physically have members of the cabinet and the government in the chamber, are an important part of the process. We have a system whereby the executive branch sits in the chamber, and the opposition parties have to have some tools at their disposal to be able to highlight the shortcomings, failures and mistakes in the government's agenda.

It does not just happen in this House. The other place also plays an important role in that. I should point out that the other place has completely put aside its hybrid Parliament mechanisms. They have been back under normal operating standards for a long time now. For months, they have been able to continue doing their job. It is really just this chamber.

In fact, it is just this chamber in all of Canada that is continuing on with a full host of measures that were originally put in place, as the government House leader acknowledged, when there was consensus about how best to do two things. One of these things was to respect the public health orders that were in place at the time, about people travelling from different parts of the country to come together, and the other was respecting the orders and regulations at the time to have people who were from different households being certain distances apart.

Government Orders

We agreed at that time to respect those two things, because we could not have a period of time when Parliament was not doing its job. Thank goodness, we insisted on that. I remember those days, when the government was trying to arrange for unanimous passage of its legislation in response to the pandemic, without any debate at all. The Liberals wanted to just email the text of the legislation to members of Parliament, have them come in here for just a few moments, pass it all and then go home again.

Thankfully, the official opposition, the Conservative Party, said no to that. It was through that parliamentary scrutiny that we learned many terrible things about the government's response to the COVID pandemic. We found out that the Prime Minister attempted to use the pandemic to try to enrich his friends. We found out because Parliament was sitting, because we had the tools at our disposal, in terms of committees and debates in the chamber. He did this with the massive disruption in people's lives; loss of life; people having to say goodbye to loved ones over Zoom; people having to miss birthday parties, anniversaries and funerals; businesses going bankrupt; and children missing out on activities and important parts of their childhood.

The Prime Minister tried to give his friends at the WE Foundation, an organization that had paid members of his family hundreds of thousands of dollars, an untendered sole source contract worth half a billion dollars. However, he got caught, because we did not give up those tools in our tool kit to hold the government to account.

We found out through parliamentary scrutiny that the government used the pandemic, as well, to reward Liberal insiders and defeated Liberal MPs, such as Frank Baylis. He got a sole source contract for providing medical supplies that he had no history of ever providing. The arrive scam app is another example of waste and mismanagement. Thank goodness we still had those parliamentary tools at our disposal.

I want to address a few points that the government House leader brought up in his speech. He talked about unanimity consensus. My colleague in the Bloc Québécois just made a very important point. As a former speaker, I have learned a little about the history, about the importance of the Standing Orders and their evolution over time, as well as why things are the way they are.

● (1915)

The McGrath committee was one of those great examples where Parliament had not been updated for a long period of time; society had implemented a whole bunch of innovations, and parliamentary life had changed. In response to those changing times in the 1980s, the government of the day decided that it would have a fulsome analysis of the Standing Orders, the parliamentary cycle and the daily routine of business. It was essential that all the opposition parties were brought in and a true effort was made to find consensus and common ground; where there was no consensus, the government did not proceed.

It was out of that committee that we had major changes, for example, in the election of the Speaker. For generations before the 1980s, the Prime Minister chose the Speaker. It was a motion that the Prime Minister moved, and it was basically a *fait accompli*; whomever the Prime Minister wanted to become Speaker became

Speaker. In the 1980s, the House decided, in its wisdom, that it would be better to preserve the impartiality of the Chair if the Speaker did not have to worry about pleasing or displeasing the Prime Minister. Therefore, the House instituted the secret ballot election, and former speaker John Fraser was the first to be elected by secret ballot. Ever since then, speakers have been chosen that way. That was a very important development in our parliamentary democratic underpinnings. It was a great development. It was a fantastic idea; it has served the House well, and it has served the Speaker as well.

The point that I am making to my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party is that it was achieved through consensus, because if all parties from all different corners of the country and from different political perspectives cannot be convinced that it is a good idea that will serve the institution as an institution, and not one party over another, then maybe it is not such a good idea. Maybe we should at least go back and try to build that consensus. However, that is not what they are doing here. They would be creating a precedent, whereby future governments and future Parliaments would look and say that it has been done before where a government, perhaps backed by a junior coalition partner in a minority context, could say that at the end of the day, it is just going to ram it through anyway.

We offered a good-faith effort to preserve the idea of consensus, to prevent what is about to happen when the government ultimately rams this motion through. We said that, in order to preserve the importance of overhauling the Standing Orders only after a government has achieved that consensus, we would agree to things on a time-limited basis that we might not normally agree to. We were willing to allow aspects of this hybrid package to continue, with the one caveat that the package of changes would sunset after the next election. This is a very simple and, I believe, common-sense proposal.

What would that do, and why is it important? After every election, it is part of our normal routine of business that the Standing Orders are studied by the procedure and House affairs committee. There is supposed to be a debate in the House about the Standing Orders and whether anything needs to be changed or how the Standing Orders are serving the House at the time. It has never really resulted in anything substantially major, because the government of the day always wants to use government time to implement business. That is reasonable; the members get elected on a platform, and every day that they spend debating the Standing Orders, as they are today, is a day that they do not have to debate the legislation they would like to put out.

Our proposal would have required a government of the day to, proactively and in a positive way, actually take some action to extend these changes. I submit that we are still only about a year or so out of the complete lifting of COVID restrictions. In some parts of Canada, it has literally just been 12 to 14 months since those restrictions have been fully lifted, so it is hard to say for sure what the long-term consequences of these changes will be on our parliamentary life. It is not just life in terms of our personal lives or how we conduct our business but also in terms of the institution itself.

My hon. colleague, the House leader, has lots of examples of how it is tough to be here. Yes, it is difficult, but I do not think that members of Parliament should ask for considerations that hard-working Canadians from across the country in other industries do not have. Yes, it is difficult to be here. I have five children, and there are lots of things I wish I could have stayed home for. There are lots of important milestones I missed. I knew that when I ran for office.

● (1920)

I knew when I put my name on the ballot that it would be a trade-off in my life. Yes, I would get the incredible reward of fighting for the things I believe in and serving my community and my constituents, but the counterpoint to that is that I would be away from home an awful lot. I made the decision to do it anyway, because I so value the important work that my party does and that my team does.

I believe that the things I believe in are important enough that I am willing to sacrifice those special moments at home to help make Canada a better place. I want to help undo the damage that big government intervention has caused in our lives, with the liberty and individual freedoms that we have lost over the past few years under the Liberal government.

It is worth it. I might miss one of my children's birthdays, but hopefully, I will help to roll back some of the misery that big government intervention in their lives causes for them. They will be better off for it throughout their life. That is one of my motivating factors when I have to miss those important moments.

For Canadians in lots of different industries, they might have an important milestone in their family that they would like to get back for. Maybe they have to go to a trades conference, or maybe they are in the legal profession and have an important court date. They cannot just phone it in because they have something going on at home. I do not think members of Parliament should grant to ourselves a privilege and a comfort that so many Canadians across the country do not have in their lives. I do not believe that this is sufficient in and of itself to justify the changes that the government is making today.

In terms of the important precedent that it is creating here today, it will likely not be singing from the same song sheet in future Parliaments if a future government does something it does not like with the Standing Orders. However, I would submit to the government that it is not too late. In a few moments, I will be proposing an amendment that will more closely resemble the consensus that we are trying to achieve in negotiating these packages of Standing Order changes.

We have long held that major, enduring procedural reforms must be implemented with the support of a consensus of the recognized parties in the House. Making permanent such a sweeping change to parliamentary life is absolutely the sort of thing that should first be embraced by all sides of the aisle.

In the interest of consensus, the official opposition would have agreed to renew the current hybrid procedures with some important limitations, subject to that sunset a year into the next Parliament, when a further renewal could have been considered with proper de-

Government Orders

liberations. It is the flip side of what the government House leader is saying. He was saying that a future Parliament could undo it. We are asking why we do not do it the opposite way. The onus is on the government to justify and to answer for all the potential and unforeseen consequences of its changes. It would have been far better for the House and for future Parliaments if it had been done in reverse, and if the onus were on the government for continuing them.

I want to focus on hybrid participation in the chamber. There really is something to the physicality of the place. Holding ministers to account in person really adds a dynamic that we lose when we have hybrid Parliament. It is not just me saying that. There are parliamentary experts from all around the world in Commonwealth parliaments and even former Liberal MPs who have said the very same thing. Being in the chamber, with that thrust and that back and forth, is as much a part of the debate as the words themselves are.

When the House sits in a hybrid fashion, it takes a tremendous amount of resources, particularly with translation services. Members of Parliament and Canadians have the right to read and watch the debates in either official language, in French or English. It is difficult for the House administration. I sit on the Board of Internal Economy; for Canadians who might not be familiar with the term, this is the management committee that oversees the House of Commons and its administration. It is generally non-partisan. It is literally designed to help make sure that the precinct is secure and that members of Parliament have the services they need to do their jobs.

The strain placed on our translation services by hybrid sittings has been brought up multiple times at that committee. The translators have a very difficult job. They have to listen at a very specific sound level. They have to be able to hear what is being said and speak out the translation in real time. It is not as if translators get copies of speeches and can transcribe them into the other language and then just read them out. They have to simultaneously listen and speak at the same time.

● (1925)

Our interpreters have had a surprising number of workplace injuries. Members of Parliament get up to speak, but maybe they are too close to the microphone, maybe they start off too loudly or maybe their headset is not calibrated properly. Our translators then get that initial blast of sound, and over time we have had an unfortunate number of interpreters who have had to go on leave or have been put on medical leave because of those injuries. As a result, our pool of available translators has shrunk, and it is now incredibly difficult for the House to find adequate levels of human resources for a hybrid Parliament while at the same time providing the same for committees.

The reason I bring this up is that because of the nature of the importance of the deliberations in the chamber, the House of Commons itself is always given the first right of refusal on human resources. That means that we will always have translation services available to the House. Where does the House get those services when human resources are stretched thin? It gets them from committees.

Government Orders

I know we have lots of colleagues in the chamber right now who sit on committees. How many of them have had a committee cancelled at the last moment over the last few months because of a lack of resources? I am sure every single member has experienced that. Often when the government extends the hours of the House by six or seven hours in the evening, suddenly the House administration has to scramble and reallocate those translators. As a result, committees get cancelled.

Why would the Liberals want committees to be cancelled?

The Prime Minister hates parliamentary committees, and it is not hard to understand why. It is at committees that we have exposed the most egregious examples of waste, corruption and mismanagement. We are able to really pore through the spending, the contracts and the hypocrisies in government programs in terms of economic mismanagement.

We have had incredible breaking news and bombshell reports that have come out at committee. We catch one minister saying something that has been denied by another minister or we get a look at those contracts that have been awarded to Liberal insiders or we hear expert testimony that—

• (1930)

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Waterloo.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I hate to interrupt the opposition House leader, but I just think it is interesting that he is talking about interpreters, who do really important work, and he is almost suggesting that it is they who are causing committees to be cancelled when it is actually Conservative filibusters that have been—

The Deputy Speaker: I think we are getting into debate. I am more than happy to let the hon. member for Waterloo ask a question when the speech is done.

The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague has chaired a committee that often has to hear about the strain on House resources. She would know that by no means is it the translators' fault; it is the government's fault when it does not properly allocate its resources or when it makes these decisions at the last minute, causing committees to be—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Waterloo has another point of order.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I do. I just want to say that when it comes to the relevance of the topic and wanting all members and all parties to agree, it is important that the member find a way forward rather than—

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member is still getting into debate. Members are more than welcome to ask a question once the speech is done.

The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, in the British Parliament, members of Parliament are able to ask questions and make comments during a speech by asking if the member who has the floor would give way or yield, but we do not have that system here.

When I am finished, the hon. member can ask me questions or provide comments and I will be happy to respond to her, but not during my speech itself. Of course, she may have a turn to speak if the government House leader has her on his list of the members from his side who will speak.

I think I was talking about how much the Prime Minister hates committees. It is because that is where the most egregious forms of his waste and mismanagement are exposed to Canadians. That is why our common sense proposal is to say that we should keep participation in the House in person. Let us at least say that when members are in the House, when they want to intervene, when they want something on the official record or when they want to give a speech on behalf of their constituents, they should do that in the chamber.

As for committees, we could allow committees to continue in a hybrid format. We have lots of expert witnesses for whom it might not make sense to fly them all the way to Ottawa, put them up for several days in a hotel and then fly them back if they are really only required to give testimony for an hour or two. Conservatives recognize the reasonableness of that particular proposal, and doing it that way—separating the hybrid chamber from hybrid committees—would completely ease the strain on the translation services. However, that proposal was rejected.

I also want to address something that the House leader referenced.

He was actually making one of the points I was going to make, and then he kind of glossed over it in, I believe, an insincere way. He talked about the parliamentary precinct, life in Parliament and how our day-to-day routines actually help a lot of work get done outside of what I am doing right now, which is speaking to legislation. I just had an example of this. I have an issue in my riding that I have been trying to get a government minister to address. It often takes days and days to get a response back from a minister's staff. Obviously, they are handling a lot of different files, so sometimes when a request is made, it takes sometimes five to seven days to get a response.

When the Speaker was welcoming the Portuguese ambassador, the minister was there. I happened to be in the same room and I could have gotten an answer right away. I could have said, "I have this important issue that I have spoken to the minister about before. I have not heard back yet. Could we get together tomorrow?", and the answer would have been yes. All those types of meetings and the ability to advance files, the ability to move something along or to have things addressed, whether it is a program or a project in someone's riding, are lost if ministers are not physically here. If the—

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

Mrs. Anna Roberts: Mr. Speaker, my colleague in the back is speaking over the conversation. Could we keep it down, please?

The Deputy Speaker: I will remind folks that the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has the floor.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, the point is that there is a lot of important work that gets done in the parliamentary precinct outside of the official proceedings of a committee or the House of Commons. This work is lost when ministers are able to literally phone in, when they are able to stay in their ridings and not be here. It is a lot easier for them to put up gatekeepers of staff and departmental officials to prevent members of Parliament from literally getting right in front of them to say, “Take a look at this. It is an important problem with what you are doing or something you have overlooked.”

That is not nothing. Those are not just small peripheral issues. A great deal of what members of Parliament do is advocate for their constituents outside of debate and outside of giving speeches in the chamber. We need to be able to have access to government ministers, and not just through the phone or through intermediaries like staff. We also propose for committees, while we would have supported hybrid committee meetings, that when ministers come with their officials, they should testify in person for similar reasons.

At this point, I will move on to what our proposed solution is, which is to make a series of amendments to what the government has proposed. These are common sense proposals that would alleviate the concerns that we have while still addressing some of the benefits of having a little bit of flexibility around the parliamentary routine.

I move, seconded by the member for King—Vaughan, that the motion be amended by (a) deleting paragraphs (a) and (b) and substituting the following—

• (1935)

The Deputy Speaker: There was no interpretation, but it is back now.

I apologize to the hon. House leader and would ask that he start over.

• (1940)

The hon. member for La Prairie is rising on a point of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the opposition House leader. I am sure that what he is reading is important and interesting. However, the interpreter is saying that he is speaking too quickly, so she is unable to provide the interpretation. He needs to slow down a little for everyone to be able to follow along, because we are interested in what he has to say.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention.

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

At the procedure and House affairs committee we have been trying to make the systems better in this place. Sometimes when something is drafted, it is easier to share it with the interpreters. Then they have an easier go at providing it in both official languages. That is just a friendly suggestion to the opposition House leader.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

Government Orders

That has been done. The interpreters do have a copy of the amendment the hon. House leader of the opposition is speaking to.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a different point of order.

I did notice that you motioned for the members at the far end of the chamber to quiet down, but the former government House leader should know that decorum is expected in the House and that respect for the person with the floor should be shown. I am only halfway in between, and I cannot hear what the member is saying over the kibitzing going on between the NDP and Liberal government members at the opposite end of the chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: That is entering into debate, but I will remind folks to keep the chatter to a minimum, especially while there is an amendment being read in, so we are able to hear it to make sure it is in order.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I will continue, and I do appreciate the reminder from my colleague. Sometimes when I am reading a lengthy technical document I tend to speed up to get through it quickly, but I can appreciate that this would pose an extra challenge to the interpreters.

As my colleague indicated, the text of this was prepared. The Table did have some changes at the last minute to make sure it was procedurally proper, so that may be why the interpreters might not have a working copy of what I am reading.

I will just slow it right down.

I move:

That the motion be amended:

(a) by deleting paragraphs (a) and (b) and substituting the following:

“(a) the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders, laid upon the table on June 8, 2023 (Sessional Paper No. 8525-441-30) be adopted on a provisional basis, with the following changes:

(i) that the proposed amendments to Standing Orders 11(1)(b), 16(4), 17, 26(2), 31, 43(2)(b), 52(3), 53(4), 56.1(3), 56.2(2), 57, 62, 74(2)(b); 78(1), 2(a) and 3(a), 83(2), 95(1) and (2), 98(3)(a), and 106(4) be deleted,

(ii) that the proposed new Standing Order 15.1 be amended by deleting the words “the House and its”,

(iii) that the proposed new Standing Order 32(2), be amended:

(A) by adding the words “, in his or her place in the House,” after the word “may”, and

(B) by replacing the words “for members participating remotely, the document is” with the words “documents presented in electronic format shall be”,

(iv) that the proposed new Standing Order 35(1) be amended by adding the words “standing in their places,” after the words “made by members”,

(v) that the proposed new Standing Order 36(6) be amended by adding the words “, in his or her place in the House,” after the words “present a petition”,

(vi) that the proposed amendment to Standing Order 45 be amended,

(A) by replacing the words “That Standing Order 45 be replaced with the following” with the word “that Standing Orders 45(3) to (8) be replaced with the following”,

(B) by deleting the proposed new Standing Orders 45(1) and (2),

(C) by deleting, in the proposed new Standing Order 45(11), the words “whether participating in person or remotely”,

(D) by deleting the proposed new Standing Order 45(12)(d), and

Government Orders

(E) in the proposed new Standing Order 45(12)(e), by deleting all the words after the words “using the electronic voting system”, and substituting the following “the Speaker shall determine whether the member's visual identity sufficiently confirmed”,

(vii) that the proposed new Standing Order 122.1 be amended by adding the words “, provided that members of Parliament and officials of government departments or agencies or the House of Commons Administration appearing as witnesses appear in person”, and

(viii) that the proposed amendment to paragraph 56(2)(c) of the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual Harassment Between Members be amended by replacing the words “debate has collapsed” with the words “no member rises to speak”,

and the said standing orders shall come into force on June 24, 2023, or upon the adoption of this order, whichever is later, and shall expire one year after the opening of the 45th Parliament; and

(b) the provisional changes made to Standing Orders 104, 108 and 114, adopted on December 2, 2021, as well as the following amendment to Standing Order 106(4), shall remain in effect for the duration of the 44th Parliament:

“That Standing Order 106(4) be replaced with the following:

“(4) Within five days of the receipt, by the clerk of a standing committee, of a request filed by any four members of the said committee representing at least two recognized political parties, the Chair of the said committee shall convene such a meeting provided that 48 hours' notice is given of the meeting. For the purposes of this section, the reasons for convening such a meeting shall be stated in the request.”; and

(b) by adding the following new paragraph:

“(e) the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be instructed to report, no later than on Friday, December 8, 2023, on recommendations for (i) a new Standing Order concerning remote participants' audio standards, along the lines it proposed in Recommendation 5 of its 20th report, presented to the House on Monday, January 30, 2023, (ii) amendments to Standing Order 45 concerning members voting remotely who experience technical difficulties with the remote voting application.”.

● (1945)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is in order.

With questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to give a bit of a different perspective. As a parliamentarian for about 30 years now, the vast majority of those years were in opposition. I am very much aware of the importance of opposition tools and how important it is to ensure that those tools are protected.

I have had the opportunity to go through this, as I know the member opposite has. There is nothing within the motion the government is proposing, which is supported by the Bloc, the NDP and, I assume, Green members, that would in any way prevent an opposition from being able to use tools to hammer home whatever their point might be. One could speculate on a few things, sure, but from an opposition's point of view, in my 20-plus years' experience being in opposition, I do not quite understand what it is within this motion that the member opposite believes, or the Conservatives believe, would prevent the opposition members from being able to do their job specifically. Can the member give a clear indication of what specific issue would prevent an opposition from being able to do its job?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I should point out that I was expecting a question from the chair of the procedure

and House affairs committee because she had a lot to say while I was speaking. Now she did not rise to seek the floor for a question.

However, I believe I covered that. I talked about how any time the Liberals are messing with the Standing Orders, we have to have our guard up because they have used it before. They have tried to take rules away. We absolutely do not trust the Liberals' motives from day one, especially when they are not going to do it with consensus and when they are going to unilaterally impose it because they have a partner in the costly coalition with the NDP.

I talked about committees. How many committees have been cancelled? We are in the middle of investigating Liberal corruption and mismanagement, and suddenly the committee will get cancelled because resources have to be reallocated. Now, when the government wants to have its committee meetings continue, the Liberals always find a way to have resources for their priorities. Committees that are investigating Liberal mismanagement get cancelled. Committee meetings for continuing debate to ram through clause-by-clause consideration or to quickly move legislation out of the committee back to the chamber magically have resources available to them. That is the most important point.

The third point that I made was that using remote options and hybrid really does limit the ability of members of Parliament to interact personally with ministers. That is an important part of being a member of Parliament. Debate is important, and bills are important, but it is important that I am able to sit down with the minister to say that I have been asking their officials for weeks why a constituent was denied access or was rejected from an application and their officials have not been able to get back to me with anything. On a weekly basis, I do that, whether it is immigration, Canada Post or any number of issues. If ministers are constantly using remote options and hybrid, members are going to lose that ability.

An hon. member: It is like a speech. He is not cutting him off.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not shut people off, and I never have. I let people speak out. If people do not like the way I do it, then maybe they should talk to me. I can cut everybody off at one minute, or I can let people get their thoughts out. That goes for the questions and the answers.

[Translation]

We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a tradition in the House. In the past, whenever changes were made to the Standing Orders, a consensus would be sought. I did not see the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons trying to build a consensus.

The Deputy Speaker: A number of conversations are taking place in all areas of the chamber.

