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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, November 23, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 23, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1005)

[*English*]

RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF POSTAL SERVICE OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 25, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

The 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 place so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. member for Foothills.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to pose questions to the minister on this issue.

Yesterday during her presentation she talked about the crisis that our small businesses across Canada are facing. We have heard from small businesses across the country that have said many of them are losing as much as \$3,000 a month, which for them is critical revenue at their busiest time of the year. The money they make during the Christmas season allows them to remain in business for the rest of the calendar year. On top of losing that \$3,000 a month, in many cases they are losing the people they hire for their busiest time of the year.

This is critical not only for our businesses here in Canada but also for those businesses that operate outside of the country. Many countries that we do business with have been told by the government not to send mail to Canada. This shows how much we rely on a dependable mail service.

My question to the minister is: why did the government not act sooner? It knew this crisis was coming. Why did it wait until we are in a crisis situation before it took action?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that this service is of critical importance not just to small business but to Canadians across the country, people in rural and remote communities, and people who rely on Canada Post for payments of all different kinds.

Tabling legislation is not a decision that we have taken lightly. We have worked very closely with the parties to ensure that the collective bargaining process has been supported. We have provided mediation through federal mediation service. We have provided a special mediator who I have reappointed several times. After five weeks of strikes with little progress, we have really run out of options.

I reject the sentiment that we have not acted quickly enough. This is what respecting the collective bargaining process looks like, unlike the previous Harper government that sometimes did not even allow negotiations to proceed.

From my perspective, we have acted prudently with respect for collective bargaining, with respect for labour but also with the interests of Canadians in mind.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. minister a couple of questions. The first being, if she does respect collective bargaining, why two or three weeks ago did the government make it very clear to the post office that it would bring in back-to-work legislation thereby crippling the attempts of the union to negotiate fairly on behalf of its members?

Second, is the minister aware of a notice that was sent out by Canada Post last week to its members instructing them not to deliver government cheques such as Canada child benefit cheques, welfare cheques, to anyone until after November 22? It would seem to me that is a tactic that the post office is using to create a crisis, and we have heard about those who would create a crisis.

If the minister could give me some clarity on both of those questions, I would truly appreciate it.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I reject the sentiment that we talked about back-to-work legislation earlier than we had to. We have worked with the parties, as I said, consistently, not just for the past five weeks during the rotating strikes but also over the past year, by providing the parties every tool necessary to reach a collective agreement.

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We have appointed federal mediation services. We have appointed special mediators. We have reappointed special mediators. We have worked very hard with both parties to help them reach an agreement. However, having said that, we are now at a time where we have to take action.

Let us remember the abysmal record of the Harper government Conservatives when it came to fair and balanced labour relations. They consistently undermined the collective bargaining process, including legislating the terms of an agreement, introducing Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, which was a direct attack on organized labour. We have reversed that legislation.

This is something that we believe is prudent at this time. The Canadian economy and Canadian workers of all different stripes are depending on us to ensure that Canada Post can function this season.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about her actions not being taken lightly. However, let us take a look at what the government has taken lightly. Myself and several other members from the operations committee spent three weeks on the road studying Canada Post at the request of the government.

What the government has not addressed is the report that we put forward from an independent auditor that shows that Canada Post is going to be losing three-quarters of a billion dollars a year of the taxpayers' money in the short term. The government has done nothing. It has taken this lightly.

The government let the Canada Post board sit with eight to nine vacant positions, despite saying that it has not taken this lightly. The government has done nothing about it. Almost a year ago, we had the minister of procurement overseeing Canada Post, in committee, with the temporary president of Canada Post. The position was supposed to have been replaced about six months ago. We were assured, hand over heart, of course, by the minister that they were going to find a permanent president soon to address all of these issues.

The government says again and again that it not taken this issue lightly but the record shows that it has not done anything to address this. The fact is this strike is not the fault of the workers or CUPW. It is due to the political incompetence of the minister and the government.

My question is this. When is the government going to get its act together, appoint a permanent president and deliver a proper plan for Canada Post so that we can avoid issues such as we are facing now?

• (1010)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I find it a little rich that the party opposite is going to comment on labour relations, given the egregious behaviour that it displayed during the 10 years that it ran this country, and ran this country poorly. May I remind my colleagues that they had the lowest rate of growth? May I remind them of the astronomical amount of debt that this country accumulated during the 10 years of the Harper government? I think the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Order. Let us have one at a time.

I would ask the hon. member for Edmonton West to come to order. As much as I enjoy the dulcet tones, I prefer them when it is his turn.

The hon. Minister of Employment.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, let us just take one example of the Air Canada dispute, which was ended with pre-emptive legislation before the collective bargaining process could run its course and before employees could exercise their legal rights. Our approach is very different to the previous government and we firmly believe that the best deals are the ones that are negotiated between the parties, which is why we have worked so hard over the last year and a bit to help these parties find a negotiated agreement.

We have provided, once again, all of the tools necessary to the parties to find that agreement. We provided conciliation officers and mediators. We appointed a special mediator, not once but several times. We offered voluntary arbitration. We have reappointed a special mediator who has been working with the parties today. They are still working today with the mediator and we hope that they find a deal.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Liberal MPs on the opposite side hang their heads in shame every time they see a postal worker in their respective ridings. It is easy for the Liberals to attend labour AGMs, to stand with workers and offer flowery words, but the real work in standing up for the rights of workers comes at moments like this. This is where the government is lacking.