● (1950)

[English]

Let us try to keep the conversations down so that we can have a serious conversation about what is happening here on the floor of the House of Commons.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The hon. member for La Prairie may continue.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Usually, consensus is sought. I would say that the government House leader did not really seek to build a consensus.

Does the opposition House leader feel that the government House leader sought a consensus with Conservatives? Did he reach out to their party?

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I can answer very simply no. I really appreciate my colleague's perspective on this. We have a lot of differences between our two parties and there is a lot we disagree on, but we both recognize that, when a government is going to come in to change the rules of the game, we really do need consensus.

Members can imagine a scenario in a sports league where one team has an advantage and then tries to get the lead commissioner to change the nature of the sport or the action to benefit one team over the rest of the teams. That is analogous to what is being done here. Right from the get-go, this was presented as a *fait accompli*. The government had already secured what it wanted with the NDP, and it is a take-it-or-leave-it type of proposal. We were told right upfront that, if we were trying to take away any of the things around remote participation in the chamber or other ancillary aspects, it was going to go ahead with it anyway. That is not the way to bring parties together for the betterment of this institution.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member's speech, and I find it a bit rich for the member to say that hybrid is problematic because of the issues around interpretation. I noted last week that, when we were doing votes in the House, many of the Conservative members were out in the lobby, just steps away from the chamber. Instead of coming in to do the vote, they were doing it through hybrid. Worse still, they were not using the proper headsets, hindering the ability of the interpreters to do interpretation. Even though the Speaker repeatedly told them to either give a thumbs up or thumbs down for their votes, they refused to listen and talked anyway without the proper headsets. Now they are saying that it is not working.

The member talked about resources. I sit on the immigration committee. If we want to talk about wasting resources, do members know what the Conservatives did? They wasted 30 hours debating Bill S-245, on lost Canadians, so we could not get on with business. Talk about wasting resources.

On the question of hybrid, I have to say this. One would think, the way the Conservatives are talking, that the only mechanism is to use Zoom to do our business, and that is not—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Essex.

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just spoke about where Conservatives were for a vote. I thought we were not allowed to say where people are or are not when they do a vote. Could you please clarify that for the hon. member?

The Deputy Speaker: I think it was on the video. People were voting online, so that is okay.

I am going to remind the hon. member for Vancouver East to wrap up so we can maybe get a couple of other questions in.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, on the question of hybrid, the way in which the member was speaking was almost as though the only option is for members of Parliament to not show up in the chamber here to do the work. That is not the case. Hybrid is meant to allow for people to have an option.

For example, I got COVID and had to be quarantined. What did I do? I used hybrid because it was important work that had to be done, both in the House and at committee. That is the whole purpose here, to facilitate the process so that people can use that option.

Why are the Conservatives opposed to allowing people to use different options to fully participate in the House?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure exactly what caused so many members to have challenges with the voting app.

I would point out to the hon. member that whatever concerns she may have about people clarifying their vote through a hybrid mechanism would not be required if we did not have hybrid. If members had to be here physically, then obviously that would not happen, so if she was vexed by the amount of time that may have taken, not proceeding with hybrid preservation would probably solve that problem.

● (1955)

The Deputy Speaker: Because I have been waiting for it, and we have not heard from her, the hon. member for Waterloo will continue with questions and comments.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you are not the only one who has been waiting for it.

I do want to say that I have always appreciated working with the opposition House leader. I remember that when I became the House leader, it was maybe the next day that he shared that he would no longer be the House leader. I did take it personally. I think my being the chair of PROC and his being the opposition House leader provides us an opportunity to work together.

At the procedure and House affairs committee, the way the House functions is a matter we have taken really seriously. We have also really pondered how to make sure interpreters can do their work. We have tried to provide some good suggestions for Standing Orders, and the list goes on.

Government Orders

Right now, at the procedure and House affairs committee, we are seized with a really important question of privilege. As much as we would like to see a response to that question of privilege, unfortunately the lists of witnesses that come from Conservative members continue to grow. Today, in question period, the member rose and wanted a response to his question of privilege. I believe every question deserves an answer, so I would like to see a response provided. However, he really should be talking to his fellow Conservative colleagues, because most members would like to see that response happen. The point I am making—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that they talk about heckling, yet they do it so well. I have been watching the House for so many years on the TV screen, and watching Conservatives heckle. Maybe that is why I have learned a trick or two. I now hear the member for Perth—Wellington doing such a good job chirping at me. It is not just in the House that he does that. I welcome it. I will continue on my point.

Many stories have been shared regarding when members might use hybrid. I have been very lucky, because I have been able to be in the House every single time I needed to be in the House. Every single time committee was called or a 106(4) was called, I was able to change my schedule, oftentimes saying no to my own constituents to ensure that I took those responsibilities seriously. However, we have heard some stories in which that is just not always the case. It might be because someone got sick. It might be because there was a wildfire in someone's community. It might be because there was a flood and people lost their homes and everything they knew. It might have been a mass shooting in a mosque, a place of worship, where someone thought they would go to offer a simple prayer, probably not for themselves but for those around them, and they did not come home—

The Deputy Speaker: We are out of time, but I will let the hon. member ask the question.

The hon. member for Waterloo.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I know the member has had many experiences within his own benches. We have seen members of all parties be online.

Does the member agree that, when it comes to those moments when an hon. member does need to use the hybrid capacity, an hon. member is responsible for those decisions, and their constituents would, at the end of the day, be the decision-makers as to whether a member takes their responsibilities seriously or not?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, her main point is that this is a massive overhaul to the Standing Orders. The House of Commons has been operating pretty much the way it has been, in terms of members being physically present and how we conduct votes, through two world wars, the Great Depression, the turbulent sixties and seventies, and everything else, including a terrorist shooting here on the precinct itself.

Our point is this: When we are making this level of changes and we are going to make them permanent, we have to do it by consensus. We would have agreed. We would have said that we have our reservations for hybrid participation in the House but that we would

go along with it if we enacted a sunset clause, where we know that there would be time for the unintended consequences to be determined and that a future Parliament could say it would not renew them or it could amend them. We could have had that consensus. We were willing to set aside some of our reservations for the very points that some other colleagues have raised, as long as there was that safety valve of a sunset clause to make sure that something that has a negative impact on the way parliamentarians fulfill their duties does not get entrenched, making it so difficult to change back.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thought my turn would never come.

I was first elected to this chamber in October 2019. Our leader kindly asked me to be the House leader of our political party. Through contact with other parties' House leaders, I quickly learned how Parliament worked. Let us just say that there was a steep learning curve. Indeed, one of the first things we had to deal with was COVID-19.

In March 2020, something unprecedented was happening. Surely everyone remembers that the country was practically shut down. People could no longer work. We were facing an extremely virulent virus. At that point, the question was: What do we do? Do we stop sitting? Do we continue? If so, under what circumstances?

I am very glad to have experienced that. The government House leader at the time, who is now the Minister of Canadian Heritage, spoke with me. He told me that it was a critical situation and that we had to rise to the occasion. We had to save the country. That was basically how we talked about it, because the country was going through a catastrophe. Despite that, we did not lose our cool. We talked and came to an agreement. We decided to pivot to a hybrid Parliament.

I applaud the technicians and interpreters, who had their hands full, along with the House staff. Their outstanding work allowed us to keep sitting and bringing in legislation that would help people make it through the pandemic.

We reached a consensus. This is exactly where I was heading. Despite the extremely difficult situation, we met up and came to an agreement. At the time, I clearly sensed that the government House leader was striving for consensus. Later, we went through wave after wave of the pandemic, yet we never stopped trying to reach a consensus. One of the methods we used was to present motions that included a deadline. We would negotiate terms that would apply for one year, and then revisit the matter for the following year. This allowed everyone to reach an agreement. Back then, in 2019, the Liberals were a minority government and they acted like one. They would try to come to an agreement with one party or another and, in the process, they would look for consensus.

An election was held in 2021. In case anyone has forgotten, the results were as follows: the Liberal Party, 160 seats; the Conservative Party, 119 seats; the Bloc Québécois, 32 seats; the NDP, 25 seats; and the Green Party, two seats. The Liberals won 160 seats, but they needed 170 seats to achieve a majority. They became a minority government once again, as they had been from 2019 to 2021.

The people of Canada gave this government a minority mandate, but the first thing that the Liberals tried to do was look for friends to help them artificially cobble together a majority government. They found New Democrat friends who fit the bill. In return, the Liberals gave them dental care insurance, presented at the time in a piece of crudely drafted legislation. In my 10 years in the parliamentary system, I have never seen more poorly drafted legislation. It could have been scribbled on the back of a napkin. In return, the New Democrats gave the Liberals the assurance of a majority. That is what happened.

The Liberals showed no modesty toward Canadians and Quebecers. As a minority government, they might have felt compelled to limit their actions accordingly. Instead, they were arrogant. The gag orders started piling up. Discussions between the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois became few and far between.

This motion is vitally important. It changes the ground rules of Parliament. It matters. We will be deciding the way in which Parliament is going to function.

• (2000)

We are not talking about what colour pens we are going to use in the House. This is extremely important.

In the past, we always required a consensus to change the rules governing the parliamentary system. I will come back to that again later and I will give specific examples. In the past, we sought consensus.

The government is presenting a permanent motion. That is the first thing. The Liberals are permanently changing the way Parliament operates. This is the first time they have done that. They came up with this motion and are telling us how things are going to work.

A few months ago, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons told me that I could send him suggestions and that we would discuss them. We prepared suggestions, but he never asked us for them. Instead, the Liberals turned around and shoved this motion down our throats. The whip can attest to that. They decided how things were going to work. That is how much respect the Liberals have for the opposition parties. They are changing the rules without a consensus.

What does that mean? Of course, they think they are doing the right thing and doing it with a smile; they are showing others how things should be done. The Liberals are the masters of giving lessons on democracy. We can forget about Socrates: They are the great democrats.

Now the Liberals are changing the rules permanently. This means that they are setting a precedent. I do not read tea leaves or crystal balls, but I can say that, at some point, they will not be in government. I predict that this will happen sometime in the next 100 years. At some point, the Conservative Party will form the gov-

ernment. The only thing I can say with certainty is that the Bloc Québécois will never be in power, but it is likely that the Conservatives will come to power.

Let us say that the Conservatives form a majority government. They might get up one morning and announce that they have decided on new rules. The Liberals, who will be in opposition with their NDP friends, will not be able to say that the Conservatives have not achieved a consensus, because the Conservatives will say that they are following the example set by the Liberals, who should be a little more humble. That is what they will say. What I am saying is that this creates a precedent.

That is what is dangerous about this. Now, what does it mean? It means that we will continue with a partially hybrid Parliament. Earlier, I heard an NDP member say that she had had COVID-19 and that it was terrible, but that she still wanted to work. I think that is the right attitude.

However, every time I spoke with the government about it, I said that virtual should be the exception, not the rule. We in the Bloc Québécois are not saying that virtual activities should never be allowed, but we think this practice should be used sparingly, in exceptional cases. We should not have 30 members participating in debates virtually. That does not work. Having a bit of a runny nose or having a bad hair day is not a good enough reason to not show up in person. Members must have valid reasons.

We need to find a way to ensure that people participating in the debates virtually are doing so for the right reasons. That is the bottom line, and that should be the rule. We were willing to work collaboratively. I did not barge in like a matador, saying that it had to be my way or the highway. No, we were collaborating, we wanted to work together, and we wanted to come up with solutions. We were in solution mode. We did not hear the same thing in return.

I heard the government House leader's speech and I must say that it made me feel uneasy. I could go on about that at length, but I will not. I was listening to him and I thought, yes, an MP's life is difficult, but no one ever found out only after becoming an MP that they had to go to Ottawa. Give me a break. Of course MPs have to go to Ottawa, that is where we sit. That is how it works and how it has been for 155 years. Yes, MPs have to go to Ottawa. Those who have a family have to do what they can, but there is no surprise there and that is how it works.

• (2005)

Our whip keeps saying that we need to be compassionate and try to listen to people who have children and give them some latitude to have a family life that is not too damaged by the parliamentary experience.

It has been this way for 156 years. Some might say that I am being too harsh with families. No, people can find a way to organize their schedules. We can make arrangements with Parliament to make work easier for people with children. There is a way we can sit down and talk about it and try to deal with the situation. At the time, we may not have had this problem, but now we have to consider work-life balance. We could sit down with everyone and discuss this.

Government Orders

Conversely, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is saying, here is what I have noticed and this is my solution. He thinks very highly of himself. Could he sit down with people and come up with a solution? I am sure that talking to the Conservatives, to the NDP, to the Liberals and to us would make it possible to come up with solutions to achieve work-life balance.

At the Bloc, we also have young mothers and they tell us what they are going through. It is extraordinary what they manage to do in this situation. We could listen to them and ask them what solutions might be possible.

Could there be virtual sessions on occasion? Could we be told about this before we are forced to participate virtually? This is not even a case of take it or leave it. We are being told we have to take it; we have no choice. There is no real room to try and negotiate and make improvements. That does not seem to be a possibility.

With regard to electronic voting, if asked, we will say that we agree with it. Do we still agree with electronic voting? If it is a vote of confidence, I think voting should take place in person. In a situation where the government could be brought down, I think decency dictates that people should be here, voting in person.

With respect to accountability, we saw that some ministers were not around very often during the pandemic. That was acceptable during the pandemic; however, at some point we were no longer in a pandemic, yet some ministers seemed to think it was okay to attend virtually. I think that ministers and others who answer questions in the House or in committee must be accountable by being present to answer questions.

Earlier, a colleague mentioned that being in the House allows us to do a better job because it is easy to meet with ministers. Ministers are approachable. When we go see them, they seem pleased to speak with us. They are human beings. We are polite with them, they are polite with us. It is possible to cross the House and to speak with them in under 30 seconds, depending on how quickly a member walks. With his long legs, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean can get there in two strides, but in any case, we walk over to see them and we can talk to them.

Earlier, some colleagues were laughing and saying that we could just call them. We could call them, but that is more difficult. I find it harder to speak to a minister on the phone than to cross the floor and go see them. I can say that because I have done it several times. I am not saying that ministers do not answer the phone; that is not what I am saying. It is much easier for everyone to be in the House. To be present in the House is to do our job properly.

I would like to share something about what happens when members work remotely. Kathy Brock, a professor and senior fellow at Queen's University, appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and said that when members participate virtually in hybrid proceedings, a certain power dynamic is enforced, meaning that ministers and shadow ministers tend to be at the forefront while the backbenchers feel a bit left out.

Some experts are saying that it can be harder for members to do their work virtually. Members meet not only with ministers, but also with other members who sit on the same committees. We see that a lot. There is some degree of collegiality among us. We talk

about the motions we are going to move, about what happened recently in the House. My colleague who chairs the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs often meets with our critic to chat and find out what she thinks about a particular subject.

• (2010)

The objective is to make the work easier. That is the objective of being present in the House.

In fact, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs tabled a report that suggested that ministers should be present in the House for the purposes of accountability. The committee said that ministers must be present, but the government did not take that into consideration, even though it promised to abide by the committee's report. That is a problem.

My colleague will speak in more detail later about interpretation, but the evidence shows that the use of French in debates decreased dramatically with COVID-19 and a virtual Parliament. That pushed witnesses and others to speak more in English. We often hear the Liberals and just about everyone saying that Canada's two official languages are English and French, but I have some bad news: The virtual Parliament has been detrimental to the use of French. The numbers do not lie.

This behaviour will be damaging to democracy. Obviously, I am thinking about foreign interference, which is a full-scale attack on democracy. I was laughing earlier because the opposition House leader was saying that for the NDP, Conservatives and Bloc to all get along, the subject must be fairly uncontroversial, since our views are so different. There are some points we agree on, but there are others we disagree on.

All three parties are saying that an inquiry is needed to protect democracy, but the government says it knows what it is required and that it is not necessarily an inquiry. I hope the Liberals will change their tune given what happened with Mr. Johnston.

However, this type of behaviour is problematic in everything this government does. It does not always seem to take democracy seriously. I am weighing my words carefully. I do not want to upset anyone or make anyone's ears burn, but that is what I am noticing more and more.

• (2015)

Add to that the situation of the current hybrid Parliament, where we are really creating a precedent. Democracy is being undeniably harmed by this type of cowboy behaviour. What is more, the opposition will be disadvantaged, but that is part of what the Liberal government wants. It wants a government that is easier to run. The surprising thing, although nothing surprises me anymore, is that the NDP, which is part of the opposition, is taking powers away from the opposition. This could cause problems in the near future.

I will be moving an amendment to the amendment.

In closing, the government is setting a precedent. The government is paving the way for a future that may be difficult with exceptionally rare and exceptionally questionable behaviour. We cannot allow this to happen. I am appealing to the goodwill of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I know him. I am sure that after listening to today's comments, he will change tack and accept our help to try to reach a consensus that will benefit our parliamentary life. This is coming from a separatist. That goes to show how important the institutions are: I must respect them and I do respect them. I hope others will do the same.

My amendment to the amendment provides that the amendment to Standing Order 45 be amended by adding the following: 45(13) Notwithstanding section 12 of this Standing Order, members are required to participate in person during the taking of recorded divisions on any question of confidence when explicitly stated by the government or to concur in interim supply, to pass estimates, budgetary policy and the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

• (2020)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment to the amendment is out of order. An amendment to an amendment must be strictly relevant to the corresponding amendment, not to the main text of the motion.

Questions and comments. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his very interesting speech. I agree with him on several points, but not all of them.

Speaking of being in agreement, there's nothing I love more than being in the House to deliver my speeches. As my colleague just demonstrated this evening, it is certainly much more exciting when we can add emotions to our words to express our feelings and our concerns. It certainly makes for a better debate. There is no doubt about that. I could not agree more. Like him, I really enjoy being here in the House.

I would like to admit one thing, and I would like my colleague to think about it over the course of the evening, for he may come back with a different opinion tomorrow. I want to be honest with my colleagues. The opposition members' arguments differ from mine on a very important point.

I arrived in the House in 2015. Between 2015 and 2019, ours was a majority government. Peter Stoffer, my predecessor, was well known for standing up for veterans. I was told that I had not attended a certain dinner, that I had not attended a certain event with veterans while this person or that person had attended. I was told that I did not represent them as he had. I could not be there because there could have been a vote in the House and our government could have fallen. When you are in opposition, as my predecessor was, it is easy. He could stay home for a day, attend activities and return to the House.

Government Orders

Being in the House at all times helps me to be more effective. I am here 99% of the time. When I am not here, I am either at an event or I am sick. It is because something has happened. I just spent three days at the dentist's office. I am so excited that I am having difficulty speaking.

I would like my colleague to tell me whether it would not be more effective to have access to the hybrid option, but to use it only on an exceptional basis, as he stated. That is why we have whips. They tell their MPs to be present. If MPs have a good reason for not being there, the whips believe in them and support them.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not want to interrupt members when they have good things to say. However, we must respect others and the fact that other people want to ask questions.

[English]

Let us please make sure to keep our questions and comments as reasonable as possible so that I do not cut members off. I do not want to do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I must confess that I am very fond of this member. It is always a pleasure to hear him speak. I commend him, and thank him for his question.

We are very nearly on the same wavelength. What the Bloc is saying is that there needs to be an exceptional situation. What is more, there needs to be a vote of confidence to require MPs to be in the House. I have to say that there are not that many confidence votes.

I want to tell my valiant colleague that we are close. We need to determine what the exceptions are. That is what we want to work on, but with whom? We have to have someone opposite us to talk to; otherwise, we will simply come across as rambling or schizophrenic, which is not the case. That is why I am saying that we are close. Perhaps, at some point, we will take our leave, content in the knowledge that we created the Parliament we wanted.

This will allow people to spend more time with my colleague, and they would be very lucky, because he is quite pleasant.

• (2025)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I really like him. He works hard and I find he always speaks very eloquently in the House, but there are two things—

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member because the sound quality is poor. I would ask him to check his microphone.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I differ on two points.

First, I was here for years under the Harper regime, and the presence of ministers in the House did not make a bit of difference. Of course, there were some exceptions, like Jim Flaherty. However, in general, the ministers did not want to answer members' questions.

Government Orders

Second, there is the matter of virtual voting. I want to point out that members of the Bloc Québécois use virtual voting more than members from any other party.

I therefore find it rather contradictory that the Bloc Québécois members use virtual voting more than members of other parties and yet they do not seem to want us to use the virtual Parliament.

Could my esteemed colleague explain that contradiction?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge my colleague, the House leader of the New Democratic Party. However, I do not understand the question, because in my speech I said that the Bloc Québécois was in favour of virtual voting. The government leader knows that.

I cannot explain an opinion that I do not have. I said that the Bloc Québécois was in favour of virtual voting. We agree.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, earlier, in his speech, the House leader of the official opposition referred back to a time where, to make a change, there had to be consensus in the House.

I will share a little story. Between 2015 and 2018, the government, which had a real majority—it was not a fake majority—wanted to have the House sit from Monday to Thursday.

Only 10 Bloc MPs agreed with the majority government. For the NDP, we all needed to be here five days a week, it was important. It was the same thing for the Conservatives.

In the end, the government did not implement that change because the House did not reach a consensus.

What changed between 2015 and 2019, during my first term, and now?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely correct and it happened many times.

I could have mentioned a similar situation from 2000. The government of the day proposed changes to the Standing Orders affecting Parliament. Several times, when no consensus was reached, the government preferred to withdraw its request because it considered a consensus necessary. To do otherwise would only open a Pandora's box for everyone to take advantage of. We were running the risk of getting to a point where the parliamentary system could no longer function at all, as they wanted it to at the time, and where a majority government would have all the power. It is ludicrous.

Anyone who looks at the history of Parliament can see that this is not a unique occurrence. Many times, when the government failed to achieve a consensus, it would throw in the towel and cancel the proposed changes out of respect for consensus.

What changed? I do not know.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech, even though he is wearing jeans today. I do not think that is very professional attire, but I will ask my question anyway.

I agree that we should strive to reach a consensus, but sometimes that is impossible. How does the member think that we can work together to find a solution that will accommodate as many members

as possible? I think that we agree that the voting application works. We want a hybrid system, but we want it to be used in a way that works for everyone.

How can we work together better to make that happen?

• (2030)

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I will answer my colleague's question, even though she is not wearing shoes.

There is nothing written on my jeans, by the way. I like her a lot anyway.

The solution is simple. We need to discuss things and show respect for one another. We need to talk to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. He knows that I am there anytime he wants to talk to me. The Bloc Québécois is constructive. We are ready to be reasonable, to discuss things and to reach agreements.

He sometimes talks about the House leader of the Bloc Québécois in the media, and the first thing he always says is that the House leader of the Bloc Québécois is reasonable. However, he did not even come and see me. He did not even come to see someone he describes as reasonable. He is giving me the silent treatment.

I cannot negotiate with someone who is not talking to me. I am waiting on him and offering to help.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this important issue. I will give a little history lesson in a moment, but first I would like to build on some of the things we have already established about the hybrid Parliament.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons was quite right a few minutes ago when he said that, on March 13, 2020, all the parties came together and agreed to suspend Parliament. We knew that the pandemic was coming and that we could not have all 338 members in the same room, with COVID-19 having begun to wreak havoc across the country. On March 13, 2020, we unanimously decided to suspend Parliament and set up what has since become the virtual Parliament we know today. It has set an example for the whole world. Other parliaments have permanently adopted rules for a virtual or hybrid assembly. Today, we are discussing the next steps we might take.

In Parliament, we are not supposed to mention absences. However, at the beginning of the pandemic, we had the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the House of Commons gave the rate of participation this one rare time. It was reported in the June 23, 2020, edition of *The Globe and Mail*. In the COVID-19 committee of this virtual Parliament, the NDP had the highest participation rate with 85%.

The Liberals were second with 76%, as *The Globe and Mail* reported in June 2020. The Bloc Québécois was at 73% at that time, in 2020. The Conservative Party had the lowest participation rate with only 47%. That caused a bit of a stir.

This was in June 2020. Today, three years later, we have beaten COVID-19 in most respects, but we must remain prudent and take measures to protect our health. The same applies to virtual voting. In June 2023, we see it once again.

The lowest rate of virtual voting translates into the highest attendance in the House, and the NDP wins again, albeit tied with the Conservatives, at 58%. The Liberals are at 65%, and the Bloc Québécois uses virtual voting 80% of the time. This gives an idea of how the NDP uses both virtual Parliament and virtual voting. The NDP has the highest participation rate in both of those categories.

Some people wonder whether the hybrid Parliament means that we will be working less actively. That is certainly not the case for the NDP, as the NDP members have proven. Our leader, the member for Burnaby South, has repeatedly pointed out that we are still working, but that there are some exceptions. I will come back to these exceptions later.

● (2035)

[English]

Given that the NDP has the highest attendance record in terms of virtual Parliament, the voting application and in the House, we have to look at, historically, how we have come to a point where the New Democrats support the idea of moving ahead with a hybrid Parliament that has been tested over the course of the last three years.

I know the Speaker is well aware of this, but historically we have changed the Standing Orders to reflect new technology and new trends. We just have to look at how Parliament functioned prior to the development of commercial air travel in this country. For somebody like me living 5,000 kilometres from Ottawa, the commute, even with air travel, sometimes takes 24 hours. When we think of the commute for northern members of Parliament and rural members of Parliament in British Columbia, at both ends of the country, we are talking about commutes that are sometimes extremely demanding.

If we went back 100 years, the member of Parliament for New Westminster at that time would have taken a slow train to travel across the country in mid-fall and basically set up lodgings in Ottawa. They would not have gone back to their ridings. They would not have gone back to British Columbia. They would spend the winter in Ottawa doing the work that we now do, in a contemporary sense, and they would have done it for four, five or six months. Then in the spring, they would have taken that slow train back to see their constituents.

Obviously, at that time, for members of Parliament to actively engage with their constituents and be effective for their constituents was hard to do if they had not been in the constituency for six months. With the development of commercial air travel, we changed the development of the parliamentary calendar. We no longer have that six month block where members are in Ottawa to

Government Orders

the exclusion of their constituencies. In fact, now we have constituency breaks, and because of those constituency breaks, we can be back in our ridings meeting with constituents, who are fundamentally our bosses, a lot more often.

In other words, with the development of commercial air travel, we understood that the important role of a member of Parliament was to be serving constituents. We therefore changed the Standing Orders. We changed the calendar. We developed a new system to respond to the ability of a member of Parliament, even from New Westminster—Burnaby in British Columbia, to fly out and fly back, to see their constituents and to still do their work in Ottawa.

COVID has allowed us to innovate yet again. We have seen the technologies that have allowed other parliaments to meet in a hybrid way, with some members in person and other members participating online. As a result of that, they have become more effective and more efficient. There is no doubt that a member of Parliament who is in their constituency is going to be a lot better at responding to the needs of constituents.

I want to give a shout-out to my staff team. They do tremendous work. We have helped thousands of constituents over the course of the last few years. The fact is that we work together to help constituents with a wide variety of cases before the federal government, even consumer cases, and with other things they need vital help with. This is a key part of the job. It is as important to me and my constituents for me to be working in my riding as it is to do that valuable work in Ottawa. There is a balance that has to be maintained, and with the idea of a hybrid Parliament, what we have found over the last three years is that we can do that work more effectively.

The member for Vancouver East raised a question half an hour or 45 minutes ago about when she became sick with COVID. The reality is that many members of Parliament, during the COVID pandemic, became sick and were unable to come here. In fact, we did not want them in the House of Commons. We did not want them spreading the virus. We did not want the House of Commons to become a vector for the virus.

● (2040)

The reality is, she was able, through hybrid Parliament, even while sick and this is the same case for every one of those members of Parliament who found themselves in a similar situation, to vote and to make her voice heard in the halls of power in the House of Commons, even while being sick with COVID, and we know that COVID cases often last for weeks.

Government Orders

That is also the case when we are talking about serious issues that come up in our ridings in emergencies. We are seeing now, because of climate change, an increasing in floods and forest fires. We are seeing, tragically, right across this country an outbreak of fires that we have not seen the likes of before. I know with climate change as well, the heat dome fell over the Lower Mainland. It killed dozens of my constituents and killed over 600 British Columbians. It is another example of the tragic catastrophes that are happening increasingly because of climate change. Atmospheric rivers have cut British Columbia off from the rest of the country. Therefore, the catastrophic impacts of climate change are felt more and more often. A member of Parliament then has to choose between serving their constituents and being able to advocate for their constituents. Whether it is a forest fire ravaging and threatening some of the major towns or villages in their riding or a heat dome that has settled over the city that is killing many of their constituents or the floods that have hit so many parts of this country, members of Parliament need to be able to intervene on behalf of their constituents. It is a much more effective intervention if they can do it on the ground as they are with their constituents and they see the needs that are there.

The government House leader also mentioned another element, and this I understand from first-hand experience. That is family crises that we all live through as members of Parliament. We are trying to get the job done on behalf of our constituents. We are trying to serve the country and build a country that really reflects the values that most of us share, but when family emergencies happen, up until COVID there were incredibly stark choices presented to people. A member of Parliament who had a dying relative would have to choose whether they needed to be with that relative or they needed to serve their constituents. We know that our constituents' needs are significant and we need to be at all times trying to advocate for them.

When my mother fell sick for the final time last year, I was able to participate through virtual Parliament. I was able to hold her hand when she passed away and it was a heartbreaking and terrible time for my family. It was unbelievably difficult, but I could still do the work, while being at her bedside.

These are the things that make a hybrid Parliament something that opens the door for far more Canadians, if they do not have to make those stark choices. If they are sick, they will serve their constituents. If there are emergencies in their riding, they can still serve their constituents. In fact they can advocate for their constituents from that constituency while talking to their constituents. In the event of family tragedies that we all struggle to get through, we still can do the work that is so important and be with our family members and help them.

This is the world's largest democracy. It is a 5,000-kilometre commute from my riding. When we talk about members of Parliament from northern British Columbia and northern Canada and from Vancouver Island, they have an even farther commute. With air travel these days and the difficulty we are having with some of the air travel networks, increasingly it is challenging to get from the constituency to Ottawa.

• (2045)

Given all of those elements, there is no doubt that a hybrid Parliament makes the most sense.

A number of issues have been raised through this debate thus far. One issue that has been raised is the question of accessibility to ministers. My experience under the Harper regime, which I lived through first-hand, with a majority government, was that while there were exceptions like Jim Flaherty, who was always available to talk, quite frankly most of the ministers were not, even though we were in physical proximity, even though we were a few feet away, even though we approached them. In so many cases, there was a complete unwillingness to engage with members of the opposition. That argument, that somehow ministers will be more accessible if one is in physical proximity with them, has certainly not been my experience.

It was not my experience during those years and, quite frankly, if a minister wants to be accessible, they will be accessible whether we are three feet away or 3,000 kilometres away. They will take one's call. That has been my experience.

Secondly, as to the issue of whether this should be permanent or subject to a sunset clause, quite frankly, Parliaments make their decisions. There is no doubt about that. The reality is that we have had three years to test this system. We know that there are still some improvements to make but we know, as well, that the system works, that members of Parliament can participate. They can vote and it is done effectively.

For this, I pay tribute to the House of Commons administration, our IT staff and the interpreting staff, who do such a remarkable job each and every day. The reality is that they created a system out of nothing, at a time when it was critical to put in place provisions for a temporary virtual Parliament and then a hybrid Parliament. They put in the long hours to make sure that everything was functioning.

Although we still have a lot of work to do to ensure the health and safety of interpreters, who do a remarkable job, without whom our Parliament simply could not function, and we still have improvements to make, the reality is that the system is working very effectively.

If Parliament reflects the country, what we are trying to do is open the doors to people who have families, people who come from communities that are not represented or are under-represented in the House of Commons. We need to make provisions like a hybrid Parliament. It is not only more effective for the constituents, it is also effective in attracting people to political life, which is very demanding. We work seven days a week. We sometimes work 20 hours a day. We need to make sure that more Canadians from diverse origins have access to our political system.

The way to do that is to have tools in place so that those new members, those upcoming members and those future members can really advocate on behalf of their constituents in the most effective way possible.

Living in a country as vast and as diverse as ours, where a 5,000-kilometre commute is sometimes necessary, we need to ensure that we put in place all of these measures. We know that they have worked. They have worked very effectively. They were established by consensus, unanimously, and, as a result of that, we are the better for it.

As far as the New Democrats are concerned, we believe that this is an important innovation that should be continued. That is why we will be voting yes on this motion and putting in place a virtual Parliament that can really serve the interests of all Canadians.

• (2050)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member can expand on the idea that work as a member of Parliament goes far beyond the work that is done here on the Hill in Ottawa. I thought the member was doing a wonderful job talking about how members of Parliament can serve their constituents by being in their riding. However, I think at times that point gets lost. There are so many events and things that are happening in our communities where members of Parliament serve their constituents best.

When I look at the hybrid, I see it as a tool that enables overall better representation of the people who elect us. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on that aspect of better quality representation opportunities by having a hybrid system.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. He has never referred to anything I have said as “wonderful” before, and I appreciate that. We generally tend to disagree, but on this I think we do agree.

The reality is that, over the last few years, my team and I have helped over 20,000 people in our riding with federal issues, yes, but also with consumer issues and a wide variety of issues that are not, strictly speaking, related to the federal government. However, by being on the ground, by having such an active constituency office where we are constantly doing outreach and by understanding what the needs of my community are, I am better able to advocate for them. Being at home is really the most important part of ensuring that I am fighting for good representation. When we talk about confidence in supply, dental care, affordable housing and the grocery rebate, it all comes from understanding what my constituents' needs are and fighting for them in Ottawa.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about family issues that may arise for members who sit in the House. I was listening attentively to that portion. However, the member must realize that in a hybrid Parliament, should this continue on, and I hoping that every single backbencher in all parties is aware of this, that eventually we will have no constituency weeks. We have constituency weeks so that we can go to back into our ridings and hear from constituents and work on individual files and then come back here, but in a hybrid Parliament, why would we have constituency weeks?

As someone who has three young kids, I have to sit here in evening sittings, which is something that was agreed to by the other parties, and so I cannot give them a call on FaceTime and cannot talk to them tonight. However, there are issues that will continue

Government Orders

with hybrid parliaments. We will continue getting more and more invites to events in the riding, and people in the ridings will expect us to do both works at the exact same time: do our legislative work in the House and do all of our constituency events at the same time. In fact, I see hybrid Parliament as going after whatever family time we have left right now as parliamentarians. I would like the member to comment on that.

• (2055)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member a great deal, but I beg to disagree on this. The reality is, and the NDP, I think, has proven this, both with having the highest attendance rate in the virtual Parliament and the highest rate of in-person voting—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that this motion was forced through committee to come to the House. Quorum is required. I do not see quorum. Should we ring bells for quorum? Would you consider that, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: A call is in order. We will do a quick count here.

And the count having been taken:

The Deputy Speaker: We have quorum.

The hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, we cannot be doing points of order after 6:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. I was just checking. I guess the parliamentary secretary and I missed that as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I said that.

The Deputy Speaker: Did you? I did not hear you.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Nobody ever hears him.

The Deputy Speaker: Speak up so that people can hear you, which is hard to believe in this House.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby had the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, in responding to the member, as I mentioned, the NDP has the highest attendance rate in terms of virtual Parliament and the highest rate of in-person voting, or tied with the Conservatives there, and so we believe that we can do both things.

Government Orders

The way the NDP functions, which is free advice that I will pass on to other parties, is that the whip has to agree to any virtual voting and to virtual participation, as I am back in British Columbia. So, there is already a measure that is in place which ensures that folks have to have legitimate reasons in order to do this. However, the reality is that without virtual Parliament, we do not have those choices. If there is an emergency in our riding, we cannot go to it and ensure that we are representing our constituents. If there is a family crisis or we are sick, it means that our constituents would no longer have the right to representation. We cannot speak out on their behalf and we cannot vote on their behalf if there is no hybrid Parliament—

The Deputy Speaker: We have another point of order.

The hon. member for York—Simcoe.

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I am confused about the member who is online. If he has the highest attendance virtually, does that mean he has the worst attendance in Parliament?

The Deputy Speaker: That is considered debate. How about this? We will just go on to the next question.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make something clear to the leader of the third opposition party: The Bloc Québécois is not against using the app for voting virtually. On the contrary, we even said as much at the Board of Internal Economy.

We are not against hybrid Parliament. We are against the fact that hybrid Parliament was not regulated, that it was not done properly, in consultation with all the parties. That is what irks us. For me, it is not a question of feelings. Since the beginning of the debate, we have been talking about work-life balance, emotions, our riding. However, it is also a question of the Standing Orders.

My question is for a leader. I am surprised that the NDP fully supports the government's motion, given that it would permanently change several rules to make them more restrictive for the opposition and less restrictive for the government. For example, for opposition motions that require 25, 15 or 10 members to block a government motion, in-person attendance is mandatory. In that case, the opposition needs to rise, but on the other hand, calling for quorum, which is the government's responsibility, can be done virtually.

I am surprised that the NDP leader agrees with that. There are rules that clearly give the government a leg up. I remember one time when the NDP was really upset and taken aback by a motion adopted with 25 members. We should perhaps remember the Mulcair incident. Under the proposed Standing Orders, which would become permanent, the government does not have to work hard to win confidence votes. It just has to tell people to log on and the confidence vote is in the bag.

Can my colleague explain why an opposition party such as his would accept these permanent amendments to the Standing Orders?

• (2100)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Bloc Québécois whip. I am pleased that Bloc members are now in favour of virtual voting. As I underscored in my speech, the Bloc uses virtual voting more than any other party. The figure for June 2023 is 80%. That is far more than for the other parties. It seems fairly logical, now that she clarified things.

Honestly, I was not reading the motion in the same way as my colleague. I do think there are a lot of safeguards in place. I should point out that the motion for a public inquiry to fight foreign interference came from the NDP. The other parties, the Bloc and the Conservative Party, supported it. The NDP continues to carry out its work as an opposition party very effectively.

[*English*]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. That is quite a fantastic riding name.

I was first elected in 2015. I was a young woman in this House. I was not really sure what parliamentary procedure was, how we function together and how we represent our communities while also working here in Ottawa on the important work we do here as legislators.

I then watched the late former member of Parliament, Mauril Bélanger, who had to come into the House in a very late stage of ALS just so that he could put forward his private member's bill to change the wording of the national anthem to make it more inclusive. I do not think there was a dry eye in the House when he did that.

Later in the day, I watched him being taken away in an ambulance. It really got me thinking about how we do things here.

I am sure that 100 years ago we did not have cameras in this place and that 50 years ago we did not have a televised broadcast of what happens in this House. These TV screens that are here are also very new. All of the changes and progress in this House are to enable us to better serve our communities and to enable people who are in a situation of the kind the late Mauril Bélanger was in to be able to put forward what they are passionate about and to show their commitment to Canadians while also taking care of themselves.

Members may also be stuck in a situation such that they cannot physically be in the House. I watched the late Arnold Chan struggle to travel to Ottawa during the very difficult illness that he passed from. I watched his family drive him up here on a regular basis because he could not fly.

Government Orders

During the pandemic, when we were working on the fly to make sure that this House still functioned and that we were able to provide support to Canadians at the time they needed it most, as the chair of the women's caucus, I was able to lead a take-note debate on the femicide that is happening in our country. We were able to do that virtually, even as the pandemic was raging.

We were not able to physically collect here in the House to have that debate. It was a very important debate. It went until midnight, and we got to hear from a lot of members of Parliament on that very important topic. We would not have been able to do so if we had not improvised and had not got with the program of what our reality was looking like.

Change is inevitable. Change for the sake of change should not happen, but change for a purpose is absolutely necessary. If we do not change for a purpose, then we are not progressing together. The world is changing around us.

I have had conversations with members of Parliament from across the commonwealth as to how our hybrid system is working for us. Canada's geographic state is very different from countries in the rest of the world. We are thousands and thousands of kilometres apart from each other. We gather here in Ottawa. We sacrifice a lot of time that we could have spent with constituents and family and at community events. We come here to debate legislation. If we are able to do that in a hybrid format, then why not do it?

I genuinely believe that the majority of members in this House are in this House to serve their communities and to make sure that their communities are well represented in this House. Would it not be great if we were able to represent our constituents and be here in person for our constituents, or be here in person in Ottawa and still be able to communicate with our ridings more effectively?

● (2105)

I am now able to take Zoom meetings with my constituents when I am in Ottawa. I was not able to do that before. Vice versa, if there is an emergency in my riding, I am able to go to my riding and attend to what needs to be attended to while making sure that I do not miss important debates like this in the House.

I was the chair of the Liberal women's caucus for over three years. The number one issue that we talked about on a regular basis was how we could make sure that there is equity in this House, that there is equality of representation and that this chamber looks like what our country looks like. Removing those barriers is paramount to make sure that we get to that space that we need to get to and make sure that we are able to effectively represent our constituents in the best way possible. Part of that conversation is to have diversity and inclusion in this place.

Although I do not have children of my own, I know there are members who struggle on a regular basis to ensure that they are not only being good parents but also being good parliamentarians. Having the hybrid option gives them the opportunity to do that. Having the hybrid option gives a person like me the ability to attend the funeral of a loved one, a constituent in my riding. It gives me the opportunity to have more town halls, to have more access to this place.

I am sure that 100 years ago, when we did not have emails, our constituents would have written to us by snail mail. That letter would have arrived in Ottawa at some point. It would have been opened at some point and then it would have been responded to. We can expect that it would have taken months for a constituent to be able to communicate with their member of Parliament to raise the issue that is being debated currently in this House. Technology has changed a lot of that. It has made us, as members of Parliament, more accessible to our constituents, and I think that is a good thing.

This hybrid system is not perfect, but I think that taking those small steps further toward progress is a good thing. It is a wonderful thing for us to be able to be more accessible for our constituents who elected us, who sent us here in this place. It is also paramount that we make sure this place is inclusive, that the people who are running for office are able to do so and are able to effectively represent their constituents. Part of that equation is having this hybrid Parliament.

I know that privately a lot of the members in this House agree that we need to have this hybrid option. I know that there are no votes waiting for us in our ridings as a result of this motion that we are debating today, but it needs to get done for the sake of progress. This is a long-term game here, and I really encourage our colleagues to come at this issue not just with the open mind that I am sure everybody in this place has, but also with a mindset about how we can do democracy better. Other countries are looking at our system, are taking lessons from our system, and I think we should take this system very seriously as well and ensure that we are working further toward progress, not just creating partisan games, which is what the future looks like now.

With that, I encourage members again to be open-minded about this motion to ensure we are working together. This is not a partisan issue; this is literally about how we can better serve our constituents in our ridings while also having the availability to be collectively here in this chamber to make sure that we are looking after one another and our constituents and making that a priority.

I look forward to questions and comments from members.

● (2110)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the concerns that I had with the hybrid Parliament is the idea that the government would not necessarily send ministers and have people on the front bench here to answer the questions of parliamentarians. That, of course, is very important. That is how we as parliamentarians hold the government to account. I know that this process has certainly improved over the last several months.

I wonder if the member could talk about what could be put in place that could ensure that the government is here taking questions from the opposition and doing its job as the government so that the opposition can do its job as the opposition.

Government Orders

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that question. The member is absolutely right; we do need to make sure that all of us, together, are available to each other, whether it is by virtual means or in person. I really appreciate that, over the past number of months, I have seen that no minister has responded to questions virtually. Ministers have been present here in the House, as their duties allow. There is a lot of good faith in what we are doing collectively and in a non-partisan way. The member, in the validity of her question, has the right to ask that. I know for a fact that the Liberal government will ensure that ministers are available for all members in the House.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talks a great deal about partisanship. However, this is the first time that a party has tried to change a fundamental aspect of House operations without the unanimous consent of the House. Other changes were started and then stopped due to a lack of unanimous consent in the House.

Why do the Liberals want to impose such a major change this time, without even coming to discuss it with our House leader?

[English]

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, in my role as the chair of the women's caucus, I can tell the House that this conversation has been ongoing for many years. The government has tried very hard to ensure that all parties come to the table on this. It is really unfortunate that this issue is being used as partisan politics. I am looking forward to everybody's collaboration to ensure that this Parliament is open and accessible to our constituents, to all Canadians, while ensuring that we are able to work effectively as members of Parliament.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the provisions in the proposed Standing Orders is that committee chairs must be in person to preside over committee meetings.