I am so irked by the government's words. The minister has to admit that with the threat of back-to-work legislation hanging over this totally manufactured crisis, Canada Post had no reason and no incentive to negotiate in good faith. That is the critical area of the argument today.

Why on earth would Canada Post's executives negotiate in good faith when all they have to do is wait out the clock for the government to come to their rescue?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the member opposite wants to talk about the work we have been doing with labour and the support for workers in our country, because in fact there is no question that our government has taken the well-being of workers very seriously.

First, we repealed Bill C-525 and C-377. We passed Bill C-4, which restored fair and balanced labour relations in the country. It made it easier for organized labour to recruit new members and grow their movements. We amended the Canada Labour Code to give federally regulated employees the right to flexible work arrangements and implement different leaves. We strengthened occupational health and safety standards. We passed Bill C-65, which provides federally regulated employees with protection against workplace violence. We ratified ILO convention 98 to ensure the right to organize and to collective bargaining.

Through Bill C-86, we are modernizing labour standards, largely informed by the conversations we have had with organized labour about the most vulnerable workers in our workplaces and the protections they need in a modern Canada Labour Code.

We introduced pay equity legislation. Again, it was appealed for by labour for many years before we formed government. We worked with them to make sure we could listen to those concerns and address something that is fundamentally a right: equal pay for work of equal value. We have almost doubled the benefits from the wage earner protection program.

I could go on. Our government profoundly believes in the rights of workers, especially the most vulnerable workers in our workplaces, and we have worked very well with organized labour to make sure we get those details right.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that in the last Parliament there were many strikes that were averted. We have fine mediators who do great work. I know of many cases where our ministers made sure the strikes were averted by the work they did at the table, sleeping in the port, and really getting the job done. When on occasion we did have to introduce back-to-work legislation, because it was having critical impacts on the economy, we did it, but we allowed for gruelling debate in the House. This government is not only doing back-to-work legislation, but it has put forth a motion with much less opportunity for debate. Its draconian measures are much worse than anything we ever did in terms of back-to-work legislation. We allowed for debate. How can the minister justify it? It is draconian.

• (1015)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, this is a great two-part question. First, I have members opposite asking me to hurry up and get this done and asking why we did not act sooner, and then we have members from the same party saying we should slow this down. I really am quite confused about what they are saying because, quite frankly, I am hearing two separate messages from the members opposite.

Let me just talk about their record. Back-to-work legislation was used four times since 2011, after they received their majority, and they threatened twice more. The final arbitration they used in their legislation was heavy-handed, oftentimes dictating terms of the collective agreement. The legislation we have tabled is completely different. These are not the same heavy-handed tactics the previous government took. I find it appalling that the member opposite would imply that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is poppycock. It is the same draconian measure as the Harper government. This is virtually the same motion it used when it legislated CP Rail workers back to work as well. This was a creation of Peter Van Loan, and the Liberals are now using it.

On the question of Bill C-377 and C-525, because the Liberals have made it pretty clear they want to coast through this entire Parliament, with this being the one meaningful thing they did for labour, the fact of the matter is one of the most egregious provisions of Bill C-377 was going to be that the unions would have to disclose the amount in their strike fund. The reason that was a bad thing was because unions need to be able to go out on strike and not have the

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employer know how long they could sustain a strike. The strike is what gives them leverage at the bargaining table.

How dare the minister get up and say they got rid of Bill C-377 so they are here for labour, ignoring the fact they are implementing back-to-work legislation. That ends the strike anyway, in which case, what does it matter what is in their strike fund, because the government is going to artificially end the strike anyway. They cannot give with one hand and take away with the other and then call themselves a champion of labour.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the question from the member opposite. It allows me to reiterate the work we have done in partnership with organized labour to strengthen workplaces and to provide decent work in this country for the most vulnerable workers.

There is no question that our government has made huge strides to actually protect workers in Canadian workplaces. He is right. Since forming government, we have repealed extremely harmful legislation that made it much harder for unions to organize and collectively bargain. We amended the Canada Labour Code to provide additional rights to flexibility for workers and to implement different leaves. We strengthened occupational and health and safety standards for workers so that they would have safe workplaces, something unions have fought for for a very long time. We passed Bill C-65 to protect workers from harassment, sexual violence and violence of all kinds. We ratified ILO Convention 98, which protects the right of workers to collectively organize and bargain.

In Bill C-86, we would modernize labour standards, which would, again, provide basic standards for the most vulnerable, and dignified work in workplaces that oftentimes vulnerable workers struggle in. We are introducing pay equity legislation, which would provide for mandatory assessments of work in federally regulated workplaces and make sure that women receive pay for work of equal value. We have almost doubled the benefits through the Wage Earner Protection Program Act, something unions have talked consistently about needing for those vulnerable workers. Finally, and I do not think it is a small thing, we have taken steps to ban asbestos in our workplaces, something organized labour again has fought for.

We have worked closely with organized labour. We will continue to work closely with organized labour. I am proud of the record of this government.

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Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am continually astounded by the naivety of the current Liberal government. It seems to me that it never considers competent leadership when it is doing something. When one has a plan, one also has to have a backup plan. There needs to be a contingency. The government has waited until the 11th hour on this crisis, when it has started to affect small businesses. It is affecting Canadians. It is going to affect the delivery of Christmas presents. It has waited until the absolute last moment, and now it is scrambling because it does not have a plan.

This is not the first time this has happened. It was the same deal with the pipeline out west. It had two years to try to remove the barriers to getting the thing built. Again, there was total naivety, no backup plan and no contingency. Why?