My question to the member is as follows: Is this a vote of non-confidence in the member for Vancouver Centre and her ability to chair the heritage committee?

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, that is a very strange question. It reminds me of the time, a couple of years ago, when the Liberal government was trying to present our budget bill. Members of that party started to bang on their desks, in a very loud way, and then marched right out the door after making some kind of deal with the Speaker to which I am not privy.

It is about good faith. It is about ensuring that we are here for our constituents and that we are doing the work that Canadians expect us to do without being full of drama about it. I encourage the party opposite to reduce its drama.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the member for taking us through some of the tougher memories since 2015.

The member spoke about change with purpose. I think about 2015, when our government was elected and we had gender parity at the cabinet table. It really did allow others to look within their organizations and businesses to say that they needed to actually think about gender. A lot of the steps we take within these institu-

tions actually do encourage the rest of our country to progress as well.

I would like to hear the member's comments as to whether she sees this as an opportunity for the government to lead, and for all of us to work together to lead, so that others could also understand it. In the riding of Waterloo, we are the hub of innovation; we will always embrace technology, but the House of Commons has not always been that place.

• (2115)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, if we are not working with the times, then we are stagnant.

I really think that change for the sake of change is not always positive, but change to make sure that our constituents, Canadians, are well represented is the best way we could work together and ensure that our country is moving forward.

Industry leads; government sets the example. By doing this, by ensuring that hybrid Parliament is a functioning system for our democracy, we are setting an example not only for industry, for the gig economy, but also across the world for emerging democracies.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise this evening in the House to join the debate on Government Business No. 26, which seeks to make permanent the changes to the Standing Orders to allow members of Parliament to participate virtually in the work we do in this place. This motion is an important step forward in the evolution of our democracy, to make sure we are keeping with the times.

I am part of the class of 2019, as I was elected in October of that year. For me, Parliament was in session for only about six weeks before the pandemic hit, so I was just getting the sense of how the business in this place operates when that hit. Then the COVID pandemic threw everything for a loop. We had to learn how to do the business of this place but be able to respect the public health guidelines we were given, which prevented us from travelling across the country and prevented us from gathering in large groups.

Therefore, at that time, we embarked on a new innovation that allowed us to participate virtually by creating a special version of Zoom. It would allow us to participate in a way that respected those public health guidelines but still do our important work where we would be able to deliver speeches by Zoom, participate as members of committees, and have witnesses in our committees participate by Zoom as well. We also were able to vote on important pieces of legislation. What we originally developed was actually not very efficient. We each had to say on Zoom what our vote was, but eventually we actually developed an application which utilizes facial recognition so that we are now able to vote anywhere in our country in sometimes 10 seconds or less. This is a very important innovation, to my mind.

The experience has shown that virtual Parliament worked. We were able to get very important work done over the course of the pandemic to deliver help to Canadians in some of the most dire straits. We were rapidly learning what the impacts of COVID were, and we were making an iterative response to make sure the programs we were rolling out were fit for purpose.

Since the public health guidelines have changed and we have been able return en masse to this place, we have kept these provisions as an addition to the work we do in this place, and that is very important to add here because there are very clear benefits to our being able to participate virtually when we need to. For instance, if there is an emergency, particularly a family emergency, members are able to be there with some of their loved ones in some of their most difficult states. Multiple members of Parliament have given birth just in the last year, and this has allowed them to continue to do their work as MPs while being at home with their newborn child. In addition, something that was very much highlighted during the pandemic is that those who are in poor health or are sick do not need to travel to be here. It means that they are not potentially exposing other people if they are contagious, or putting themselves in a very risky position. I have heard a number of the previous speakers mention some names of members of Parliament here, and I do want to just mention our late colleague, the Hon. Jim Carr, who, with a terminal condition, was able to participate virtually, right up until the end of his life. That bears mentioning because he brought so much wisdom to this place and I learned a lot from him personally.

Another benefit I would mention about this system is that it allows members to be in their constituencies more and to do more constituency work. A very important part of our job as parliamentarians is to make sure we can be there and listen to the concerns people have and be able to advocate for their priorities. To be able to do that, it is important to actually connect with people in our constituency so that when we come to this place, we are able to advance those priorities. Many of us in this place have ridings with large populations. For me, it is 131,000 people, and there are many other members of Parliament who have even more constituents and represent large areas that are sometimes very difficult to get to.

• (2120)

It is important that we be able to connect with folks so we do not get too caught up in the Ottawa bubble here and become detached from the realities people are facing. That work as a constituency member of Parliament is very important, as is just being there at events, so people can feel close to their government and so members are able to be more responsive.

There are significant costs to the pre-existing system we have, where everybody is here in person. A number of members previously have talked about how the size of our country, the largest democracy in the world and the second-largest country in the world, presents some major challenges. Just the time to get here from our constituencies can be immense. At the best of times, it takes me eight hours, point to point, to get here. In the last two weeks I have missed connections, which meant I had to stay overnight in places along the way. Some other members have talked about it taking 24 hours to get here, so time is a cost. There

Government Orders

is also a monetary cost every time we travel here; it can be in the thousands of dollars for a round trip for folks to get here.

There are health issues, particularly for some of our more vulnerable colleagues, when we are doing 26 round trips a year, particularly if we have a time zone change. For me, it is a three-hour time difference, which does take its toll as well. There are also the environmental impacts. I calculated that, for every round trip I do to Ottawa, there are 1.2 tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted, so I think we all need to be mindful of that. Then, of course, there are the opportunity costs when we are not able to be in our community as well.

One thing that I do not think has been mentioned so far in the debate today is the cost it has on families. I have seen some statistics that have shown that members of Parliament have a divorce rate of 85%. It is not hard to see why. With so many of my colleagues I have talked to, I have seen the stress it puts on relationships when they are not able to be with their family for half of the year. I think this is something we also need to take into account, because it discourages many people from getting involved in this kind of work, particularly for young families or young couples expecting to have a family. The challenge of the amount of time we need to be here, which is sometimes 130 days of the year, is a huge challenge in getting more of the people involved in this type of work whom we really need to get involved.

I do not want to say I am advocating for all virtual, because there are very real benefits to people's being here. As the government House leader for the Conservative Party mentioned, being able to talk to a minister and get something solved is much easier when one is able to walk to their desk and have that conversation. We are not, if all virtual, able to develop the informal relationships that are so key to making this work effectively, whether with other members of Parliament from other parties, with senators, bureaucrats or other stakeholders.

It is really important that, when we are giving speeches, we be in this place, because the impact when we are able to see how it is landing with somebody is very different than reading something on the screen, so I think there should be guidelines for the use of the system. I think it is a very important tool we have. All members should seek to be here far more in person than virtually, and the experience to date has shown that the vast majority of MPs are doing just that. The questions and answers in question period should be done in person. I know a few other members have brought this up previously, but the experience has been that ministers are here answering questions, which is very key for accountability.

I very much support this motion, which creates the conditions for us to be more effective MPs and better people, more energetic in the work we do as well. It has very clear benefits when it is done in a judicious way, and the experience to date has shown that it has been used in just that way.

• (2125)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country a similar question to the one I asked the previous speaker.

Government Orders

These provisions provide that a chair must preside in person. Does the member agree that the chair of a committee ought to preside in person, and is that a reflection on the absolute gong shows that we have seen at some committees where members have not presided in person?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I think being there in person can make the job of a committee chair a lot easier. It is not impossible to do it virtually, but they do need to have help on the ground to see how people are motioning and whether there is agreement in the room. I do not think it is absolutely necessary, but I have seen some chairs who are able to do it very well and some not as well. I think that, ideally, we would have chairs in person. My experience has been that it makes it a much smoother process.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I found the end of my colleague's speech rather interesting. According to him, we should be present in the House to give speeches. When we are here to give a speech, it is nice when there are people here to listen. Since I know we are not allowed to mention the presence or absence of members in the House, I will not do so, but I think people get my drift.

The member said that there should be guidelines and that members should attend question period in person. However, there are no guidelines for those situations. To date, I have seen only one guideline, and that is that the opposition needs to have 25 members present in person in the House to block government motions, while government members are free to vote remotely on confidence motions.

Does the member not find that to be a major power imbalance? It seems as though this motion was moved without consulting the real opposition parties, because it is an initiative of the NDP-Liberal coalition. I do not understand why the NDP is supporting this motion, because it will reduce their power.

Does this imbalance not make the member uncomfortable? Is he not open to really working together across party lines and creating a real, serious working committee to oversee these changes?

We are not opposed to every aspect of hybrid Parliament. We agree with many of them, but we think that what is being proposed is not balanced enough. I would like him to elaborate on that.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I think that is one of the reasons we are having this debate this evening. When we started using this system, we had unanimous consent. To do our job, we need to hear the different perspectives and allow everyone to contribute to the debate.

I agree that it is very important that the ministers be here to answer questions. I am here to listen to the member speak about what he would like to do with this motion. I think that we can find solutions by having discussions.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have spent a lot of time trying to get young women to enter this place and get involved in politics, and often they have a lot of questions about a lot of things, like the toxicity of social media, the time requirements, their ability to take care of their kids and

the work-life balance. One of the things I tell them about, which I have to say is unfortunate because hybrid is not confirmed, is what hybrid has allowed a lot of women to do in the House to do this job. It is an incredibly important voice that women bring to this place. It is not just women, but all people of different equity-seeking groups.

Could the member talk more about that and how hybrid can help?

• (2130)

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, indeed, that was one of the points I brought up in my speech. Hybrid allows for some of that flexibility, and we do need to get more women and more people from equity-seeking groups here in this place. Right now, for the first time ever, we have 100 women represented here. We need to find ways to encourage more people to be here, and if some of these issues are preventing that, we need to have an honest look at it, because when we do that we improve our democracy and get those important voices heard in this place.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege and an honour to rise in this House, but I do so today on Government Business No. 26 with some degree of disappointment. There is disappointment because we are debating a motion that does not have the consensus of this House of Commons. It does not have the consensus of the recognized parties. The government and the government alone is trying to unilaterally change the accepted rules of this place without the consensus of all parties.

When provisions for hybrid Parliament were first introduced in this place, they were done so as a temporary measure so that members could participate in the proceedings of Parliament at a time when travelling and gathering in large groups were not permitted due to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were never considered a long-term change to how we conduct business as a House of Commons.

The proposed changes being debated today are not in the interests of Canada's Parliament. I am reminded of the words of a great Nova Scotian, one of the great parliamentarians of his generation, the Right Hon. Bob Stanfield, from Truro, Nova Scotia. I know the Speaker is a proud Nova Scotian. Bob Stanfield, in a memo to his caucus, focused on the importance of certain institutions, certain principles among parliamentarians, that we ought to hold dear. He wrote, "Not only is it unnecessary for political parties to disagree about everything, but some acceptance of common ground among the major parties is essential to an effective and stable democracy. For example, it is important to stability that all major parties agree on such matters as parliamentary responsible government and major aspects of our Constitution."

In the past, that has been accepted. It has been accepted among all political parties and different political parties that when major changes are made to how we operate as a Parliament, as a House of Commons, it is done with a common understanding among parliamentarians. Indeed, during the Harper majority government, a process like this was led by then parliamentary secretary Tom Lukiwski, who ensured that the multiple major changes made to our Standing Orders were made with the consensus of all political parties at that time. That is the process that worked then, and that is the process that ought to work going forward.

I want to quote my friend and geographic neighbour, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. The member was recently at a parliamentary committee testifying on a different matter, but the point he made applies to this place. He said:

In Canada, there is only one federal electoral process, and that is the process whereby Canadians get one vote for their local member of Parliament. Everyone else in our system is appointed. The Senate is appointed. The Prime Minister is appointed.... The cabinet is appointed. Everyone else is appointed. The only electoral process federally in our system is for the House of Commons. It's the only part of our system that has an electoral process. It's the only part of our system that is democratic. It's the only part of our system where Canadians get a vote, and that is for the House of Commons.

The changes the Liberal government is proposing would give even more power to the whips and party leaders, and take away the rights and privileges of individually duly elected parliamentarians. It is a fundamental principle in this place that the Standing Orders ought to be respected, and up until now, the changes ought to require consensus. It is clear from the debate thus far that the government does not have that consensus.

I want to draw members' attention to some history in this place. On May 18, 2016, the then leader of the government in the House of Commons, now the minister of democratic institutions, introduced government Motion No. 6. Back then, when the NDP was still operating as an opposition party and holding true to its principles, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby raised a question of privilege in which he called the motion “a motion that rewrites our Standing Orders in more than 17 different ways so that the executive has unilateral control over all of the procedural tools in the House.”

• (2135)

That was when the member for New Westminster—Burnaby had principles and held the government to account. Unfortunately, now the New Democrats have joined the Liberal coalition and are no longer using the tools at their disposal. Motion No. 6 was eventually withdrawn, but only after the united concerted efforts of the opposition parties to make it clear that changes ought only occur with a consensus.

Then in our walk down memory lane, we move to 2017, when the then leader of the government in the House of Commons, now the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, instructed the Liberal members on that same committee to introduce a motion that would have given the government the ability to change the Standing Orders in a way that was only approved by the Liberal majority in the House of Commons. This resulted in what was then known as the Standing Orders standoff, in which the 55th meeting of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House

Government Orders

Affairs lasted from March 21 to May 2, 2017, when the Liberal government eventually backed down.

That was certainly a challenging time, but when I look back at it, I do so with pride, because it was a time when Conservative, New Democrat, Bloc and Green members were all united against the unilateral Liberal government actions. I remember at the time the outrage so eloquently expressed by the NDP member David Christopherson. In one of his 303 interventions in that meeting, he said, “I don't understand how the government thinks they're going to win on this, or how they think that ramming through changes to our Standing Orders is going to make the House work any better.”

More than six years later, here we are again, with the Liberals trying to ram through changes, having not learned a single thing. Unfortunately, this time the NDP is driving the getaway car.

It reminds me of another quotation. In a speech to the Empire Club, an individual said this:

It is the opposition's right to insist at all times on the full protection of the rules of debate. The government is entitled to that same protection, but in addition it has its majority with which to establish its will. The opposition has only the rules for its protection, hence the authorities on parliamentary procedure emphasize the greater importance to the opposition of the only protection it has, the protection of the rules.

Who said that? It was the late great Stanley Knowles, one of the great NDP parliamentarians in this place, who, even after he left office, continued to have a seat at the clerk's table until he passed away. That is how dedicated he was to this place and to parliamentary democracy. Sadly, the NDP is no longer living up to the great expectations set by the late great Stanley Knowles.

As I mentioned at the outset of my remarks, the provisions for hybrid were brought in as temporary measures during the lockdowns of COVID-19. They were only there as a matter of necessity and should not be a permanent change so that members of Parliament can avoid this place.

Frankly, I remember that in April 2020, when we first started looking at temporary changes to the Standing Orders, it was done with a clear understanding that they were temporary. When the procedure and House affairs committee made its recommendations at that time, it included phrases such as “during the current pandemic” and “during exceptional circumstances”. This was never thought to be a part of the normalized operation of this place.

In fact, the committee heard from former acting clerk Marc Bosc, co-editor of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, the person who quite literally wrote the book on procedure in this place. On June 4, 2020, he said:

...I would say that I agree with Mr. Blaikie that the changes made so far relate to a pandemic situation. I think that has to be the lens through which you look at this particular exercise. The speed with which the hybrid model for the committee has been adopted, to me, is not a particular concern, but as Mr. Blaikie pointed out, if the tendency or the temptation is to make these changes permanent, that's a whole other issue.

Government Orders

As clearly shown at the time, these changes were never contemplated to be wholesale changes but rather temporary measures for a temporary situation.

● (2140)

We, as parliamentarians, especially opposition parliamentarians, hold a fundamental purpose in holding the government and the executive branch to account. What is often forgotten by Liberal backbenchers is that they share the same responsibility. Liberal backbenchers are not members of the government. They are members of the government party, but they are not members of the executive branch, and they ought to share the same concerns as opposition members in their role of holding government to account.

Unfortunately, hybrid Parliament makes it easier for Liberal ministers to avoid accountability in this place and at committee. What is more, as much as we may not always like what our friends in the media may write or say about us or our party, the media, too, holds a fundamental role within our parliamentary democracy. However, when a minister of the Crown participates virtually, either in committee or in the House, they avoid the interaction with our friends in the media and thereby avoid that effective way of accountability. When ministers participate in committee virtually, it takes more time and eats up more of the opportunity for opposition members to ask questions and have an effective restraint on the actions of government.

As I have raised a couple of times in questions and comments, the challenge of committees is very clear in a hybrid setting. I had the great honour and privilege to serve for nearly a year on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. At the time, we were undertaking some very important studies, one of them on the absolutely horrendous state of affairs at Hockey Canada. I might add that is now ongoing with many other sports, which frankly, has not been adequately addressed. Sport Canada, as an organization, should be ashamed of itself in view of those allegations against Hockey Canada back in June 2018. It did nothing for four years, but I digress.

At committee, we were also studying Bill C-11 and we were undertaking clause-by-clause. In both of these situations, having a chair who was entirely virtual led to a gong show of a committee. The committee was unable to function because the chair could not see the room. The chair could not understand what was happening in the room. Quite frankly, the chair was constantly saying that she did not know what was happening in the room because she was not in the room. That is one of the major failings of the hybrid system, particularly as it relates to committees.

Now, I do recognize that, in these provisions, the presiding officer must preside in person, and perhaps we could call that the Hedy Fry rule, but that is what is happening—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On a point of order, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, we cannot say members' names, and that would be an inappropriate name under that rule anyway.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Obviously, the hon. member realizes that he mentioned the name in error. I am sure he will ensure that the rest of his speech does not include the name of a parliamentarian who presently sits in the House.

● (2145)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, indeed, I did mean to say the member for Vancouver Centre, but it does reinforce the point that a member presiding over a committee or over the affairs of the House ought to be in person to ensure that a committee can function well.

Indeed, the member just raised a point of order. In a hybrid setting, where the chair is not personally there and present, it is much more difficult for a member to raise a point of order and catch the eye of the chair.

I want to talk a little now about how I believe hybrid Parliament has actually created a more toxic House of Commons. I was elected in 2015 and served here for about four and a half years prior to hybrid Parliament being introduced. In the three years since hybrid Parliament has been used, I have noticed a deep decline in decorum in this place and in committees.

Recently, in his final remarks to the House just earlier today, the member for Durham spoke about that growing division we have seen. I believe that a lot of this is a result of having more virtual and fewer in-person sittings of this place and committee.

It is far easier to be nasty to someone when one sees them only on a screen and one does not see them in the elevator, in the cafeteria, sharing flights and having private conversations. That understanding of in-person content and in-person conversations is what is important, and it is not always discussing Parliament. It could be discussing sports teams, the weather, our families and other things that colleagues talk about on a daily basis. It allows people to be seen as people and respected, rather than as adversaries who need to be defeated.

It has been spoken about in this place fairly often that this ought to be a measure to make things more family friendly. I do not disagree that Parliament is not the most family friendly place in the world. I think we all recognize that, when we are elected, there are many sacrifices each member makes for their family. I have three young children, who are almost nine, seven and five, and I do miss events in their lives.

I know that many members, especially members who are women, find real challenges because of the commute back and forth. There is no getting around that, but frankly, hybrid Parliament will not be the solution. In fact, hybrid Parliament requires that certain members ought to vote and participate even when they are unwell, caring for a loved one or caring for a new child. There is a new expectation that, when they are undertaking those important life milestones and important life situations, they are now expected to be voting and to be participating, rather than dealing with the important things that ought to be dealt with at that time.

It is not just Conservatives who have concerns with hybrid Parliament. Wayne Easter, a former long-time Liberal member of Parliament, an individual who served in this place from 1993 to 2021, recently expressed his concerns about hybrid Parliament.

He said, “Let me put it this way: If you don’t want to work in Ottawa during the parliamentary sessions — don’t run to be an MP. A hybrid Parliament made sense during Covid but it should never be permanent. I strongly oppose govt’s move to make it permanent. He also said, “MPs being present at Committees is critical to do their work properly so they can build relationships across Party lines, chat with guests on the sidelines and feel the emotions of witnesses and Members.” He then said, “MPs present build alliances within the caucus, with Members of other parties and speak directly to Ministers behind the curtains on issues of concern.”

Mr. Easter goes on to further elaborate on many of those concerns, but suffice it to say, this is a member who served in that Liberal caucus for decades who is now criticizing this effort by the unilateral Liberal government to make changes.

At the Procedure and House Affairs Committee, we heard from another distinguished parliamentarian from the provincial level, the Hon. Ted Arnott, the Speaker for the Ontario legislature, who has served the Ontario legislature for over 33 years. He said:

It’s hugely valuable for elected members to be able to interact in the chamber, outside of the chamber, in the corridors and in the lobbies. Having those face-to-face conversations can be very helpful in terms of ensuring that members are informed and that they’re able to share best practices and ideas, as well as for members to be able to represent their constituents.

Throughout my time as a member, when I was advocating for my constituency, in many cases I would approach ministers, whether I was on the government side or whether I was on the opposition benches, and speak to them privately. That was a very important way of advancing an issue on behalf of constituents.

• (2150)

There is an importance in having these opportunities in the House.

As a wrap-up, I want to focus on a couple of paths forward. First of all, I want to note that the PROC dissenting report opened the door to co-operation with the government. We said very clearly in the Conservative dissenting report that we would agree to extend the provisions of hybrid Parliament to one year after the next election, so that when we came back after the election, there would not be that standoff in the first week. We would allow for the provision of the Standing Orders to continue for approximately one year and then have a vote on whether new members, and all members at the time, wish to see that continue. We made that offer. We had that opening, but the government failed to take it. It is unfortunate because we have seen the concerns that have happened.

I want to point out that, since March 2020, there were 90 disabling injuries recorded by interpreters in the House. We are quite literally causing damage to our interpreters, who are already in a lower number than they were prepandemic. If we want to truly be a bilingual Parliament, truly be a bilingual place, we need to ensure that interpreters are available in this place and for all committees.

I do want to say that we have opened the door to compromise. It is entirely inappropriate that the Liberals fail to seek that consensus where all recognized parties could have found a solution going forward.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I like the member and enjoyed working with him at Canadian heritage. He did a great job as vice-chair.

Government Orders

I am prefacing my remarks in praising the member, but I have got to say his memory is faulty. I lived through the Harper regime, and I saw how the Conservatives ran roughshod over parliamentary rights. Through the entire majority mandate of its last four years, it was absolutely appalling and atrocious. Therefore, for the member to somehow cite the Harper government as an example to follow, I strongly disagree.

However, the member talked about this being before the House now, but where did this come from? The member will recall that, as a House, we referred it to procedure and House affairs. Procedure and House affairs had as its first recommendation reporting back to the House of Commons: “That hybrid Parliament, including the voting application, be continued and that all necessary changes to the Standing Orders be made to allow for its use, and that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs must review these measures within the first year of the 45th Parliament.”

Therefore, the procedure and House affairs committee recommendation before us now is to be voted on by Parliament, so I simply disagree with the member’s interpretation of the facts. Procedure and House affairs—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will allow the hon. member to answer because I do have other individuals who want to ask questions.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, when he is citing the Harper record, that his party, the New Democratic Party, so far has supported time allocation 37 times in this Parliament, so it is awfully rich for the NDP members to be claiming it is an opposition party when they are supporting time allocation here in the House of Commons.

Ms. Heather McPherson: You did it 115 times.

Mr. John Nater: I would remind the member for Edmonton Strathcona—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I think there are other individuals who are trying to have their say here, but it is not time. I have not recognized them.

Before I go to the hon. member for Perth—Wellington, I want to remind hon. members who are online that I will not recognize them unless they have their headsets on.

Government Orders

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, in response to the member for Edmonton Strathcona, 37 times her party has supported time allocation to ram through the Liberal government's agenda. The New Democrats used to be an opposition party to hold the government to account, and now the member for New Westminster—Burnaby and others are raising this issue. They talked about the Harper regime. There was a cake at that time. We were going to bake a cake for the NDP to celebrate—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Chair, excuse my voice. I have asthma, and I am suffering from the pollution syndrome right now.

I just want to say that there was some misinformation that went on in this House, and I want to correct it.

• (2155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member's mike is not working properly. I will ask her to unhook it and hook it in again.

In the meantime, I will go to the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît, and I will make sure that the hon. member's mike is plugged in properly to go back to her.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a fairly simple question for the member who just gave his speech. All evening we have been talking about work-life balance, how nice it would be if we could all be in our constituencies with our husbands, wives and children and perhaps have a more balanced life. Of course, I think that every working person in the world would like to have a job where they work at home with their family close by. However, that is not possible.

My question is quite specific. There are a number of things the government can do, but is not doing, to make it easier to have work-life balance. I have the parliamentary committee schedule in front of me. Before the pandemic, I think even in the winter and spring of 2020, parliamentary committee meetings were not held on Fridays. Since we have started sitting in a hybrid Parliament, committees sit from Monday to Friday, full time.

Do you not think, sir, that this measure is getting in the way of work-life balance, yet it is tolerated in a hybrid Parliament?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must remind the hon. member to address her comments to the Chair and not directly to members.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, the government is doing a number of things that are not good for families. Tonight, tomorrow night and the night after that, we are sitting until midnight. That is not good for families, but that is what the government is doing.

[English]

I want to say to the member for Vancouver Centre that we have been doing Parliament virtually now for three years, and we have to plug in our headsets in order to participate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Yes, I want to remind members that, if they want to participate, they should make sure their headsets are on and plugged in. Let us try that again.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to watch when someone is trying to be personal and nasty. People can make assumptions. My headset was plugged in. It just did not work for that moment.

I just wanted to say that there was a great deal of misinformation and, may I say, disinformation that went on with the hon. member's speech. If the hon. member will recall, the hon. member mentioned the clause-by-clause discussion of one of the very contentious bills on his committee. The committee did not work, and we had problems; we had to come back to the House to ask the House to set time limits for how we dealt with clause-by-clause. The reason for this was that his party filibustered every second clause. There was filibustering going on, and that was what created a dysfunctional committee, not my being hybrid, not my being there. I had everything in front of me. It was working extremely well.

Let us not be nasty and mean to people who have problems and sometimes could be ill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The microphone was showing as either not being plugged in or not being plugged in properly.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the member for Vancouver Centre is incorrect. We had not proceeded to clause-by-clause until the Liberals brought in a guillotine motion in the House of Commons. To say that we were filibustering clause-by-clause is 100% inaccurate, so perhaps the member could refresh her memory, because that is not what happened. They came with a guillotine motion, literally in the dead of night, to force every clause through without debate or discussion. Every debate was debated in the dead of night.

To remind members who are wondering at home, the bill in question was Bill C-11. This was the Liberal effort to regulate the Internet and to try to force user-generated content to be subject to CRTC regulations. We all know that if we want something to be done poorly, we give it to the CRTC.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been listening tonight. We know that democracy is going to be changed with this virtual Parliament.

I wonder if the member has heard if the Liberal government has tabled or is going to table a stop-work order on Centre Block to save billions of dollars. Should we then, with their arguments, just make all of Parliament virtual? Do we need to spend \$3 billion on Centre Block now? Should we act like a battery plant and put a stop-work order on Centre Block tonight?

● (2200)

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, Centre Block has a carving in the old House of Commons chamber, and part of that carving represents the 20 members who must contribute to quorum. The current Liberal government would be doing away with the constitutionally mandated quorum requirement that, at all times, 20 members must be present in the House of Commons. Because of the Liberal-NDP coalition agreement, they would do away with something as fundamental as the constitutionality of quorum, where members must be physically present in order to do that. It is disappointing to see the efforts of the Liberal government to avoid accountability on these important issues.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a very quick question before I get the opportunity to speak. Could the member give a clear indication of why the members of the Conservative Party seem to oppose the voting app? Do they support the app?

Mr. John Nater: Madam Speaker, in our dissenting report, we were open to a compromise to allow all elements of hybrid Parliament to proceed for one year. Our clear requirement was that there ought to be a sunset clause so that, one year after the start of the next Parliament, the new Parliament would have a vote on whether to maintain those provisions. This was the compromise that, as opposition MPs, we were willing to make. Although we do not particularly like the provisions of hybrid Parliament, we were willing to make that compromise in order to come to a consensus among parliamentarians, but the requirements were the sunset clause and the vote one year into the next Parliament.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an interesting point the member just raised. He says that the Conservative Party would support everything we are talking about if there were a sunset clause. If I am understanding what the member just said, he would then be in full support of the motion; I look to him to give clear indication that my statement is, in fact, correct.

Mr. John Nater: That was in the dissenting report.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, he is reaffirming that by his comments across the way.

I think we have to put things into proper perspective here, and part of that is recognizing the role the Conservative Party plays today on the floor of the House of Commons. I would suggest that it is very much a destructive force. They talk about the NDP voting with us on time allocation, and they try to give the impression that there is a solid coalition and so forth. However, the member does not realize that, in the last federal election, Canadians decided that it would be a minority government.

Government Orders

In a minority government, it is not only the party that has the majority of seats that is afforded the opportunity to continue to govern, as we were given. It also ensures that the government works along with opposition parties. The Conservatives, virtually from the get-go, made it very clear that they do not see themselves as a co-operative—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, I would like to do a quorum call.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. There is no quorum call during these debates, and there are quite a few people online at this point.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, I think one of these screens should show the people who are online, so that when we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. That is not a point of order. That is a point of debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this is now the second time we see that Conservative members do not understand the rules. They stand on a point of order when they know that, after 6:30 p.m., quorum cannot be called. It is very rude for members opposite to interrupt a member's speech in order to ask for a quorum call when they know full well they cannot do so. I would ask the indulgence of the Conservative Party members to understand that they cannot call quorum and to allow members to continue with their remarks uninterrupted.

I was trying to emphasize that a clear message was sent in the last election, not only to the Liberal Party but also to opposition parties. This message was that in order to pass anything through the House of Commons in a minority situation, one needs the co-operation of at least one opposition party. Without that, one cannot accomplish anything. The Conservative Party is very much on the record saying they do not support this party being in government. Its members are going out of their way to play a role as a destructive force in every way to prevent legislation and motions from ultimately being passed.

Government Orders

A good example of that is when the leader of the Conservative Party, just last week, prior to coming into the House indicated to the media and anyone who wanted to hear that he was going to speak until the Prime Minister withdrew budgetary measures. It lasted four hours; the vote ended up taking place anyway, because of the rules. In my mind, this amplified the Conservative Party of Canada's approach to dealing with issues that come to the floor of the House of Commons. As a member of Parliament now for over a decade, one of the things I have recognized is that it is exceptionally hard, if not impossible, to make substantive changes to the Standing Orders unless one is prepared to take a strong stand. This is because getting that consensus is virtually impossible.

I sat in on PROC meetings and listened to all sorts of discussions taking place. I guess I would say that I am a frustrated parliamentarian who recognizes that we need to modernize the rules of the House of Commons. There are changes that are necessary. After every election, we are actually afforded the opportunity, as individual members, as parliamentarians, to share concerns on rule changes we would like to see.

I recall standing up not that long ago, I believe it was last year, when we had that debate inside the chamber, and I talked about some of the rules I would like to see changed. I would like to see more debate time, for example, and I set in process a way in which that could be accommodated. Other members talked about different forms of rules and changes, such as dual chambers and so forth.

There have been both on-the-record and off-the-record discussions among members of all political parties. I was actually very pleased when, back in March 2020, we had a consensus to look at ways in which we could accommodate the pandemic and allow Parliament to continue. There was a very positive attitude, where opposition parties of all stripes worked with the government and where the government worked with opposition parties. We came up with a system that has clearly demonstrated that even in a world-wide pandemic, the House of Commons can continue and be effective. We are able to deal with the issues that concern Canadians day in, day out.

● (2205)

There are many things that took place during the pandemic that I would suggest would be of great benefit in terms of modernizing the House of Commons. Not all Conservatives within the House of Commons would balk at the idea of having the voting application completely in its hybrid form, as the government House leader himself pointed out when he brought forward the legislation. Like him, I too have heard many positive things about the hybrid format.

When I posed a question to the member who spoke just before me, asking whether they do or do not support the voting application, the member's response in essence was that if there were a sunset clause, they would support the motion in its entirety. That is what he implied. I actually repeated what he implied as he was there, and he nodded in the affirmative. He said, "Absolutely."

This is mixed messaging. On the one hand, the Conservative Party is prepared to continue doing what we are doing for the next couple of years. We are committed to continue to work with opposition members, particularly the New Democrats, who have expressed an interest in listening to what Canadians said back in 2021 and mak-

ing this Parliament work, which means we could be going well into 2025.

The Conservatives are saying that as the official opposition, if we give them the sunset clause, they will accept it. That tells me that they do support what is here. Their problem seems to be that they want us to say that it would be reaffirmed after the next election. After the next election, the standing order could be withdrawn. I suggest that once this resolution or this motion is passed and adopted by the House, as I anticipate and hope that it will be, we are not going to see even a Conservative majority government withdraw it.

It is not because it is to the advantage of one party over another, depending on whether someone is in opposition or in government. I do not believe that for a moment. That is the reason I posed the question. Having been a parliamentarian for over 30 years now, I know that most of my years were actually in the opposition benches. I understand the importance of opposition tools that are utilized in order to hold a government accountable. That is why I said to give me a tangible example of something within this motion that will take one of those tools away, and explain what it is.

Some members say it is ministerial accountability. I can appreciate the concern about ministerial accountability, but it has a lot more to do with the personality of the minister than anything else. When I was in opposition and I approached a minister, I was often told to check with their staff or call their office. Some ministers would actually sit down and chat, I suspect, or pick up the phone, depending on the situation. I do not believe ministerial accessibility is lost.

Every member of this House is afforded the opportunity to file four questions. Once those questions are asked, I think it is 45 days before they are answered. I know; I table a lot of these. I think I am well into the thousands of questions, and they will get a response from the ministers.

● (2210)

They talk about ministerial accountability. Well, thousands of questions have been answered now. When was the last time we heard a minister or a parliamentary secretary answer a question virtually? We see that the answers are being provided from the floor of the House.

People may say, "What about the future?" I remember that when I was sitting in opposition, we would be counting the number of question periods in which one of the ministers in the Harper government was not showing up to answer any questions, and it went for days and days, going into weeks, going past months.

Ministerial accessibility is not really an issue. I would suggest that it is not a tool that is going to make members more ineffective. At the very least, it would not prevent opposition, because opposition members will use the absence of a minister who does not show up inside the chamber as a reason for questioning that particular minister, and that has happened for years. I do not think ministerial accessibility has anything to do with it.

We hear about some of the benefits that are being proposed in the hybrid system. I am a big fan of the voting application. I believe that the voting application is probably the single greatest change that we have seen in generations.

An hon. member: In 152 years.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not know if we had the technology back then, but I can tell members that when Canada was formed, Hansard did not exist. Hansard did exist in other parliaments, but not here in Canada. It took a few years before we actually got Hansard. I would suggest that a change of that nature was very important. It provided a lot more accountability, because when a member said something in the House, it was actually recorded. Prior to that, it was more of a secret club of sorts, and I suspect that when Hansard was brought in back then, we might have seen some members not necessarily supporting it, but it enhanced our democracy and accountability.

We could go to a few decades after that, when we saw televised debates. Television changed the way in which politicians responded to questions and to debates themselves. I like to think that it contributed in a very positive way. As a parliamentarian in the Manitoba legislature, I remember having these types of discussions on the impact of television when it was brought in. Believe it or not, there were still some members when I was first elected who argued that television was a bad thing to be brought in to the Manitoba legislature. However, I would suggest that it raised the bar. It ensured additional accountability.

I believe there is a great benefit to the voting application. It is not a tool that is going to diminish opportunities for opposition members. If they believe that to be the case, then they should explain why that is the case and then explain why they are prepared to allow it to continue for the next couple of years, because that is what they are prepared to do. I think that in their heart of hearts, they actually recognize the value of the voting application, and it is valuable.

Imagine that wherever a member is in the country, they would actually be able to participate in a vote. Imagine what that would mean for a member representing British Columbia if there were going to be a vote on Monday.

They do not even have to be from a far coast. Let us take my colleague representing the community of Brandon. It involves taking a taxi to the airport and waiting at the airport. Then there is the plane ride to Winnipeg, hopefully not having to go through Toronto, and then getting into a vehicle once there and driving two hours to get out to Brandon. That has to be reversed in order to be able to come for a Monday vote, possibly on a procedural call.

● (2215)

What is the real difference? I would suggest that by enabling that member to vote virtually, we are doing their constituents the favour. The member benefits, but the real individuals who benefit from the electronic voting are the people of Canada, our constituents.

When we have committees happening or meetings taking place throughout the parliamentary precinct, very important meetings, very important standing committees, and a member is meeting with

Government Orders

x , whoever x might be, sometimes the bells start to ring, which means that meeting is interrupted. It could have been a meeting on something of an urgent nature, a foreign affairs matter or a very important discussion one was having via Zoom. There are all kinds of reasons why someone might not necessarily be able to attend a particular meeting. Now, that person has the option to be able to vote using the application. I see that as a positive. I have not heard an argument that has convinced me otherwise.

Being able to participate and be fully engaged here on the floor of the House of Commons, whether virtually or in person, is important to all of us. I think when members look at the rules being proposed, and hopefully adopted, it is not too late for the Conservatives to support it. If they truly believe what they say about supporting it if we would put in a sunset clause, the government House leader provided them with the rationale that three or four years from now, any future government, through a Standing Order, could reverse the changes. We can look at the 2020 discussions that took place, where there was a consensus developed, to what we are seeing today and what the member has said, which is that they in essence support everything as long as there is a sunset clause. I would suggest that the desire to see the changes that are being proposed is in fact there, but there is a lot of political posturing taking place.

At the end of the day, Canadians will be better served if this motion is passed. I would ask and suggest that all members look seriously at supporting the motion.

● (2220)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North, early in his intervention, talked about quorum calls not being permitted after 6:30 p.m. during these late-night sittings. Is not part of this hybrid situation the Liberal-NDP government has created that prevents these quorum calls at this time of night, so that the Liberal members do not have to have more than two or three members, or sometimes only one member, in the House at this time? They do not have to be here to participate in a legitimate two-sided debate because they do not have to worry about quorum being called. They can sit at home in their pyjamas or do whatever they want, but they do not have to be here for that two-sided debate.

Is it not part of the rules that you have already changed and twisted around, with the support of this NDP coalition, which has caved in, and part of the twisting of Parliament in your favour?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to address all questions and comments through the Chair.

I think there needs to be a bit of having to be careful when talking about how the House is right now, who is in it and who is not. I know the member did not specify, but he is not too far off from that. I think it would be best to address the questions and comments based on the issue that is before the House as opposed to on the quorum question.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, like the member opposite, I will walk that fine line and hopefully not cross it.

Government Orders

In order for the House to convene, we have to have at least 20 members inside the House. Last week, on more than one occasion, there was only one political entity that actually had members when the House was getting under way, when the prayer was going on, and it was not the Conservatives. That might have crossed the line there a bit, and I apologize for doing that, but the point is that dilatory motions, quorum—

● (2225)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member there is to be no mention as to who is in the House and who is not, and the hon. member really crossed that line when he mentioned that one particular party was not in the House. I would just ask members to stick to the issue that is before the House, and to the debate that is before the House during questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary, if you could wrap it up, I have other individuals who are dying to ask questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the point is the member might not realize it, but even when Stephen Harper was prime minister, and in governments before, often members would be sitting late in the evening, and there were no quorum calls. That actually happens quite a bit with all different political parties—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Terrebonne.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask this question, which I was very keen to ask.

In his speech, my colleague talked about lofty values and democracy. I would like him to come down from the clouds and talk about where much of the democratic work really happens in Parliament, which is in committees.

I would like to talk to him about this reality, because I have the pleasure and honour of sitting on a committee in this Parliament. Perhaps he does not.

I wanted to tell him that, with the hybrid Parliament, not only do committees have to sit after 5:30 p.m., but they also sit on Fridays. This is not at all convenient for a young mother like me. This is due to technical reasons. Because of the hybrid Parliament, technical and language resources are limited.

This system is so perfect that two of the opposition parties oppose it. Does the member know how many committees have been cancelled or cut short today alone because of insufficient resources owing to the hybrid Parliament?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one of the things that needs to be factored into the member's comments is the amount of filibustering that takes place in many standing committees.

To not take that into consideration is to not respect the fact that there is a finite number of resources. We have to work with the resources that are there. Where they can be enhanced, they have been, as much as one would expect.

Our standing committees play an absolutely critical role. They are really the backbone of our Parliament and the work that is done. I would like to think that we would have more functional standing committees in different areas.

At times there is a need for filibustering. Often filibusters end as a result of more political partisanship than I, personally, would like to see.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, back in 2017, when my third daughter, Isla, was born, my wife went through an extremely difficult pregnancy. She was hospital-bound for about eight weeks. Everything turned out fine, but I was required to be there to look after my other two daughters.

For the entirety of September and October 2017, I was forced to be at home. Of course we did not have hybrid Parliament at that time, so I missed a number of caucus meetings, votes and opportunities to represent the good people of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I understand its value there.

That being said, I do enjoy my time physically in this place. I actually like serving physically with members. I feel that being here in person makes our committees work properly but, again, I understand that different people who serve in this place are in different situations.

I want to tag on to the question of resources. There is a continuing problem with this hybrid Parliament over the safety and health of our interpreters. Whether it comes from people using improper headsets or speaking without them, that is a resource question. I would like to know from the parliamentary secretary, either through the Board of Internal Economy or the government itself, could he speak to addressing that very real problem in making sure this place continues to function?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I want to acknowledge that for many people there are all sorts of good, personal reasons for why we should be supporting the hybrid model, whether it is the birth of a child or issues related to a parent of a member of Parliament, and everything in between, including graduations and so forth.

What people need to recognize is being an MP is unique. There are demands that are very different. It is very much a seven-day-a-week job. MPs are often looking at 16-hour days. That is not to complain, I love what I do. I just recognize that it is different, and the hybrid model could make life a little easier, which would allow for us, ideally, to get more quality people running to become members of Parliament, and in particular more women and minority participation.

Having said that, to the specifics of the question, I do believe that we are exploring all sorts of options, including having translators who would not have to be in the Ottawa circle. There could be someone from St. Boniface, Manitoba being the translator. I hear that is being considered, and I think it is a wonderful thing.

• (2230)

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Madam Speaker, I heard my hon. colleague reference when he was in opposition and counting ministers on the government side. We would not be able to count them now in the front bench. It is absolutely empty.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is bordering there; we just went through this. I would just ask the member to speak to the question that is before the House.

The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

Mr. Clifford Small: I am sorry, Madam Speaker. I will take that back.

Just the same, it will not be long before the member for Winnipeg North is back over on this side and counting again. All jokes aside, can members imagine what this place would be without him? He shows up here. I wonder if in some way he asks himself whether he is making other colleagues feel bad because they are online all the time.

I was talking with Kevin earlier—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member certainly knows the rules of the House and he should not be mentioning individuals by their first name or their last name.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It was a different Kevin, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Clifford Small: Kevin is a member of the Parliamentary Protective Service.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Oh, a different Kevin. Okay.

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, when I was outside earlier I was talking to him as I was coming in and Kevin said to me, “We’ve got to show up, we’ve got to go to work and we’ve got to come here.” They do not want to come here to protect an empty building, so folks like them have to come to work. Our constituents expect us to come to work. Kevin expects us to come to work.

The member for Winnipeg North does not expect us to come to work, but he comes to work himself. I wonder how he thinks this hybrid Parliament makes the general public in Canada feel about our not coming to work. Does he think we are not getting paid enough to come to work?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the hon. member that when someone is online they are actually considered to be in Parliament.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am not too sure where to go with that particular question. The members of Parliament work whether they are here or they are in their ridings. I can tell the member that I do and my colleagues do.

At the end of the day, the member needs to ask himself a question: Why does the Conservative Party support everything that is in this motion on the condition that it be sunset for two years, as opposed to just forgetting about the sunset for a moment? If they sup-

Government Orders

port it for the next two years, then what is really wrong with the motion?