• (1020)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, yet again, we have a conflicting message from the party opposite. Is it either too fast or too slow? I cannot quite figure it out from the question.

Let me just answer this. I will tell members right now that our plan is to put forward, if necessary, legislation that is going to have guiding principles that will not look like the draconian legislation of the previous Harper government. In fact, we are going to make sure that the arbitrator is chosen in a non-partial way and a way that will not result in the arbitrator being removed for conflict of interest, as was the case with the previous minister of labour's decision. We are going to make sure that there are principles that respect the needs of the workers and respect the needs of the corporation.

The legislation is tabled. Members can look at it. This is dramatically different from the previous government's approach.

We are proud of the work we are doing with organized labour. We know that we need to have this legislation in place should the parties not come to an agreement. However, I encourage them both to do so.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is a black Friday for several reasons, but mainly because the federal government is trying to force thousands of mail carriers and other employees who are fighting for better working conditions to go back to work. We are currently discussing a closure motion on a closure motion, a super closure motion. That is not the usual way of doing business, and it is undemocratic.

In 2015, the current Prime Minister criticized the Harper government for intervening and forcing mail carriers back to work. Today, his government is doing exactly the same thing. It is unbelievable. Management and labour are being asked to negotiate in good faith, but how can that happen when the government is going to force employees back to work regardless?

Thousands of workers are having trouble getting paid for overtime. The employer does not even recognize their overtime. It also does not recognize pay equity between mail carriers who work in rural and suburban areas.

Why are the Liberals, who claim to be great defenders of workers, dismissing all of those concerns out of hand? Then they expect us to

take them at their word when they say that they believe in defending workers' rights.

Today, the government is violating workers' rights. It is humiliating workers who provide services day after day. I cannot understand how things have gotten to this point. We will not even have one day of debate in total on a bill that will impact thousands of families across the country.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, in fact, the labour disruption is affecting thousands of families across the country, including Canada Post workers, of course. It is certainly affecting the thousands of small businesses that rely on Canada Post to deliver packages to get their goods to their customers. These are small businesses, where the margin is so tight that the loss of their most profitable season can mean the end of their businesses. The member is absolutely right that this is a situation that is affecting thousands of Canadians, and I would suggest millions of Canadians, across the country.

This proposed legislation we are introducing will be impartial and fair to both parties. These are some of the measures we have included in the proposed legislation, should we have to use it. We would permit the parties to voluntarily conclude new collective agreements at any time before the mediator/arbitrator issues his or her final report. We would give the parties an opportunity to participate in the selection of a mediator/arbitrator by proposing three candidates to the minister. If both parties proposed the same person, the minister would be required to appoint that person as the mediator/arbitrator. If the parties did not propose the same person, the minister would appoint the mediator/arbitrator after seeking advice from the chair of the Canada Industrial Relations Board. There would also be guiding principles that would be very balanced.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that this shows how little Liberals know about the house of Labour, because when they come for one of us, they come for all of us. When they come for postal workers, they are coming for every worker across this country.

Everyone today knows that when Canada Post picks up the red phone to let the Liberals know that it wants people to be sent back to work, the Liberals will be happy to do it.

We are talking in this proposed legislation about workers, women, who are not paid equally. How many times have we heard the government talk about pay equity for women in this Parliament? Here is a concrete example of women not being paid equally who are now going to be forced back into that workplace. There are rural people who are not being paid for all the hours they work. Apparently it is okay with the Liberal government that there are Canadians out there working hard who are not being paid. That is unacceptable.

This is the busiest time of year, and with the injury rate they have at Canada Post, the Liberal government would force them back into a situation where they will have forced overtime. There will be more injuries before Christmas, because there will be nothing to help the health and safety of these workers at their busiest, most vulnerable time of year. However, this Liberal government is quite content to do exactly what the Conservatives did before it and force working people, without rights, back to work. The minister is sending those workers back into those conditions.

My plea is that we do not have to do this. The Liberals do not have to send people back into a situation where there is no equality for women and no health and safety and where workers rights are being disrespected. The Liberals had time to draft not only back-to-work legislation, which the minister seems incredibly proud of, which is bizarre, but legislation on a super closure motion, which we have been debating. It had a lot of time.

Will the minister now take the time, pick up that red phone and call Canada Post and tell it to negotiate at the table in a fair way for working people in our country?

• (1025)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that the member opposite does not think that my considerable messages, publicly and privately, to the members who are negotiating this collective agreement have not been encouraging them to get a deal. I clearly have said it countless times over the last five weeks, certainly privately to those members and publicly through the press. This is something we take incredibly seriously. I will say again that the best deal is the deal the two parties can negotiate together.

Having said that, we have had a year of mediated negotiations. We have had special mediators. We have had special mediators re-appointed. I have offered voluntary arbitration. The parties have not accepted.

We are at a critical point here. These strikes are affecting Canadian businesses and rural communities.

I will tell the member about some of the comments and messages I am receiving: “Thank you, minister, for taking this seriously, because my livelihood depends on getting the cheques that are owed to me by the people who buy my things. If I don't receive these cheques, I am going to go out of business, and I employ five employees.”

These are the kinds of messages my colleagues and I have been receiving. This is about all Canadians. This is about making sure that the parties have, if necessary, legislation that will be fair and balanced. However, we know that the Canadian economy, small and medium-sized businesses and rural and remote residents rely on this very important service.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the notion of the Liberals so far has been that they never take responsibility for their actions. The message today is a result of non-action on their side. They keep blaming others all the way. They keep laying the blame on other people. They have been on the job for three years, and they still do not take responsibility for their actions.