I suspect that the member does, or many members of the Conservative Party do, support the motion, but the House leadership team is having a difficult time showing any sort of consensus building.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to share my time with the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

Members have heard me say before that I participated in the Standing Orders debates in the past. I think back to 2020, when Parliament resumed in a hybrid format. I think the Conservative caucus was one of the first to resume having full meetings. We were one of the first ones, if not the first, on Zoom. We had tested all the other different software systems and fell on Zoom as being the best one, and we requested our own server from the House administration and cybersecurity people so we could meet using that format. Within three meetings, we got interpretation services going, because it was incredibly important for us to keep having meetings bilingually.

I oppose the motion. I oppose the contents of the motion. I have said it from the beginning. I have been as consistent as I can be on this question. I still oppose it. I want to speak to the backbenchers in the Liberal benches about how bad this would be for all of us in the long term, but especially for those who are going to be in the government caucus in the long term.

I say this because eventually the parliamentary calendar will mean nothing. Eventually we will meet every single week because constituency weeks and legislative sessional weeks will blend together. There will be no difference between the two. We will be expected to do both our works, and our constituents will expect us to do everything at the same time. There will be no ground given for being away in the nation's capital on the floor of the House of Commons or in a committee debating the issues. There will be no difference made.

For all the events we will be invited to, there will be an expectation that we do everything at the same time. If someone is now participating in committee in a hybrid format from home, they are working. They are not watching their sick child. I had four kids; I have three kids now. I had a personal tragedy happen in my life and I was away for six weeks. I did not think about work during that time.

What we are going to be asking members to do is to work while sick. We are going to be asking members to work while a loved one is very sick. We are going to be asking them to do everything at the same time in those same weeks and to figure it out and balance it themselves. Members will get incredible pressure from their House leadership team and their leadership, whether that be from the Prime Minister's Office or the leader's office in opposition, whichever one it is. Incredible pressure will be put on the backbenchers. I say that as a former chair of the Conservative caucus, where my job was to speak on behalf of backbenchers in my own recognized caucus. The whole point of caucus chairs is to speak on behalf of the backbenchers.

Government Orders

There is not a single legislature in Canada that has moved to a full hybrid format. I do not quite know the territories so I will not speak to them, but none of the 10 legislatures have moved to a full hybrid dual format as far as I know. I have looked at them and they are not doing it.

This Parliament here is talking about permanently introducing measures we had agreed to doing and now are not.

The member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook is disagreeing with me and is not liking it, but we started with consensus and now we are being forced to have one system.

One of the offers made by Conservative members on the PROC committee was for us to perhaps have a sunset clause. Let the next Parliament decide. Give the next Parliament a year to see how things are working out with potentially new members who are here and to weigh the pros and the cons again of whether to continue with everything, with some or with nothing in hybrid.

I know what my position is. My position is not to continue with any of the hybrid format. There are a lot of interpreters who are injured. I have seen a lot of committee meetings be completely dysfunctional because it does not work very well even after all these years with Zoom. I have seen committees cancelled because there are not enough resources. It is always interesting the government is able, through its whips, to cancel the committee meetings it does not like versus the ones it really wants. There are not enough resources to go around for all the committees.

One of the Bloc MPs raised a great point that now we are meeting on Fridays. Fridays used to be a day when some members would return to their constituencies, especially those in marginal seats. I am looking at the members of the government caucus in marginal seats who would probably like to have a Friday where they can press the flesh, as we call it, or go meet constituents in the local coffee shops or community events or spend some time working on case files on Friday. Those of us who are not in marginal seats can spend more time on legislative work if we so choose.

What will happen in this chamber, not this year, not next year, but many years down the line, is our whips, our House leaders, will come together and ask why we have constituency weeks and say that all weeks should be legislative weeks. They will say that members could then pick and choose which weeks they would be here and which ones they would not be here.

● (2235)

Many other members have spoken about the downside that we will not be able to go up to a minister right after question period on a specific case file or will not be able to get to know other members. I will admit that I have not gotten to know most of those on the Liberal benches because, frankly, I have a hard time recognizing some of them as members when they rise in the House. I do not know what issues they are directly passionate about. I have been on some committees with some members and have gotten to know them a lot better. That builds trust. There is a reason we still have parliamentary associations that send legislators from the House and from the Senate overseas to meet other legislators in person. That is how we build a relationship with them. We do not build it over

Zoom in boxes on a screen. That is not how we build relationships of trust.

Much of our committee work is based on trust. If we disagree on an issue, we may not get everything we want, but we usually suspend the meeting and are able to negotiate a resolution or a solution to whatever problem is before us. Then we continue doing the work on behalf of our constituents. At the end of the day, that is really what this is all about.

I know many people have talked about the voting app. Some people like it and some people dislike it. I will be the first to say that I dislike the voting app. I highly doubt many members are clicking on the little information button and checking exactly what they are voting on every single time. We see it sometimes happen. We have these giant screens in the House now, and we always look for that one member who did not get the memo from their whip's office and votes the wrong way on government legislation. I do not mean private members' bills, because those should be free votes and hopefully are always free votes.

We have Standing Order 44.1(1), which allows for the pairing of votes. I have written a letter in the past to the chair of PROC, which was shared among members of PROC, and I stand by what I wrote. Pairing is the way out of this. We should not expect members who are taking care of loved ones, who are going through a serious sickness at home or who have major family obligations to stay connected to their work. They can pair their votes like we do with cabinet ministers. Cabinet ministers can pair their votes. They usually pair them with members of the opposition when they are travelling overseas. Why can we not do more pairing in the House?

I have said that before. I said it during the previous Standing Order debate. Pairing is the solution, especially if we empower a member to pair. In fact, I will even say that during this Parliament, I actually paired one of my votes on a handshake with a Liberal member. That is the way it is supposed to be done. I trusted the member. I had gotten to know the member over the last few years, and I trusted him enough to turn around and go to my whip. Likewise, he did the same thing. He was paired so he would not have to take a long flight just to come back to Ottawa to be present to make sure that I would be present here as well, which is ridiculous. I trusted him as a gentleman. He trusted me as well, and we paired. Why can we not do more of that?

The app makes it unnecessary. We do not need to get to know anybody on the other side. We do not need to build a relationship of trust. We do not need to get to know anybody. In fact, in the future, we will be able to spend our time in boxes on screens and not get to know anybody. We will not need to talk to another person. We can just send emails, read speeches and read prepared questions and it will all be fine. I do not think that is the way Parliament should function. I do not think it is an improvement. I do not think it will have better transparency. There will not be better accountability.

We heard the parliamentary secretary, the member for Winnipeg North, mention Order Paper questions and the format in which they are provided and tabled in the House and how there has always been a member to do that. We have not talked about the quality of the Order Paper answers. The answers have gotten worse. It is something that started a decade ago, but they have gotten really bad now. They borderline on the ridiculous sometimes, where there is not even an attempt to answer the content. It is not always like that but sometimes.

● (2240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: What about the questions?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member is now heckling me from across—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to hold off on his questions and comments. It is not time. The hon. member only has one minute left, and the hon. parliamentary secretary will have an opportunity to ask a question.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I invite the member to look at the questions I submit, because I am always looking for data, content and information. That reminds me. With the member's interruption, I do have a Yiddish proverb. I hope that everything I have spoken about tonight are things I have seen. "Let you not say things that you have not seen" is a Yiddish proverb. I hope I have done that.

I have stayed consistent with what I have said in past debates on the Standing Orders. The House is built on consensus and trust, and what the government is doing here, because it has a coalition ally, is simply ramming through changes to the Standing Orders. The preference has always been that we do Standing Order changes by consensus. We do not always get everything we all want. We get what we can all agree on, which are small changes.

That has been the great thing about Parliament. Our rules protect backbenchers; they do not protect the front bench. These changes will protect the front bench from backbenchers. There are more backbenchers in the House, and this is the House for them and for their constituents, not for cabinet.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague opposite a very specific question, but I would first like to give a small introduction.

The pandemic forced us to innovate. It forced us to make greater use of technology. Let us think of our families who are benefiting from it today. During the pandemic, my children were able to learn at home without missing a class, and my wife, who is a teacher, taught from home. We adapted.

This week we saw a Conservative member with a baby in his arms. It was beautiful to see that and to think that it is possible to work from home, from time to time, while looking after one's family.

Government Orders

Can the member opposite tell us that technology has come a long way and that today it is time to move to a hybrid system?

● (2245)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his question, but that is not the issue we are examining in the House right now. The question before us is whether we should have a hybrid Parliament that operates in the way set out by the government in Motion No. 26.

During the pandemic, two of my three children, the two oldest, were attending school online. I was also the caucus chair. As such, I had a screen in front of me and I also had my two children sitting in front of me doing their online classes. I had to make sure they were paying attention to their classes. Then, there was the youngest who was watching television on mute because he wanted something to do.

That is not what being a parent is all about. It is not about being obligated to work for four and a half hours every Wednesday and spending two days getting ready to do that, while taking care of the kids who are also in virtual mode and who have things to learn and classes to take online. That is not what raising kids should be. After the pandemic, I do not think that is what parents want to see, even in the House.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Calgary Shepard for his remarks. As usual, they were clear and intelligent.

He addressed a very important issue, in other words, human contact and what I would call informal discussions. That is where we get to know one another and understand each other. It is through these contacts that we can develop a rapport and negotiate better agreements, better bills for the public every day.

Everyone will say that we will be in hybrid mode on an exceptional basis. However, since there is no framework to the proposal, it will be used increasingly more often and people will no longer come in person. That is what worries me. I would like my colleague to address that and tell us what he thinks.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, the member for Berthier—Maskinongé is right. The amendments to the rules proposed in government Motion No. 26 will do away with the need for members to get along with one another.

It is easy for cabinet members to meet and talk to one another. They often meet during the week. These meetings are usually held in person, since they sometimes have to talk about confidential matters. However, for backbenchers, the only way to advance a file, to create a bill and amendments, is to talk face to face to build mutual trust.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have been able to stand up and speak since one of the member's colleagues brought up time allocation. Therefore, I want to make the point that, when the Conservatives were in power, they used time allocation 115 times. In fact, they made a cake to celebrate the 100th time. I just wanted to make that clear.

Government Orders

However, the member talked about a lot of hypothetical situations that I do not think any of us can address. He also talked about the fact that there is no difference between constituency and parliamentary weeks, saying that our constituents would expect us to be around all the time. I think that is the case for many of us. What I do not understand, though, is how taking Zoom away from Parliament would take Zoom away from parliamentarians. It would not. Our constituents would still be able to reach us through Zoom, and they would still expect that to happen. Therefore, that argument does not actually make a lot of sense. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I just want to clarify, because I do not think the member quite understood what I was getting at.

What I am saying is that, in the future, what will happen is that constituency weeks will simply disappear. This may be two, three, four, five or six years from now. There will be an expectation that we do sessional weeks half of the year or more, and members will pick which weeks they will be in their constituencies. However, there will be this constant tension from our constituents and local organizations that a member must appear at all local events while doing all their work. I can even imagine a situation where members have committee business that they will have to conduct from their car while going to, say, a Legion hall for events related to veterans.

• (2250)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to bring the voices of Chatham-Kent—Leamington, and tonight I bring them in person to the debate on Motion No. 26.

I want to begin by asking a question: What is the role of Parliament?

It is a rhetorical question for sure, but it has a clear answer: It is to serve Canadians, and that concern is at the heart of the matter being debated tonight. The Liberal-NDP coalition has unilaterally pressed for making hybrid Parliament, a temporary model of Parliament, into a permanent model. Such a dramatic change to a long-held procedure cannot and should not be implemented without clear consensus from all recognized parties within this chamber.

On May 5, the World Health Organization formally declared the COVID-19 pandemic emergency to be over. The governing coalition cannot hide behind a past crisis to avoid accountability and transparency, because ultimately that is a by-product. I hope that is not the intention, but that is a by-product behind this procedural change. Instead of helping Canadians who are struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table, the government is actively working to avoid facing the Canadian people.

Both accountability and engagement suffer in a hybrid Parliament. We have seen the core constitutional principle of responsible government, which is accountability to Parliament, weaken under the current hybrid system. I do not think anyone is challenging that.

In this session of Parliament alone, House administration decided to cancel dozens of committee meetings due to a lack of resources for virtual participation. That fact alone should give my colleagues across the aisle pause. The importance of committee work cannot be overstated. It is at committee where drafted legislation is re-

viewed, and at times it is there, after all, that corruption and mismanagement are uncovered.

Here are some examples. It is at the finance committee that the extent of the implications of another deficit budget are examined and highlighted. It is where amendments are tabled, debated and hopefully passed to improve the lives of Canadians, though unfortunately not this year.

At the fisheries and oceans committee, which I attended this morning, the bungling of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' handling of the bilateral Great Lakes Fishery Commission file has united both houses of the U.S. Congress and all four accredited parties of this chamber in calling for a change in how the commission is managed. This failure has caused our American partners to walk away from the board table and risk the \$8-billion fishery industry through the return of an invasive species, the sea lamprey, which devastated the Great Lakes in the 1950s and actually led to the original creation of the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries.

Earlier this evening, I attended an agriculture and agrifood industry committee where the four parties representative of this chamber reviewed Bill C-280 for my colleague from York—Simcoe, a bill to bring about some protections for fresh vegetable and fruit growers in case of bankruptcy of their buyers.

Committee work is important, then, for advancing legislation and for government accountability, yet through the mechanics of a hybrid Parliament, the Prime Minister and his cabinet have been able to duck and weave their way around facing questions from His Majesty's loyal opposition. This defies a founding tenet of our Westminster parliamentary system, in which the role of the opposition is to hold the government to account. There are technical glitches. The ministers avoid standing in their place in this chamber or at committee, choosing instead to surround themselves with screens in their offices right here on the Hill to avoid accountability when a poor grasp of a file is on full display.

Is this acceptable? As parliamentarians, is it not our duty to serve our constituents to the best of our abilities? How can we do that if the government enshrines opportunities to avoid accountability?

I do not deny that by almost every quantifiable metric, productivity and accountability are higher when we are working in person, but to quote General Patton, “Always do everything you ask of those you command.” This is not what the Minister of Procurement demonstrated as the minister was directing our federal workers back to work in the office. How is it just to deny a provision to federal workers while granting the same privilege to politicians? This is a textbook example of “Do what I say, not what I do.”

Beyond televised acts of accountability, there are innumerable interactions that help our constituents, advance public policy and generally contribute to the building of constructive relationships among colleagues, both within our caucuses and across party lines. Stifling these small but consequential interactions through a hybrid system is simply flawed.

• (2255)

I am sure I do not need to explain the many ways that constituents' problems can be solved with a quick word to a minister while the bells ring for a vote, or the important information that stakeholders draw to our attention when they visit us personally in our offices, or how a casual word with a colleague bumped into in the hallway helps to build the trust needed later to be confident that a future agreement struck at committee will be honoured. This has been mentioned several times this evening. These are just some of the examples of inter-personal dynamics that a hybrid Parliament prevents and discourages.

Again, it must be asked how Canadians are best served by their parliamentarians. Is it through increasing the personal convenience of members of the House or is it instead through encouraging maximum transparency and accountability, part of which is through ensuring that both official languages in Canada are given equal weight?

Conservatives have a long and proud history in building and supporting a bilingual Parliament.

[Translation]

I do not speak French, but I am learning French with Duolingo.

[English]

That is as far as I can get right now, which is why it is all the more alarming to hear from the International Association of Conference Interpreters, Canada region, and its president, Linda Ballantyne, who said that a hybrid Parliament has meant that “English has predominated and French has been snuffed out.”

In part, this is due to a skyrocketing injury rate among staff interpreters. We have gone from a single disabling injury before the pandemic to 90 incidents. With a dwindling pool of interpreters, we cannot tolerate the harm done to these crucial women and men in the functioning of our democracy. It is for these reasons that Conservatives put forward a common-sense recommendation to have the House of Commons proceedings return entirely to in-person while maintaining the voting application. Considering that 97% of chamber interventions are now made in person, this recommendation would have led to little change to the nature of House debates, yet such a change would free up a badly needed translation service

while also reducing some workplace risks that interpreters have faced.

To reiterate an earlier point, far too many committee meetings have been cut short or outright cancelled due to a lack of resources, particularly the presence of interpreters to ensure our meetings are conducted bilingually. By cancelling the important work done at committees, Canadians are deprived of one avenue of making their voices heard, especially when it comes to holding this government or any government to account.

Regrettably, truncated committee work has formed just one portion of a broader pattern of hybrid proceedings eroding government accountability to Parliament. Finding an effective way of combating the pandemic and ensuring that parliaments continued to function the world over was a global concern, yet perpetuating the solutions found during the pandemic to the post-pandemic era seems to be a problem unique to the Canadian federal government. According to Andy Williamson, an Inter-Parliamentary Union researcher, some of the digital and remote working practices at foreign legislatures “will have been temporary as they are no longer felt necessary”. Indeed, he advised that just 46% of legislatures will retain remote functionality while “in some cases this might only be for use in exceptional circumstances.” To answer a question heckled across earlier, even within Canada, no provincial or territorial legislature currently has a full-fledged hybrid system.

Succinctly, no other comparable legislature has rushed headlong into a permanent embrace of full-fledged hybrid proceedings or, if it is being entertained, it is with eyes wide open to the potential downsides. Despite the advances of technology and the rise of the Internet, some problems are best solved the old-fashioned way. Sometimes precedent and procedure are in place because they work. It is with a reckless disregard for the health and functioning of Parliament that the governing coalition has pressed for the permanent status of a hybrid system.

I must ask again. What is the role of Parliament? Is it to serve the interests of Canadians or the convenience of its members?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would argue that the interests of Canadians are best served by having a hybrid Parliament, as has been suggested in a motion that the Conservative Party has indicated it would support if there was a sunset clause where it would have to be reaffirmed three years from now.

Does the member not see anything within that statement that is rather odd with respect to the Conservatives saying that they will accept the changes if we put in that sunset clause, which, in essence, is saying for the rest of this Parliament and at least a year going into the next Parliament that these rules would be accepted? Does he not see any inconsistencies?

Government Orders

• (2300)

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, what I see in the Conservative offer is respect from the Conservative Party for the long-standing tradition of compromise to get a consensus for the standing rules of the chamber. That is what I see from the members of the Conservative Party.

In that very vein, I was listening when the member for Winnipeg North was speaking. At 10:04 he was referring to something and saying that something was virtually impossible. He went on to explain that he was also willing to consider other changes in the Standing Orders if they were mutually agreed upon.

Would the member entertain, at some further point, that after 10 p.m., no puns would be allowed in this chamber? I do believe that saying something is virtually impossible when we are talking about virtual Parliament is a pun.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech. I have been here since the beginning of the debate, and I can say that few speeches have mentioned the whole issue of the interpreters and their health and safety while working in a hybrid Parliament. I want therefore to congratulate my colleague, because I share his concerns. I will speak more about that in my speech.

I am surprised by the arrogance of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and by the way he chose to move this motion in Parliament. He could have done it in a different manner.

I would like my colleague to address two things. First, what other approach could the government leader have taken to gain support and consensus on certain aspects of a hybrid Parliament? Second, could the member tell me who are the people most affected by the hybrid Parliament?

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, to the member's first question, why would the House leader act as if he had a majority government and not have to work toward a consensus? Quite frankly, in this minority Parliament, I believe that at times the government is acting like it is has a majority. A prime example of that is what we are debating tonight being pushed through.

Do they not feel the need to work toward a consensus? I would direct that to our NDP colleagues across the aisle as they are supporting the government on many measures that seem to not be in the best interests of Canadians.

To the second point by the hon. member as to who is being hurt the most, I referenced in my speech that it is Canadians in general due to the accountability Parliament has to them. I also focused on our interpreter friends who we need for accountability, bilingualism and the future of this country.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the majority of the House wants hybrid Parliament. The member talked a lot about consensus and building that consensus. Could he provide the House, right now, with an absolute?

We have seen many times Conservatives filibuster their way. He was talking about resources in the House being taken up, and I would argue that a lot of that has been through a lot of the filibusters by the Conservative Party. However, can he commit right now to not filibuster? We could move forward in a consensus-based way by saying that a hybrid model is what the majority wants.

Would the Conservatives not filibuster that decision so we can move forward in a very productive way to build a hybrid Parliament together?

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party has respected the long-standing traditions of the House. We have even seen in this session of Parliament the government filibustered its own legislation at committee on Bill C-21.

I am not in a position to respond to that. Our track record as a party demonstrates the fact that we respect the traditions of the House and work at compromise. We have worked with the 100 and some-odd years of our Westminster parliamentary tradition, which has served us so well. I advocate using that going forward.

• (2305)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure at this late hour to rise and debate this motion.

Quite frankly, the fact that the government has planned changes to the Standing Orders of the House of Commons without even initiating any discussions or approaching all the opposition parties shows a certain degree of arrogance. It even shows a lack of respect and consideration for the work of the opposition parties and their leaders.

Some very important rules are being modified, and in a way, this reform is aimed at permanently establishing Parliament 2.0. I think the government could have sought consensus. Only then could they say that the other parties firmly oppose it, that there is no openness to discussion or the possibility of agreeing on one, two, three or perhaps four standing orders. We could have discussed this. Instead the government is refusing to listen.

I was even a bit insulted by the way this was presented. I read in the paper that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons was saying how things were going to work and that Parliament was not going to close its doors until the motion was adopted. I do not see any openness on his part, and I no longer recognize him. He has not demonstrated the same openness and respect for the work of the opposition as he did when he was whip.

The bottom line is that the Bloc Québécois is against the principle of a permanent full hybrid Parliament. We are not against all the rules of the hybrid Parliament or all the ways of running it.

I am pleased to see in this motion that the government listened to one thing that I really care about, and that is the fact that committee chairs are not allowed to chair meetings virtually. I am very happy about that, because it is awful when a chair tries to fulfill their duties remotely. When a chair is sick, they need to take care of themselves and let a vice-chair take their place. I agree with that.

However, when it comes to some of the other rules, I cannot understand why we were not given the time, the opportunity or the pleasure of discussing them with the government House leader.

Many of the rules are interesting because it is true that they favour work-life balance, especially the electronic vote. However, it made me laugh earlier to hear some of the NPD members say that we were against electronic voting. It is quite the opposite. From day one, the Bloc Québécois and I, as the whip, have actively participated in implementing electronic voting. We have never hidden the fact that remote voting was a good way to promote work-life balance.

What we are saying is that if we bring in permanent rules, then we might need to restore the importance of the confidence vote. I was elected from 2006 to 2011 and I went through some confidence votes. When a confidence vote is coming up, for example, a motion to pass the budget or the throne speech, it is the government's responsibility to ensure that the confidence vote is done properly. We experience these great moments in democracy by being here in person.

In the Bloc Québécois, we agree with allowing members to vote electronically. However, we would have liked to propose an amendment to give more value to confidence votes by ensuring that they are held in person.

We also believe that it is important to ensure that a virtual Parliament does not weaken accountability by allowing ministers to be absent during question period. I am not the only one who has said this; I heard similar comments during an NDP question. I think ministers should be here in person to answer questions put to them in committee or in the House. That is important, because it is not the same dynamic. As we have seen, when ministers are present or not, the dynamic changes, and I think that they should be here in order to testify, to express themselves or to answer questions put to them.

Of course, the other reason we have slight misgivings about a hybrid Parliament with no conditions and no framework is the whole issue of protecting the health and safety of our interpreters.

● (2310)

We need to ensure to take a fairly structured approach to conducting reviews to address the health and safety of our interpreters.

In the motion before us today, there is no consideration for these employees, who follow us every day in our committees or in the House of Commons to ensure that the work is done in both official languages. It contains no measures, apart from the mandatory headset that complies with the ISO quality standard. Other than that, there is nothing else for them.

Although I was embarrassed to say so in the past, I am no longer embarrassed to say that I am a unilingual francophone. The inter-

Government Orders

preters are my ears. I need them. I believe that I quite frequently have interesting things to say, and when I speak I also want unilingual anglophones to hear me. They have to be able to hear me.

We know, and it has been documented, that the reality of the hybrid Parliament has a greater impact on francophone members, because it is often when Bloc Québécois members or witnesses are speaking in French that there are technical, interpretation, sound or connectivity problems. Basically, what the government is telling us, with complete disregard for the interpreters, is that it would be great if everyone spoke in English so there would be fewer problems. No, the work must be done in both official languages.

Unfortunately, with a hybrid Parliament that has no conditions and no oversight, it is the francophone members and our francophone witnesses who are most affected. I can say that some of the francophone witnesses we invite prefer to give evidence in English because they know that they are less likely to be interrupted, either by technical problems or by problems related to interpretation.

I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and member for Ajax. Honestly, I have not heard him talk about that reality, and I do not get the impression that he or his government is particularly concerned about it. I would say the same thing about the NDP, since I have not heard them mention this concern for the reality of francophone members or for the health and safety of our interpreters.

I was surprised to hear him say in his speech that there was interpretation before the pandemic and that it makes no difference if we meet in person or virtually. No. There has been a lot of talk tonight about impressions, emotions and how we feel. Everyone is sharing a bit of their personal lives. The interpreters' issues are very well documented. A hybrid Parliament requires many more hours of work from the interpreters than a full in-person Parliament. That has been documented; it is not just an impression. There is data to back it up.

What really surprises me is that they are acting as if this data does not exist. I know that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the House leader of the New Democratic Party are aware of the data, because we sit together on the Board of Internal Economy. We have spent two years talking about the problem of sound quality, difficulty recruiting interpreters, the shortage of interpreters and interpreter injuries. This has all been well documented. I have not heard the government members talk about it this evening. I would not go so far as to say they have not mentioned it at all, because I may have missed a few speeches, but I did not hear it or notice them talking about it.

Government Orders

I have worked hard and diligently to document the use of the hybrid Parliament. It is rare for me to make assertions that are not supported by data. The fact is that the hybrid Parliament is not working very well. When I hear that it has been running smoothly for three years, that we are okay and everything is fine, my response is no, not at all. It is the complete opposite. I can say that the data I have show that things are not going so well.

Every day, there are technical problems in committees. Every day, there are problems with interpretation. Committees are being cancelled because of a lack of resources. The Translation Bureau even told us that it does not know what it will do next September because there are no solutions to the shortage of interpreters. We in the House are debating this issue together. It is great that we can be at home and we can be close to our children and spouses. However, the government is not saying much about the possibility that proceedings will not be conducted in both languages, that committees will be cancelled and that we may not have full and complete debates.

• (2315)

The first victims of the hybrid Parliament are the interpreters. The unions say that since the adoption of the hybrid mode in March 2020, more than 300 dangerous incidents have been reported by the interpreters, including about 100 since 2022, and 30 disabling injuries have required interpreters to stop working. Every month, about a dozen interpreters are assigned to other duties for medical reasons because of injuries sustained during hybrid or virtual meetings. One interpreter even suffered a serious acoustic shock and had to be taken away in an ambulance.

The International Association of Conference Interpreters Canada represents freelance interpreters who work for Parliament. Approximately half of the interpreters who work on the Hill are members of this association, which surveyed its members last winter in light of the interpreters' increased workload during hybrid Parliament. In all honesty, the survey results show a trend that is not pleasant to hear.

Eight out of 10 interpreters, or 81%, stated that they are unlikely to make themselves more available to work on Parliament Hill. Due to the working conditions, the interpreters said that unless things change, they would look for work elsewhere. There is no shortage of work for interpreters. Two-thirds of interpreters, or 65%, say that they will probably reduce their availability to work to Parliament Hill. Seven out of 10 interpreters stated that they are unlikely to maintain their current availability to work on Parliament Hill. Finally, 87% of freelance interpreters who had never worked for Parliament but who planned to do so were going to change their minds.

What I am saying is nothing new. The government House leader knows it, the NDP leader knows it, and all the members of the Board of Internal Economy know it. What is more, it says it on the association's web site. What shocks me and makes me feel a bit emotional is that the government is ignoring this reality.

The Translation Bureau is unable to project forward. We asked the bureau how many interpreters we will have in September when the House resumes. They told us that it would be amazing if they could hold on to the number of interpreters they have right now. They do not think they will be able to add any more, even with a pilot project they are currently experimenting with. It is not like

there is an abundance of interpreters who are looking to get injured at work, to have permanent hearing damage and to kiss their job goodbye.

Interpreters are taking their well-deserved retirement but there are few graduates coming out of universities. The House is struggling to recruit and retain interpreters, and there is no solution to rectify the situation. That is the harsh reality: There is no solution. The only answer is for more of the people who work here, by which I mean both elected representatives and witnesses, whether in the House or in committee, to return in person. This is the best solution to guarantee the health and safety of our interpreters.

I have said this several times. We are not taking care of our interpreters when we work virtually. We need to return to in-person situations as much as possible. I will not rule out the possibility of sometimes participating virtually, with a hybrid model. As whip, I allowed my MPs to work virtually if they were in more difficult situations or needed to be present in their constituency. However, this needs to be used only in exceptional circumstances.

We also need to reduce the number of daily hybrid meetings that are interpreted, and insist that remote participants use the correct equipment. Again recently, committee chairs asked for unanimous consent for a witness to speak without a headset, despite everything we know today. There is resistance everywhere, in all the committees and in every party. There is resistance to using what we have at our disposal, which is not regulated, but makes the work safer for the interpreters.

• (2320)

For that reason, I challenge the premise that the government has listened to the opposition parties, listened to the data that currently documents the problems and listened to the interpreters' requests. It seems to me that things could not be any clearer than what I just said. A number of measures have been taken in recent years. I mean, we worked hard. Personally, I have put a lot of effort into making all my colleagues aware of what we can do, what is within our power to do and does not cost a lot of money.

I asked for a dashboard to see how things were going in committee. The interpretation problems related to the hybrid Parliament are being documented. Members of the Board of Internal Economy, including the leader, the government whip and the NDP leader, have had that information since November 26, 2020. They cannot say that everything is fine and that the hybrid Parliament is not affecting our valued interpreters. Since 2020, members of the Bloc Québécois have been on the attack. This is no joke. The Bloc Québécois has been forced to agree to actively work to change the routine motions in committee so that every committee conducts pre-tests. That came from us, the Bloc Québécois. We put this initiative in place to protect the health and safety of the interpreters, while, at the same time, guaranteeing the quality of the French interpretation.

Members of the Bloc Québécois were given instructions. If the interpretation is not good, if the interpreters indicate that the sound is not good, then Bloc members need to interrupt the committee proceedings. I participated in questions of privilege and many points of order on the use of House-approved headsets. Even Employment and Social Development Canada's labour program ruled in favour of the parliamentary interpreters. The chair must require that.

This could have been done a long time ago. Members are complacent or resistant to using the proper equipment for all sorts of reasons that I do not understand. Still today, there are members who are voting from their cars, who are participating in committee meetings from their cars without the appropriate equipment. That is still being done today, and it is unacceptable.

There is one measure that makes me say that political will is lacking on the government side because without rules and without permanent changes to the rules, everything I am saying could have been put in place with political will. The chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was able to create an atmosphere of respect. She was proactive. It is a fine example. I mention it often. Her colleagues should have followed her example more.

The fact that we are short on interpreters means that we have fewer committee meetings. We are cancelling committee meetings where democratic work is done, where we improve bills, where we conduct studies to document problems. Essentially, our work is falling by the wayside. I think that somehow it must suit the government that the committees cannot sit or improve its own bills. Maybe it prefers it that way because many committee meetings are cancelled every time Parliament extends its sittings. Just today, the meeting of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration was cancelled. The work of the Special Committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China Relationship was cut short. This is a serious state of affairs.

We have spoken a great deal about work-life balance. I have a lot to say about that. I would like people to ask me questions about that because I did not have the time to address it in my speech as I had much to say.

Today is a sad day. I hope that the government will seize the opportunity. Our leader reached out asking it to amend its own motion out of respect for its consultations with many leaders.

• (2325)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague must be proud to speak in French in the House. I have also decided to speak French in my committees.

My colleague mentioned a number of statistics related to the situation facing interpreters, so my questions are along those same lines. I would like to see her source indicating that some witnesses prefer to speak English because of interpretation issues. Since 2015, I have not heard anyone mention those statistics. However, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the interpreters for their exceptional work. I would like to know whether my colleague agrees with me about the measures the Conservatives

Government Orders

are taking, such as filibustering committees, and the partisan games they play in the House during votes, such as when they vote from the lobby, with or without their device, making it look like the system is faulty. Are those situations harmful for interpreters?

I am hoping she can talk to us about that.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Yes, Madam Speaker, it feels good to speak French. I think I was one of the first to deliver a speech entirely in French in the House tonight.

To answer his specific question, filibustering is part of parliamentary politics. Sometimes it is misused, as the Conservatives did during the last few votes to retaliate against the government for its behaviour and arrogance.

It takes two to tango, however. A government that is defiant and irritating, one that refuses to compromise or negotiate and instead ignores the opposition is bound to face some bumps in the road. I do not agree with the Conservative Party's misuse of the voting app, but I can understand that sometimes there are no tools left to respond to an arrogant government that ignores the opposition parties.

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I apologize for not trying to use a bit of my French tonight. It is getting late, and I do not want to butcher it too much.

I have more of a comment than a question, because the member really emphasized the impact on the interpreters, and therefore, the impact on committees. I just want to share that it is bigger than even the committees.

I have the privilege to sit on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, and we have a challenge to just have enough interpreters with the right security classifications for that committee. We have been impacted directly by the injuries to interpreters because of the hybrid Parliament as well, which then makes it more difficult for us to meet.

If it were not for the graciousness of the Bloc Québécois member of that committee to attend committee and sometimes only participate in English, we would not be able to play our very important role, considering everything we are studying. I just wanted to get that on the record.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments.

I think it is a good thing to speak more than one language. It is good to speak English, French and Spanish. I believe we should speak several languages. That is fine. The idea is that we must try to be accepting of the other person's language. I thank the member.

Government Orders

It gives me the opportunity to say, in this evening's debate, that we do not talk much about the interpreters' situation, but it is truly alarming. In September, more than 57 working events for our parliamentarians will no longer take place. This means that the hybrid Parliament eats up a lot of the interpreters' time. I really want the government to be aware of this issue. We must find concrete solutions.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and especially for what she said about the interpreters. I give her full credit, because I know that she did a lot to defend the workplace health and safety of the interpreters before the Board of Internal Economy.

However, she neglected to mention that the NDP was also there and that we also lobbied hard for the interpreters. We think it is extremely important to resolve this issue. I spoke about it in my speech. What she said is not 100% accurate. On the contrary, the NDP has always fought for the interpreters to have good working conditions. We will continue to do that, and we hope to be able to work with her in that regard.

The member said that she thinks it is important that the Conservatives agree. However, the problem is that the Conservatives voted against the hybrid Parliament, even during the pandemic. For all of those reasons—

• (2330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am trying to ensure that everybody gets enough time.

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, one of the principles I live my life by is that, when I believe in something, I defend it, and I defend it at all times. I noticed that my friend and colleague on the Board of Internal Economy was defending the interpreters at the Board of Internal Economy, but that is not what I am seeing this evening. When it comes to forming an alliance, he agrees to support a motion in its entirety, without amendments that would ensure that the hybrid Parliament is well structured and that interpreters are protected. As I like to say, people need to walk the talk.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague for her excellent speech, which stands out from the other speeches that were all about lofty theories and the broad principles of modernization. She showed us what real democracy is. It means taking care of one another above all else. That is what she was doing when she was talking about the interpreters.

I know that work-life balance is very important to her as a mother and grandmother. As a mother myself, I would like to get her perspective.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I am indeed very concerned about the issue of work-life balance. I think that when a person is sick, they need to take care of themselves. Sometimes a member needs to take leave to take care of themselves. As whip, I accept that. I would not want that member to connect to the hybrid Parliament. I would want them to take care of themselves. If a member of my caucus is taking care of a sick family member, then I accept that they are providing this care and that they will not be

participating virtually because they need to focus on the person they are helping.

In 2010, I was the deputy whip and my mother attempted suicide. Does anyone really think that I wanted to participate virtually? Of course not. I wanted some time off to be completely focused on my family members.

In closing, I sincerely believe that there are plenty of things that the government could do to show that it really cares about work-life balance. For example, committee meetings should not be held on Fridays. That is hard for families. Now, with the hybrid format, we are obligated to hold those meetings. The government could review the parliamentary schedule. That would have a very tangible effect on the lives of families and those who live farther from Parliament Hill.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and the relevant information she shared during her 20 minutes.

First, I want to say that the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has done an outstanding job. I have been to the committee a few times, and I have been very impressed. She is not biased. She is very open to discussion. I wanted to note that, as well.

I want to mention that things are easier for the opposition than for the government. I understand that you are not in government and never will be, because of the party you represent. I say that with all due respect.

I remember that, from 2015 to 2019, the MP who was here before me—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize, but the hon. member has already spoken for more than a minute. I also want to remind him that he must address the Chair.

There are only 43 seconds left. I will ask the hon. member to reply.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Madam Speaker, I knew Peter Stoffer. It is true that he was not in the House much. He was often in his riding. It was the whip's decision to permit those absences back then. I will not interfere in the whips' work in their own caucuses. That is a choice.

However, as a member of the opposition, I expect to get some consideration. The role of the opposition is to improve the government's work, the bills and regulations that are presented. At present, we do not have a government that is interested in having the opposition improve its bills or motions. Instead, I see a government that is closed off and anxious to stop the work of Parliament because it has had enough of being implicated in files that are a little too hot for it to handle.

• (2335)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It has happened a few times tonight, so I want to remind members that questions and comments are questions and comments and should be within the one-minute timeline, or 30 seconds if I say that it is a quick question. It is not for making speeches.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, “Let me put it this way: If you don't want to work in Ottawa during the Parliamentary sessions—don't run to be an MP. A hybrid Parliament made sense during Covid but it should never be permanent. I strongly oppose govt's move to make it permanent.” Those are not my words. Those are the words of the Hon. Wayne Easter, the former Liberal minister and MP for Malpeque for almost 28 years in this House. I note that the statement Mr. Easter made earlier today was shared on social media by former Liberal minister Jane Philpott.

Before I forget, I am going to share my time with the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

I am going to talk a bit about some of the advantages of hybrid sittings, because they have been brought up, to be fair, in some of the speeches. We talk about the sacrifice members make in the service of Canada to be members of Parliament. I would say first and foremost it is a privilege to be here. It is an absolute privilege and an honour. However, to be frank, part of the reason I decided to run for office was to have a better work-life balance, because compared to my previous life in the military, this is way more flexible. It is way easier to manage my work-life balance than it was in the Canadian Armed Forces.

We have people serving our country who do not have the privileges and options we have, and I would argue there are lots of Canadians out there, because of the dire state of our economic situation, who are working two jobs. They do not have the privilege of virtually attending their work and trying to balance everything. I am not trying to take away from any of this. I am just saying that it is a privilege to be here and we need to treat it as such.

We have had these rules, and I have used them when I have had to. I am a single dad half the time, and as a single dad of a nine-year-old, it is very difficult to try to balance all of this. My daughter has been here up in the gallery or in the lobby. When I was the deputy whip for my party, she even got to call the MPs into the House a couple times as we came in for a vote.

I have utilized the voting app as well, and I fully acknowledge that there are dire circumstances or situations, whether they be medical, a death in the family or a baby being born, for which we should not take away the right of a member to vote. I can see some legitimate uses for the voting app, as an example, but I note that we have had existing tools kicking around Parliament for a long time. We can pair members of Parliament. That is a good way to start, because there are members who face challenges on a regular basis.

One of the arguments we hear, which the parliamentary secretary for the government House leader has used, is the fact that we have

Government Orders

used this, as if it is some sort of reason for us not to vote against it. I would note, though, that we can use the analogy of a sports team. Let us use hockey, for example. If we go back to the start of the NHL, a hundred-and-some-odd years back, players could not pass the puck forward. It would be dumb for opposition parties not to utilize the rules that have been forced upon us under this hybrid Parliament. We use the rules we are forced to use and we play the game. I do not even like using that term. This is not a principled issue about fiscal mismanagement or some issue of conscience. This is about procedural rules. We would be dumb not to use them.

I want to give another quote. It is from an article that came out of The Globe and Mail by Campbell Clark:

...governments...have wanted to find a way to get under-fire cabinet ministers into the Commons without having them walk past the press. Now they don't even have to sneak out the back. There is real accountability lost if ministers don't have to walk past MPs in their caucus and stand up across from the opposition.

This point was brought up by a previous speaker. The press is another tool for holding the government to account; it is not just us in opposition. Specifically, when ministers of the Crown do not have to be in this House, it is a way for them to avoid tough questions, because, again, those in government have to make tough decisions.

• (2340)

I know you have been doing a good job, Madam Speaker, of recognizing the member for New Westminster—Burnaby virtually, but I know I have been on virtually plenty of times trying to get attention, I am sitting there waving my hands on the screen, and it is hard to get recognized. It is a lot easier here in the House.

The real point I want to focus on about hybrid that really scares me is the partisanship. This place is already divisive enough. Partisanship ebbs and flows in a parliamentary session. However, I would argue to take the pandemic out of it. There is an inability to build relationships in this House, which is what actually gets things done. I can speak to numerous examples from my short time here since 2019.

Shortly after the pandemic broke out, the government introduced the Canada emergency business account. I asked a question in question period. I got talking points from the minister. That was in June 2020. I brought it up in the summer when we were doing those special COVID committee sessions. Again, I got talking points.

Government Orders

September rolled around and I asked again, but this time when I did not get the answer that I desired, I basically cornered the minister in the hallway. There were no cameras, there was no worrying about being misunderstood and getting it reported incorrectly in the media. I was able to actually explain why small businesses that do not have business bank accounts really needed to qualify for this. There are many farmers and small businesses in my riding that were failing to meet it.

I was not the only MP bringing up this issue to the minister, but I swear I saw the lightbulb go on. It kind of took that for her to understand the challenges and the issue. Shortly after that, to give the government credit, it actually made the changes and announced the changes to the program, and things got done. This happens almost every day with opposition MPs and the government ministers.

We walk across the way, we talk to them face to face. We do not have to worry about going through staff. I have had that relationship with the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Immigration in dealing with security clearances, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

This is not new. I will quote the press gallery reporter, Dale Smith. I do not think he is real friendly to the Conservative Party. He has quoted an article from about a year ago, I believe. He warns that this hybrid Parliament could “further erode the relationship building that better helps Parliament function”.

He points to research from the Samara Institute that was pulled from exit interviews from former MPs. Smith indicated that “over time the House of Commons has become a less-friendly place to foster that dynamic. In the Chamber, it’s harder for backbenchers and opposition MPs to catch ministers—who can now leave to vote on their phones—for constituent files that require ministerial intervention.”

There are other people I can quote. John Milloy is a professor of political science and public ethics at Wilfrid Laurier University who served as the Liberal MPP in Ontario and in former prime minister Jean Chrétien’s office. He said, “Just those hours of being able to talk to each other, and dare I say, talk to the opposition,” are so important. Mr. Milloy talks about, in his references, about the voting opportunities should we use them, but we have to justify them.

I think the people who should never use hybrid Parliament are the actual ministers themselves. I started my speech saying it is a privilege for all of us to be here as members of Parliament. However, it is an even a greater honour and privilege to be a minister of the Crown, and with that comes sacrifice. I think the ministers and parliamentary secretaries should have to participate in debate in this chamber.

Conservatives have put forward some reasonable amendments that would allow consensus to occur around this motion and keep hybrid in place for the remainder of this Parliament. However, I cannot emphasize enough the risk to partisanship if we keep hybrid going into the future.

• (2345)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I regret the fact that I did not get to listen to my colleague’s French accent. He speaks very well in French, and I encourage him to continue to do so; that is very important.

I appreciated the fact that he listed a number of advantages, as well as underlining some of the disadvantages, of hybrid. I have to say that, when I replaced the previous member of Parliament, who was an NDP opposition member for 18 years, that former member was able to stay back and do events on a certain night or certain day, activities with veterans, that I was not able to do between 2015 and 2019. I could not stay back one day to go to an event with the member. I felt that I was not able to be as representative as I would have liked to be.

Now, I am here all the time. I have maybe missed five in the last year, for specific reasons, such as dental work last week. I am able to do my duties at home and represent my constituency.

Does the member think we could be even more effective by having hybrid, but using it only on an exceptional basis?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, we are elected to be here and to be the voice of the people in Ottawa, not the voice of Ottawa back in our constituencies.