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When will the time come when the Liberals start taking action and stop this childish behaviour that has been occurring since they became the government in 2015?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, again, we see a divided opposition party. One member wants us to act more quickly; one member wants us to act more slowly. In fact, we have done everything we can to support the collective bargaining process for these two parties.

Let me reiterate some of the steps we have taken. We started working with the parties early on, with mediation services, beyond a year ago. We then accelerated our efforts. After a request to appoint a special mediator, we appointed a special mediator. We reappointed a special mediator. We offered voluntary arbitration.

The parties simply cannot find a place where they can get a deal. They continue to hear my message, both privately and personally, that I believe the best deal is the one they negotiate together. However, we find ourselves at a place where, as a government, we need to act now, and that is the purpose of this motion: to make sure that if we are forced to begin debate on this legislation, we can do it in a timely way that will deliver for Canadians of all different backgrounds.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a dark day for our country and especially for workers' rights. The bill that the minister is fast-tracking through the House today would deprive some Canadian workers of their right to strike. That is a basic right. It is protected.

As I listened to her, one question kept coming to mind: Does Canada's labour minister believe that Canadian workers have the right to strike?

Her bill is taking that right away from thousands of Canadian workers. She says she believes in negotiation, but everyone knows that the one of the only ways workers can put pressure on the employer, one of the only negotiation tactics or tools at their disposal, is the right to strike.

Does my colleague believe in Canadian workers' right to strike? Does Canada's labour minister respect Canadian workers' right to strike?

That is the basic question we need to ask.

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I have said before that we believe in the collective bargaining process. We support the collective bargaining process. That is why we introduced and passed Bill C-4, which restored rights and reversed harmful legislation, rammed through by the previous government, that was intended to minimize, reduce and delegitimize the labour movement. In fact, we amended the Canada Labour Code in partnership with labour, which gave us advice about protecting the most vulnerable in the workplace. We have strengthened occupational health and safety standards.

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Let me talk about the legislation we have tabled, which we really hope we do not have to use. However, if we do have to use it, we have crafted it in a way that will set balanced guiding principles. I did not get a chance to tell the House about those principles earlier, so let me tell members the factors the arbitrator will have to take into account: the health and safety of workers, equal pay for work of equal value, fair treatment of part-time and temporary employees, the financial sustainability of Canada Post, the need for collaborative labour management relations and high-quality service for the public.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are certain times in a government's term when an issue of fundamental importance comes up and we get to see the real character of the government, and this is such a time. I have rarely seen a time in a government's term of office when it acts in a way that is anti-democratic, anti-union, and anti rule of law and international treaty obligations at the same time, and that is what is happening here today.

There is a principle that Canada and Canadians subscribe to as a free and democratic society that is part of the global compact and agreement on what makes a modern democratic country that respects the rule of law, and that is the principle of free collective bargaining. That means that when labour and management have a labour dispute, we have to allow them to work out their differences freely without interference from any other party. That is not happening in this case. What is happening is that the government is interfering and introducing legislation to tip the balance to one hand.

Does the minister believe in the principle of free collective bargaining, and if so, why does she not back off and let Canada Post and CUPW resolve this issue by themselves?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, clearly, we believe in collective bargaining. That was why we introduced Bill C-4 to reverse harmful legislation of the previous government and to ensure workers had the right to organize freely and collectively bargain freely. However, we also are the federal government, with a responsibility to ensure that services on which Canadians rely are there when they need them.

This mediated process has been going on for well over a year, with rotating strikes taking place for five weeks. The parties still do not have an agreement. We hope they will reach that agreement in very short order. However, if they cannot reach one, we will help them with legislation that will be fair, principled and will help both parties achieve their goal.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1110)

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

(*Division No. 944*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Harvey	Hébert
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuilty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***VIOLA DESMOND**

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week we are celebrating a remarkable Nova Scotian, a Halifax hero, and the face of Canada's new \$10 bill, Viola Desmond.

Viola's 1946 story of being jailed and fined for sitting in a whites-only section of a theatre happened nine years before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat. Viola fought back and became the first black woman in Canada to legally challenge racial segregation.

This week, thanks in part to our government's \$25,000 contribution, Halifax will #CelebrateViola with events like a free spoken word event on Gottingen Street tonight, a free tribute concert on Saturday at the Marquee Ballroom, and a luncheon and ecumenical service at Saint George's Round Church on Sunday.

Seven decades later, as she takes her place on our \$10 bill, Haligonians and Canadians alike are celebrating her courage, strength and determination.

Mr. Speaker, the next time you reach for your wallet, I encourage you, and I encourage all Canadians, to reflect on the story of a Halifax hero, Viola Desmond.

* * *

HOCKEY

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hockey season is in full gear and Canadians from coast to coast are excited for the beginning of the world junior hockey championship in just a few weeks.

This year, the junior team is managed by Hamilton native and former first-round pick, Steve Staios, who played 1,001 games in the NHL with the Bruins, Canucks, Thrashers, Oilers, Flames, and Islanders before he retired in 2012.

In 2015, Steve returned home to Hamilton as president and general manager of the Hamilton Bulldogs. He has brought playoff hockey back with him. Last season under Steve's leadership, the Bulldogs won the OHL championship after beating the Sault Ste. Marie Grey Hounds in a thrilling six game series.

Now with selection camp less than a month away, I want to wish Steve and his staff at Hockey Canada the best of luck as they build and manage a winning team.

Steve is making Hamilton proud. On behalf of the citizens of Flamborough—Glanbrook and indeed all Hamilton, I thank him for all he does for our community.

* * *

● (1115)

HOUSING

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Housing Day was the first anniversary of the national housing strategy.

Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Yip
Zahid— 162

NAYS**Members**

Aboultouf
Albrecht
Barlow
Bergen
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boulerice
Brassard
Cannings
Choquette
Davies
Doherty
Dubé
Duvall
Finley
Gladu
Hardcastle
Hughes
Kelly
Kwan
Laverdière
Lobb
MacGregor
Mathysen
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater
O'Toole
Poilievre
Ramsey
Sansoucy
Schmale
Stanton
Stetski
Trudel
Webber

Albas
Angus
Benson
Berthold
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Clarke
Deltell
Donnelly
Dusseault
Eglinski
Fortin
Gourde
Harder
Julian
Kusie
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lukiwski
Marcel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Moore
Nicholson
Paul-Hus
Quach
Richards
Saroya
Shields
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Waugh
Weir— 70

PAIRED**Members**

Beaulieu
Cormier
Gill
Sikand

Boudrias
Fry
Plamondon
Whalen— 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Oral Questions

I want to assure all Canadians and this House that our government's commitment to ending homelessness and making sure all Canadians have a safe and affordable place to live has never been stronger.

Since taking office, 14,000 new affordable housing units have been built or are under construction. Twenty-six thousand people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness have been given safe and secure housing. Some 156,000 homes are being repaired or are scheduled to be fixed as a result of our investments, and 776,000 households have been helped with rent supplements, including the renewal of co-op agreements.

This has happened because in our first budget we tripled transfers to provincial and territorial housing programs. We doubled our investment in community groups to fight homelessness. We also delivered significant funding and resources to indigenous communities on and off reserve to make sure that their housing needs were met as well.

These dollars are flowing now. They are building real housing now for real people now. This is not just real change. It is historic change.

* * *

COWICHAN—MALAHAT—LANGFORD

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was a fantastic Tuesday in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford last week as I had the opportunity to welcome our leader Jagmeet Singh to participate in two very well-attended events.

Roughly 250 students of Belmont Secondary School in Langford participated in a stimulating conversation on policy ideas to tackle the great challenges of our time: climate change, housing, the opioid crisis and rising inequality. I am incredibly proud of how engaged our youth are on these important issues. Their future participation as electors will be most welcome.

Later that evening, I hosted a town hall on supply management in Cobble Hill. I am incredibly grateful to the guest panellists representing chicken, egg, and dairy sectors. They clearly explained why the system is so important for Canada and how detrimental the recent trade deals signed by the Liberals are.

As the NDP's critic for agriculture and agri-food, I am proud to say that our party will always stand in solidarity with our hard-working farmers.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our drama teacher Prime Minister has decided to write his own report card about how he is living up to his election commitments. In his fall economic update he rates the commitment of balancing the budget in 2019, and here is the status: "Actions taken, progress made, facing challenges".

If action has been taken and progress is being made, will the government answer now once and for all in what year will the budget be balanced?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is sad that the Conservatives do not see lifting hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty as progress.

We on this side see that growing the economy and ensuring an economy that works for everyone is what we were elected to do and what we are delivering on. We will continue to grow the economy. We will continue to invest in Canadians because we know that is what Canadians elected us to do.

We will not take lessons from the Conservatives who only want to help their millionaire friends.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only should the Liberals take lessons from Conservatives, they are taking credit from Conservatives. The child poverty numbers for which they take credit actually start in 2013 and run through to 2015, during which time I was minister, so I thank the member for congratulating me on that success. The reductions we did with a balanced budget because we know that helping millionaire friends is what happens when Canadians are forced to pay excessive interest payments to wealthy bond holders and bankers who hold our debt.

Once again, will the government finally answer the question, in what year will the budget be balanced?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what lesson specifically would the Conservatives like us to take? Is it the lowest growth rate since the Great Depression? Is it stagnant wages like they had under their government? Is it sending cheques to millionaires with the Canada child benefit and making it taxable? That is not really a record they should be proud of.

On this side of the House we have continual growth. We are seeing increased investment, 80% more business investment than under the Conservatives. That is the type of growth we are focused on, an economy that works for everybody.

* * *

● (1120)

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fall economic update is designed exclusively to work for the Liberal Party. While the deficit is running out of control, they managed to find \$600 million in order to buy themselves endless praise in the Canadian media. They believe that the job of the media is to praise the Liberal Party and help them with their re-election in an election year.

If the goal is really an independent media, why are the Liberals trying to make the media dependent on their government?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is really insulting, not to me, not to the government, but to the professional journalists. In our society, professional journalists play a key role. It is one of the pillars of our democracy. After attacking professional journalism, which other pillar of our democracy are the Conservatives going to attack?

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Friday, and I am in a good mood.

I would like to recognize the Liberal Party of Canada's sense of humour. What can we find in the economic update? My colleagues will see that it is very funny. On page 120, under "Commitment", it reads "Balance the budget in 2019/20", and under "Status", it states "Actions taken, progress made, facing challenges".

Wow! "Facing challenges", I can understand that. There have been deficits of \$60 billion over the past three years and a deficit of \$20 billion when it was supposed to be zero.