I feel that our job is to listen. That is why we have constituency weeks. I actually think we should sit longer. We sit less than most Parliaments in western democracies in the world do. We should not be breaking next week. We should be going into July; we should be back at the start of September. We should start back in January.

I believe that our job is to work together to make the best legislation that works for all Canadians, not just the Canadians that the government is privileged to represent.

[*Translation*]

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

He focused on one important point, which is that it is a great privilege to be here in the House. We should act accordingly and with dignity. We should always seek the common good and strive for balance and consensus as much as possible.

This evening, we are watching the Liberal government use its fake majority to make permanent something that was obtained through consensus. This profoundly debases that decision. That is what is so shocking.

Now we are debating the possibility of being with our family, but we know full well that in a non-hybrid Parliament, it is possible to ask for permission. We know that every member of the House is open to compromise. The problem is that there is no discussion.

The difference between a decision by consensus and a decision by vote is that, with a consensus, no one is dissatisfied. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, a number of members and our House leader, as well as the member for Perth—Wellington, highlighted that this is really the purpose of our amendment to the motion. I think that is technically what we are supposed to be debating right now.

It is about saying that we should keep this in place. There are parts that we do not like, but we can accept that. However, let us not make it permanent. Let us force the government to come back and work with all parties. I think the consensus is that, if we just put the sunset clause on this bill, it would be acceptable to all members here in the House. That is key.

Traditionally, for the last 100-plus years, changing Standing Orders has always been done through consensus, not unilaterally by the majority of MPs.

• (2350)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have worked very well with my colleague, both in and out of the House. We have had meetings together on Zoom. We have been very effective that way, too.

Even today, we were able to talk in the lobby together about some of the work that we are doing to push the government to bring Afghan MPs to safety in Canada. What I want to say to the hon. member is that it is hybrid Parliament right now, and we did that. We were in the lobby working together. That was happening.

There are people in this House debating right now, but there are also people who were able to stay in their communities because they have other things that they are doing. We have an NDP member of Parliament who is going to be having a baby in the next few days. A member of the Conservative caucus just had a baby.

There are reasons why hybrid is very important, and we can still do the work that we do. We did it today.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I talked about that in my speech. I said that I am actually personally open to exceptions, such as babies being born, illness, death, etc. However, my point is the accountability aspect. That is what bothers me. It is about ministers of the Crown and parliamentary secretaries being here, being present and being able to be held to account, because they are the ones who have that privilege of being in government. The job for all the rest of us as members of Parliament, even the backbenchers in the Liberal caucus, is to make sure all aspects for Canadians are being represented.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to be able to stand up and represent the people of Battle River—Crowfoot in this place.

I want to emphasize something very significant that my colleague, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, talked about earlier. It was a statement that bears repeating because of its significance. It is the fact that MPs should be representing their constituents in Ottawa, not Ottawa to their constituents. It is that attitude that I endeavour to bring each and every day that I come to this chamber.

Let me talk for a moment about this chamber, because it bears emphasis in light of what we are debating here this evening, which are changes to the Standing Orders, and specifically the very reasonable amendment that was brought forward by the opposition House leader to see a sunset on the changes that the government is, I would dare to say, ramming through this place with little consultation. Certainly a great concern has been brought up by many as to what the implications of these things might be.

To speak specifically about this place, for more than eight centuries there has been a parliamentary process that has evolved and has been developing to get us to the point where we are today, from the fields of Runnymede through some pivotal moments in the foundations of responsible government. Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine, I believe in Montreal, brought about the foundation of what was called “responsible government” to the point when we had our first parliamentary elections and the appointment of Sir John A. Macdonald as our first prime minister, the times when Canada became a nation and when we saw a burning down of our parliamentary building. We saw less disruption when our Parliament Buildings literally burned to the ground in the beginning of the 20th century than we did when the COVID-19 pandemic took place.

Democracy matters. Democracy is worth fighting for, and democracy is something that each and every one of us needs to be diligent and focused on protecting when we see the sort of antics and behaviours that we see from the current Liberal government. It seems to have very little respect for our democratic process, very little respect for democracy and very little respect for anybody who does not agree with them and their ideas of how the country should be run.

Although Conservatives did actually receive more votes in the last election than the Liberals, that is something that they like to conveniently forget. The Liberals specifically said that they would not join a coalition with the NDP, which we found out was categorically untrue only months after the last election. It places upon all of us the responsibility to defend democracy and to make sure that the long-standing traditions of this place are preserved.

We saw a host of challenges that came about because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although I did not think I would have to spend a number of my first months as a member of Parliament fighting to even be able to do my job to make sure that I was able to represent my constituents in this place, we eventually got to a place where we could ensure that those voices from coast to coast and from sea to sea in this country were heard. It took time and it took effort, and we did get to a point where a hybrid system was able to ensure those voices could be heard in the midst of some of those challenging circumstances. We proved that it was possible, but that does not mean that it should be continued in that manner, especially when there are those who would abuse it.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would like to make a specific point to emphasize that very thing. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw that instead of ensuring that they brought the country together, one of the Liberals' first proposals was quite something. What the Liberals proposed was not pandemic supports. It was not helping Canadians at a time when it was absolutely necessary. No, they wanted to grant themselves unlimited taxation and spending authority. That was the Liberals' response to a crisis. "Never let a good crisis go to waste", they said. They were going to give themselves unlimited taxation and spending authority without parliamentary approval; spitting in the face of eight centuries of responsible government.

• (2355)

It is not without extreme caution that I enter into this debate to say we should be very careful in how we approach the seriousness of ensuring we preserve our democratic institutions. I speak specifically to the amendment that has been brought forward. Let us make sure we study it. Let us make sure we have a sunset on it. Let us make sure we can carefully evaluate how these dramatic changes to the way Parliament works can be studied in a fulsome manner to ensure we can do what is best ultimately for our constituents and for Canadians. There is only one place, one room in this country that ensures that every square inch and every person has a voice, and it is this place.

There is no question there is a wide variety of perspectives, personalities, professions and political parties, but it is in this place where we are able to accomplish dialogue and debate, which are so fundamental to the functioning of our democracy. When it comes to standing up for that, it should be not only be the first and primary responsibility of a first minister, prime minister, a government represented through the cabinet, members of every political party and every MP here, but also very much the focus of all of those who have the honour of being able to be a temporary tenant of these green seats in Canada's House of Commons.

The unfortunate trend is that the government prefers obedience as opposed to opposition. Let me use another example. I think that a very significant example has to do with the coalition partners over there at the far end of the House, the fourth party. The NDP are not much of an opposition party. The debate we are having here is a great example of that.

I do not think there is a lot of support from the members of the NDP for this sort of thing because it is contrary to the ideals they purport to have, which go beyond their parliamentary functions in the context of the so-called confidence and supply arrangement. I think that this is more about either incompetence or laziness, and sometimes it is difficult to tell between the two which it is because, when a fourth party gives a blank cheque to a government that was elected as a minority, it is unacceptable that they would do so with so little recognition for the impact that has on how our country operates.

I do not know if the leader of the NDP is more focused on video games than he is worrying about the interests of his party, but I know I have spoken to a number of members. It may surprise some members of the NDP, but there are a few of them in my constituency. I have heard from a surprising number of them over the last number of months and the last year or so, where there are these—

• (2400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am so sorry. The hon. member's time is up.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today because of a question I asked some time ago in the House of Commons, which went unanswered in many respects. We talked about, at that point in time, the inflation and the toll it was taking on Canada's businesses, both in their ability to borrow and with respect to the bankruptcies that were happening across Canada. That is on the rise as well.

When I asked that question, it was just before the budget came out on March 28. I asked the Prime Minister and I asked the government to ensure there were no new taxes coming forward in the budget so there would not be more burden felt by Canadians, and by Canadian businesses in particular, from the rising cost of CPI, the Consumer Price Index in Canada. This is something that continues to haunt Canadians, and it has haunted us more again, as we have seen in the last little while.

There was a point when it looked like the Bank of Canada was actually getting inflation under control. When I say, "under control", I mean back down to about the 4% level, or about double where it needs to be in order for the economy to manage to the point where it is deemed to be stable, which is between 1% and 3%. Usually, we say about 2%. That is not happening anymore.

On June 7, the Bank of Canada raised the bank rate again because the CPI was continuing to increase. Why did the CPI increase after April? What happened after the budget? The government imposed an increase in the carbon tax, a new tax, 30% of which was felt directly by consumers. The government will tell consumers that they get all their money back, yet it has been proven time and time again by objective officers of Parliament that it is in fact an in-and-out scheme, where Canadians are being fooled about how much they are getting back.

On top of that, the government is designing a new tax from July 1, which is going to double the effect of the clean fuel regulations, which is going to take a total now of 61¢ on average per litre of gasoline out of the pockets of Canadians. One cannot sit there and impose more taxes and more costs on Canadians without it having an effect on everything they buy, and that in itself creates inflation. These things all flow all the way through the value chain. When one increases the cost of things, one increases inflation. When one increases inflation, one increases the cost of debt and devalues the work people do, because everything costs more. Therefore, what they used to take home does not buy as much. It is not worth as much to them as it was before the inflation was created.

We have more inflation and we are on a spiral. The government continues to create more inflation. We must think about everything it is doing here. It is over-budget on everything it is doing. A \$41-billion deficit plan for this year is already out of date. Three months into when that budget was planned, we are already well past that. We have all kinds of industrial commitments for which the government never foresaw, for some strange reason, that it would have to pay the bill at the end of the day. In addition, interest rates go up, and interest rates are going up again. They go up not just for Canadians; they go up also for the Canadian government. The Canadian government is going to pay more in interest this year because the bank rate just went up, and that causes more interest to be paid by the government, which causes more interest to be paid by Canadians. This is a vicious cycle. The government needs to get over it. Will it please commit to looking at inflation and stop the increase in costs upon Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a number of thoughts come to mind. First and foremost, we can understand and appreciate the degree to which inflation is hurting Canadians. I would ask the Conservative Party to collectively understand what I just finished saying and support some of the initiatives that the government is doing to assist Canadians, whether it is the dental program or the grocery rebate program. These are helping Canadians in a very real and tangible way.

The member talked about the price on pollution. Even though 338 Conservative candidates made a campaign promise to have a price on pollution, I respect that they did flip-flop on the issue, even though they did promise Canadians.

What is misleading is when Conservatives stand up and try to give the impression that the Parliamentary Budget Officer was wrong when he made the statement saying that 80% of Canadians would receive more money, real dollars, compared to money that is put in.

That means 80% of the residents of Winnipeg North are going to be receiving more of a rebate, which, again, helps with inflation.

There is a consistency problem. The Conservatives talk about inflation rates. As I said, we are concerned, and we are taking action, even though the Conservatives do not support it. We need to recognize that around the world, inflation is hitting. It is not unique to Canada. What is unique to Canada is that Canada's inflation rate is substantially less than the inflation rate of many of the European countries. It has been less than the rate of the U.S., England, Germany and other European countries.

Relatively speaking, Canada's inflation rate is high. We recognize the hardship that it costs and, as a result, we have put into place a number of budgetary measures to support Canadians in a very real and tangible way.

Imagine the frustration that we do not hear ideas coming from the Conservative Party, outside of the issue of cryptocurrency, and we are still waiting for the apology. Remember that the leader of the Conservative Party said, look, do we want to fight inflation? Go to cryptocurrency.

Adjournment Proceedings

Those people who would have followed that advice would have lost 60%-plus of their investment. Other economic recommendations coming from the leader of the Conservative Party included things like getting rid of the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

It is very well respected not only here in Canada but across other jurisdictions in the world, recognizing the important role that the Bank of Canada plays in our society, a society that is doing exceptionally well, whether it is the deficit, the GDP or our ability to be able to have better controls on the issue of inflation.

How does the Conservative Party respond, in particular the leader of the Conservative Party? Fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada. How silly an idea?

I do not think we need to take advice from the Conservative Party, because it has clearly demonstrated that it does not understand.

• (2405)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I know it is late and I know my colleague across the way probably did not even listen to what I had to say. The answer was obviously disconnected from any question I actually had. We talked about inflation. I did not talk about much else that he referred to in there.

Nevertheless, I will go on here about inflation and what his government is causing. He did say one thing that I wanted to address here. He did say that the more things go up and the more Canadians get harmed by the inflation the government has caused, the more they will give them cheques and find ways to put a little bit of money back in their pockets, much like with the carbon tax they talk about.

They take a bunch of money out of one's pocket but do not worry, they will give one a cheque for a little bit back and one will be happy with it. They will give a bunch of misinformation in the House of Commons that 80% of us are better off.

I think that a lot of people have disputed that rather substantially.

In any event, continuing to abet inflation is not the way to address inflation. Would he please commit to doing something to actually address the inflation that he is causing?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, with respect to the member's initial comments, he should read the speech that he gave in his four minutes. He will find that I addressed it directly, with one exception and that was when I talked about Conservative ideas related to dealing with the issue of inflation. All I was doing was regurgitating ideas that were generated from the leader of the Conservative Party. I suspect that likely makes him a little bit nervous, as I am sure it makes a lot of Canadians nervous.

The bottom line is, and I have said this consistently, this government is very much aware of the issue of inflation. We have a budget that is reflective of what Canadians have been telling us. It is a budget that deals with the issue of inflation in a very tangible way.

We will continue to work with stakeholders, to minimize the negative impact of inflation on Canadians while, at the same time, building a country and an economy that is there for all Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (2410)

[*Translation*]

cordingly the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Ac-

(The House adjourned at 12:10 a.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, June 12, 2023

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Child Health Protection Act

Bill C-252. Report stage.....	15729
Ms. Lattanzio	15729
Motion for concurrence.....	15729
(Motion agreed to).....	15729
Third reading	15729
Mr. Steinley.....	15731
Ms. Gaudreau.....	15731
Ms. Chagger.....	15731
Mr. Davies.....	15731
Mr. Steinley.....	15732
Ms. Gaudreau.....	15733
Mr. Davies.....	15734
Mr. Lamoureux.....	15736

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Strengthening the Port System and Railway Safety in Canada Act

Bill C-33—Time Allocation Motion

Mr. Holland.....	15737
Motion.....	15737
Mr. Brassard.....	15737
Mr. Alghabra.....	15737
Mr. Barsalou-Duval.....	15737
Mr. Bachrach.....	15737
Mr. Lamoureux.....	15738
Mr. Patzer.....	15738
Mr. Davies.....	15738
Mr. Barsalou-Duval.....	15738
Mr. Généreux.....	15739
Mr. Rogers.....	15739
Mr. Hoback.....	15740
Mr. Zimmer.....	15740
Mr. MacGregor.....	15741
Motion agreed to	15742

Miscarriage of Justice Review Commission Act (David and Joyce Milgaard's Law)

Mr. Lametti.....	15742
Bill C-40. Second reading	15742
Mr. Genuis.....	15745
Mr. Bachrach.....	15745
Ms. Chagger.....	15746
Ms. Gladu.....	15746
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	15746
Mr. Van Popta.....	15747
Mr. Van Popta.....	15747

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Anti-India and Anti-Hindu Groups

Mr. Arya.....	15748
---------------	-------

Justice

Mr. Soroka.....	15748
-----------------	-------

Big Day of Giving

Mr. Casey.....	15748
----------------	-------

CKRL Community Radio

Mrs. Vignola.....	15748
-------------------	-------

Lebanese Heritage Month in Canada

Ms. Diab.....	15749
---------------	-------

Gulf War Veterans

Mr. Richards.....	15749
-------------------	-------

Canada Summer Jobs Program

Ms. Damoff.....	15749
-----------------	-------

Portuguese Heritage Month

Mr. Fonseca.....	15749
------------------	-------

Canadian Open

Mr. Fast.....	15750
---------------	-------

Sam Ibrahim Centre

Mr. Anandasangaree.....	15750
-------------------------	-------

The Economy

Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster).....	15750
---	-------

The Economy

Mr. Vis.....	15750
--------------	-------

Agri-tourism in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell

Mr. Drouin.....	15750
-----------------	-------

Community Trail

Mr. Bachrach.....	15751
-------------------	-------

60th Anniversary of Éditions du Boréal

Mr. Champoux.....	15751
-------------------	-------

The Economy

Ms. Gladu.....	15751
----------------	-------

The Budget

Mr. Gerretsen.....	15751
--------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Democratic Institutions

Mr. Poilievre.....	15752
Mr. LeBlanc.....	15752

Housing

Mr. Poilievre.....	15752
Ms. Freeland.....	15752

Mr. Poilievre	15752
Ms. Freeland	15752
Mr. Poilievre	15752
Ms. Freeland	15753
Mr. Poilievre	15753
Ms. Freeland	15753
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Therrien	15753
Mr. LeBlanc	15753
Mr. Therrien	15753
Mr. LeBlanc	15753
Housing	
Mr. Singh	15753
Ms. Freeland	15754
Mr. Singh	15754
Ms. Freeland	15754
Democratic Institutions	
Ms. Lantsman	15754
Mr. LeBlanc	15754
Ms. Lantsman	15754
Mr. LeBlanc	15754
Mr. Chong	15754
Mr. Mendicino	15755
Mr. Chong	15755
Mr. Holland	15755
Mr. Berthold	15755
Mr. Mendicino	15755
Mr. Berthold	15755
Mr. LeBlanc	15755
Mr. Villemure	15755
Mr. Mendicino	15756
Ms. Gaudreau	15756
Mr. Mendicino	15756
Ms. Gaudreau	15756
Mr. LeBlanc	15756
Finance	
Mr. Uppal	15756
Ms. Freeland	15756
Housing	
Mr. Uppal	15756
Ms. Gould	15756
Finance	
Mrs. Vien	15757
Mrs. St-Onge	15757
Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Idlout	15757
Mr. Mendicino	15757
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Ms. Kwan	15757
Mr. Fraser	15757
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Baker	15757
Ms. Joly	15758

The Economy	
Mr. Hallan	15758
Ms. Freeland	15758
Mr. Hallan	15758
Ms. Freeland	15758
Mr. Williamson	15758
Mr. Fraser	15758
Mr. Williamson	15759
Ms. Gould	15759
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mr. Perron	15759
Mr. Drouin	15759
Mr. Perron	15759
Ms. Freeland	15759
The Economy	
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	15759
Ms. Gould	15760
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	15760
Mr. Wilkinson	15760
Mr. Lehoux	15760
Mr. Guilbeault	15760
Public Service of Canada	
Mr. Arseneault	15760
Mrs. Fortier	15760
The Economy	
Mr. Morantz	15760
Ms. Freeland	15760
Housing	
Mr. Morantz	15761
Mr. Fraser	15761
Mr. Généreux	15761
Mr. Duclos	15761
Health	
Mrs. Valdez	15761
Ms. Bennett	15761
Families, Children and Social Development	
Mr. MacGregor	15761
Ms. Gould	15762
Emergency Preparedness	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	15762
Mr. Blair	15762

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply	
Opposition Motion—Climate Change	
Motion	15762
Motion agreed to	15764
Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act	
Bill C-35. Report stage	15764
Motion No. 1 negatived	15765
Ms. Gould	15765

Motion for concurrence	15765
Motion agreed to	15766
Criminal Code	
Bill C-41, Third reading	15767
Motion agreed to	15768
(Bill read the third time and passed)	15768

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Resignation of Member

Mr. O'Toole	15768
Mr. Holland	15770
Mr. Poilievre	15771
Mr. Savard-Tremblay	15772
Mr. Blaikie	15773
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	15773

Privilege

Alleged Intimidation of Member

Mr. Caputo	15774
Mr. Lamoureux	15775
Ms. Findlay	15775
Mr. Scheer	15776

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Gerretsen	15777
---------------------	-------

Committees of the House

Citizenship and Immigration

Mr. El-Khoury	15777
---------------------	-------

Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Morrissey	15777
Mr. Aitchison	15777

Justice and Human Rights

Mr. Genuis	15778
Motion for concurrence	15778
Mr. Anandasangaree	15779
Ms. Larouche	15779
Mr. Ruff	15780
Ms. Larouche	15781
Ms. Kwan	15781
Ms. Damoff	15782
Mr. Gerretsen	15782
Ms. Kwan	15783
Mr. Anandasangaree	15783
Mr. Genuis	15783
Mr. Anandasangaree	15783
Mr. Genuis	15785
Ms. McPherson	15785
Mr. Holland	15785
Motion	15785
(Motion agreed to)	15785

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Government Business No. 26—Amendments to the Standing Orders

Mr. Holland	15785
Motion	15785
Mr. Scheer	15789
Mr. Therrien	15789
Mr. Julian	15790
Mr. van Koeverden	15790
Mr. Scheer	15790
Amendment	15795
Mr. Lamoureux	15796
Mr. Therrien	15796
Ms. Kwan	15797
Ms. Chagger	15797
Mr. Therrien	15798
Mr. Samson	15801
Mr. Julian	15801
Ms. Pauzé	15802
Ms. Chagger	15802
Mr. Julian	15802
Mr. Lamoureux	15805
Mr. Kmiec	15805
Mrs. DeBellefeuille	15806
Ms. Khalid	15806
Ms. McPherson	15807
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	15808
Mr. Nater	15808
Ms. Chagger	15808
Mr. Weiler	15808
Mr. Nater	15809
Mr. Perron	15810
Ms. Mathysen	15810
Mr. Nater	15810
Mr. Julian	15813
Ms. Fry	15814
Mrs. DeBellefeuille	15814
Mr. Davidson	15814
Mr. Lamoureux	15815
Mr. Lamoureux	15815
Mr. Arnold	15817
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	15818
Mr. MacGregor	15818
Mr. Small	15819
Mr. Kmiec	15819
Mr. Lauzon	15821
Mr. Perron	15821
Ms. McPherson	15821
Mr. Epp	15822
Mr. Lamoureux	15823
Mrs. DeBellefeuille	15824
Ms. Mathysen	15824
Mrs. DeBellefeuille	15824
Mr. Lauzon	15827
Mr. Ruff	15827
Mr. Julian	15828
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	15828

Mr. Samson	15828
Mr. Ruff	15829
Mr. Samson	15830
Mr. Perron	15830
Ms. McPherson	15831
Mr. Kurek	15831

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Taxation

Mr. McLean	15832
Mr. Lamoureux	15833

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>