What challenge is there, other than giving us the date for returning to a balanced budget?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives were in power, they had an average GDP growth of just 1%. Since taking office, we have had an average 3% GDP growth and that is expected to continue and rise.

The Conservatives talk about their record, but in fact their record is abysmal and they should be ashamed. When it comes to the economy, we know that real growth is based on investing in Canadians and as a result, over half a million new jobs have been created and wages are growing. That is what our government is focused on.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals took office, they inherited a budget surplus, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer mentioned, and the best situation in the G7. That is the record the Liberals inherited.

Three years later, the debt is \$60 billion, three times higher than what had been announced. The government has no idea when it will address the issue of balancing the budget. The question is still open.

Can anyone in the government reassure Canadians and tell them when they can expect the budget to be balanced?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, well, we know that the Conservatives do not let facts get in the way of the message they are trying to send. While Conservatives are focused on trying to rewrite history, we know they could not balance the budget. They could not grow the economy.

However, over here, we have created over half a million new jobs. Next year, a typical Canadian family will be \$2,000 better off than it was under the Conservatives. We know the investments are working and that we are focused on Canadians, while they are focused on selling their failed plan to Canadians.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims to be a progressive. The labour minister claims to be a progressive. However, one cannot claim to be a progressive when one's actions do not match one's words. Back-to-work legislation is not progressive, especially when it gives Canada Post, one of the worst employers in this country, licence to bargain in bad faith.

On this side of the House, we see time and time again that when push comes to shove, Bay Street Liberals always seem to trump progressive Liberals. When will the real progressives on the Liberal benches stand up to this attack on workers?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously with the work action, when we talk about what is going on with Canada Post today, this is something we do not take lightly as a government. Negotiations have been going on for over a year. We have had a mediator. We have been trying to help with a mediator for over a year. We have appointed special conciliators. What we would hope is that both sides are able to get down and get a deal done that is in everybody's best interest. That is what we would all like to see, but until then, we still hold out hope that they can find that way forward.

● (1125)

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member said the exact opposite in 2011 when Conservatives introduced back-to-work legislation.

[Translation]

Mediation is futile if one of the parties is negotiating in bad faith. That party is Canada Post, and the Liberals are giving management even more power with this legislation.

This legislation restores the old working conditions, which were problematic in terms of health, safety and fairness. It is estimated that between now and Christmas, 315 workers will be seriously injured, rural mail carriers will work about 250,000 hours without pay and urban workers will do thousands of hours of forced overtime.

Will the progressive thinkers on the Liberal benches stand up and oppose this attack on workers?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP House leader would know that it is a mediator-arbitrator who is clearly identified in this legislation. As the workers go back to work, the mediator will continue to be engaged in trying to find resolution on those outstanding issues. Health and safety is obviously one issue of great concern, and it should be of great concern to all Canadians.

Rather than an imposed arbitration and a final offer arbitration, we will look to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Jonquière.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim to stand up for the middle class, but with this special legislation, they are preventing middle-class workers from negotiating with their employer. They are acting just like the Conservatives.

When the Conservatives pulled the same stunt on postal workers in 2011, my colleague from Cape Breton—Canso said, and I quote, "...this legislation is not only heavy-handed, but wrong-minded."

Could he explain why the very thing that was heavy-handed and wrong-minded under the Conservatives is now completely acceptable?

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, as I said, the legislation we are putting forward would have a mediator-arbitrator who would sit down with both sides to try to find a way forward.

Earlier, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford had a very eloquent piece on how the NDP is supporting farmers. He may want to talk to Veseys Seeds and see how this strike has had an impact on its ability to get those seeds out to farmers. This tie-up is hurting farmers. This tie-up is hurting small businesses in this country, and we are taking action to fix that.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are bringing new meaning to the term Black Friday.

The New Democrats remember 2011, when Jack Layton led a filibuster against the Harper Conservatives for forcing CUPW members back to work without a contract. Since then, workplace conditions at Canada Post have only deteriorated. If the trend continues, workers will experience 315 disabling injuries in the four and a half weeks between now and Christmas, and it is on the Prime Minister's head.

Why is the Prime Minister forcing workers back to an unsafe workplace? Is he totally without conscience?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously we recognize there are some outstanding issues. We hope the mediator will be able to get both parties together and find a way forward. We have heard from rank-and-file members that they want to be back to work, that they want to be doing their jobs. This is a busy time for them.

I would hope there is still time at the table; they are still at the table. Let us see if they can find a resolution. If not, we are going to take the action that is necessary to help small business operators in the country.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has his priorities all wrong in his economic update. The border crisis has been going on for two years now, and Quebec and Ontario are paying the price.

Instead of paying Quebec and Ontario the \$400 million and \$200 million they are owed respectively, the government is giving Unifor \$600 million to attack the Conservative Party and its leader.

Do Quebec and Ontario have to beg to get their money back?

● (1130)

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working closely with our provincial and municipal partners in managing, very effectively, the issue of those who have come to our country seeking the protection of Canada. Those processes are being well managed. We are working with municipalities.

I would like to take this opportunity to also acknowledge and thank the City of Toronto, under Mayor Tory's leadership, for its excellent collaboration. I have also recently worked with Mayor Plante. The municipal partnership has been exceptional and needs to be acknowledged.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fall economic update has done nothing for workers who rely on the energy sector to care for their families. The Prime Minister stands idly by and does nothing to address the deep discounts in Canadian oil.

Yesterday, actual Canadians, not paid foreign protestors, took to the streets of Calgary to demand action. Why did the Prime Minister even bother to show up in Calgary, when it is clear he does not care about hard-working energy workers in the sector we promote here?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we deeply care about the energy sector and the people who work in the energy sector. We understand the frustration they are facing, but the source of their frustration was the inability of the previous government to build a single pipeline to expand our non-U.S. global market.

Oral Questions

We are moving forward on Enbridge Line 3, which will come into operation next year. We are working closely with the Province of Alberta to find solutions to the challenges the energy sector is facing.

We have stood with energy sector workers and we will continue to stand with them.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has confirmed that the Liberals have failed to take action to improve Internet services in rural and remote communities.

Rural businesses across Canada are disadvantaged and families are continually frustrated by slow, unreliable Internet service. There was nothing in the Liberal fall economic statement to address this problem.

Why is the Prime Minister failing rural communities?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, we have taken significant action to connect Canadians from coast to coast to coast. The connect to innovate program, \$500 million, has resulted in 900 communities in rural and remote Canada being connected. That is 600 more than we had targeted with our initial group.

We take connectivity seriously. We know Canadians need to be connected for economic and social reasons. The minister sat down with his provincial and territorial counterparts in October. We will have a national strategy moving forward.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fall economic update came on the heels of sweeping notices of work curtailment and mill closures in British Columbia and indeed in my riding.

West Fraser, Conifex Timber, Tolko Industries, Canfor and Interfo forestry companies have all announced sweeping forms of labour force reductions. With Christmas just 32 days away, families are now facing tough choices.

Why is the Prime Minister and the minister neglecting hard-working forestry families?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member would know, \$100 million have been allocated for innovative practices in the forestry sector. We know that the forestry sector is a source of well-paying middle-class jobs and will remain a source of well-paying middle-class jobs. We will continue to support it. We have provided \$867 million to support workers and communities, diversify our markets and help producers access services and new markets.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the health minister about serious drug shortages in Canada and her answer was that the government had a web page

where it listed them all. A web page does not get medications to the Canadians who need them. What is next, an app?

Clearly, addressing the shortages was not a priority in the fall economic update. Why will the Liberals not take action to solve these chronic drug shortages?

[Translation]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of my responsibilities as Minister of Health is to ensure that Canadians are properly informed about the drugs they are taking.

We are bringing in important measures to address the complex problems of drug shortages. We have launched our website, for example, and we continue to work on this issue. The global drug shortage is a complex problem, and our government is taking significant action to address it.

* * *

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this spring the Liberals tabled a so-called gender-based budget, but in the fall economic update we see very little follow through.

The Prime Minister actually spent 20 times more on swanky new vehicles, which he drove for two days at the G7 summit, than he did on improving access to employment skills for women who are vulnerable, coming out of violence and needing a restart in life.

Why did the Prime Minister spend \$23 million on his swanky new vehicles that lasted for two days and not even a drop in the bucket for women who need a restart?

● (1135)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject the several premises brought forward in my hon. member's questions.

First, there is proactive pay equity legislation in the fall economic statement. Second, the G7 was the first time ever that gender was mainstreamed throughout every single item of the agenda. Third, we have been committed to advancing gender equality because we know it will grow the economy, and our plan is working.

If my hon. colleagues are concerned about vulnerable women, why do they vote against every single measure we introduce to address it?

*Oral Questions***CANADA POST**

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals care, then why are they ramming through back-to-work legislation?

Today, the Liberal government is violating the constitutional rights of workers. This is wrong. Postal workers are not getting paid equally. They are not working in safe environments. They are working so much overtime that they cannot get home to see their families.

Today the Liberals are betraying working people. When they come for one worker in Canada, they come for all of us. Just like the Conservatives, they are siding with rich corporations and Black Friday profits by violating workers' rights.

Why are the Liberals so hellbent about forcing postal workers to return to an unfair and dangerous workplace?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me an opportunity to contrast the way the Conservatives took this approach and the approach we have taken. We have been engaged for over a year with these negotiations. We have appointed conciliators and special mediators. Over the last four weeks, we have seen that the situation at Canada Post has had an impact.

However, with the legislation we tabled yesterday, it is a mediator-arbitrator. The mediator will continue to work with the groups to try to find a resolution. We know that the arbitrator who was appointed by the Conservatives was a—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with this special legislation, the Liberals are putting on a sordid display of cynicism and political betrayal.

In 2011, the Conservatives introduced an identical bill. One outraged MP said, “We have the hard right ideologues in the government jamming the union with legislation...” Who said that? It was the Liberal member for Scarborough—Guildwood. If the shoe fits, wear it. Seriously, it was a hard right proposal coming from the Conservatives, but the Liberals are no better. The Liberals are showing their true colours.

How do they reconcile attacking workers' rights with defending the middle class? Since when has that been okay?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we want to go with the sanctimony of the New Democrats, maybe they might want to look in the mirror. Why did the NDP government in Ontario legislate teachers back? The member for London—Fanshawe was a member of that provincial government. The member for Hamilton Centre was a member. There we go.

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have confirmed that Russia meddled in Canada's 2015 election, but they refuse to provide any details.

Canadians have the right to know. The government must tell us how Russia interfered and who was targeted.

[*English*]

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take foreign interference in democratic processes with the utmost seriousness and we will continue to work to protect our institutions and our elections.

With Bill C-76, we are putting forward the necessary measures to protect against foreign interference in our elections. Measures to ban foreign funding as well as to provide greater transparency in elections-related advertising by third parties and on digital platforms are key changes that will help close loopholes for foreign actors that have used other jurisdictions around the world.

Let me be clear. We will not tolerate foreign interference and will respond with the full weight of the law.

• (1140)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, intelligence officials in the United States have released detailed reports on Russian interference in its 2016 election. There is absolutely no reason why Canadians should not expect the same level of transparency from their government, especially on an issue as fundamental as the integrity of our electoral process.

Therefore, I will ask this again. How did Russia interfere in the election, how extensive was the interference and who was the target?

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to protecting and defending Canadians' democratic institutions. That is rich coming from the party opposite. It is the party that has been found guilty of trying to influence elections in three past campaigns, the party of in and out, the party of robocalls, the party of Dean Del Mastro.

We are protecting and strengthening our democratic institutions. Bill C-76 would do that.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Wall Street Journal is reporting that American intelligence officials are actively briefing their allies on the dangers of Huawei. This should be a wake-up call for the Liberals, who think they know better. It is time to stop ragging the puck and make a decision.

Oral Questions

Will the Liberals stand with our allies and say no way to Huawei?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is open to global investment that will grow our economy and create good middle-class jobs, but never at the expense of our national security.

When it comes to telecommunication services, we promised Canadians that we would improve the quality, the coverage and the price of their services no matter where they lived. That 5G technology is an emerging part of that picture of service to Canadians. We will make sure that Canadians have access to this technology, but not at the expense of our national security.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want access to this technology, but they want to make sure that foreign interests are not getting access to that as well. The government has been telling us for weeks that the personal financial data of Canadians is safe with it and not to worry. Yet, it plans to allow a Chinese government-controlled company free access to our Internet infrastructure.

Canadians care about their security, even if the government does not. When will the Liberals do the right thing and ban Huawei from our 5G network?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me correct the record. There is a 5G program in place, led by a number of different companies, including Ericsson. We will trust the opinion of our national security advisers on this matter. We will never compromise our national security. At the same time, we will be open to investment through the Investment Canada Act and other procedures that are meant to protect Canadians and see that we get value for money.

Our national security is never compromised. We trust our experts and we work with them.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): The Liberals' back-to-work legislation is terrible, and how they are going about passing it is even worse.

In 2011, the Conservatives at least let us debate the bill. With Motion No. 25, the Liberals are telling us that they learned from Harper's mistakes and that, this, time, the opposition will not get to debate it.

We have had five times more time to debate Motion No. 25, which is stifling debate, than to debate the bill itself. A day and a half for the motion and three and a half hours for the actual bill.

Why are the Liberals using Conservative tactics and forcing us to vote in the middle of the night on a bill that violates workers' rights?

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there comes a time when a government has to take action,

and that is certainly what we are doing here: taking action. We have supported both sides with mediation for over a year and we have appointed special mediators. There comes a point when we have to make a choice. We know that the NDP had found that seven different NDP premiers 15 times have put forward back-to-work legislation and sent workers back to work. That is what we are doing to try to continue to help small business and people.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is pretending like the Liberals are just making this choice now. The fact of the matter is they made the choice a long time ago when they did not tell Canada Post management to deal with the injury rate. They made the choice when they decided to do nothing when Canada Post cut off its sick and injured workers at the beginning of the strike. They chose to do this two weeks ago when they signalled back-to-work legislation. The government has been poisoning the well all along, so how dare they pretend that they just made this choice this week? It is not true.

• (1145)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the efforts that have gone in on behalf of both ministers on this particular issue have been exemplary. For over a year, we have been standing with both sides. We believe in a fair and balance approach to labour relations. Unlike the past Conservative governments, we have been with them. We continue to have conciliators at the table. Negotiations are still ongoing and we would hope that they are going to find a way forward, but if not, we will enact this legislation, get everybody back to work and get parcels moving in this country.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a year ago our government hosted the UN peacekeeping defence ministerial in Vancouver.

[English]

At this UN peacekeeping conference, our government committed to working with international partners to re-engage in peace support operations and to end the abhorrent practice of recruiting children as instruments of war.

Could the Minister of National Defence update this House on our re-engagement on the world stage through the UN and our commitment to the Vancouver principles?

Oral Questions

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is once again demonstrating the global leadership that we are known for. Last week, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver. A year later, I am proud of the progress that we have made thus far: deploying our air task force in Mali, which is conducting life-saving medevac missions; launching the Elsie initiative; and committing to the Vancouver principles aimed at preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, which now has signatures from 68 member states.

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has no plan to connect Canadians to the Internet. I am not the one saying this; it is the Auditor General, who has been very tough on the Liberal government this week.

The Liberals have failed, while the public, businesses and farmers are anxious to be active participants in the Canadian economy.

It is even worse: the government was completely silent in this week's economic update. On October 30, elected officials from Mégantic—L'Érable came here to call on the government to take action.

When will the Prime Minister make high-speed Internet accessible to all Canadians?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was at the meeting with the people of Mégantic when they were here. We reaffirmed our commitments and explained what we are doing: we are connecting Canadians to the Internet across the country with the connect to innovate program.

As I said, we targeted 300 communities across Canada and we have helped 900, 190 of which are indigenous communities. We are connecting remote and rural communities across Canada to the Internet and we will continue—

[English]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government promised to connect rural Canadians with broadband, but the Auditor General recently said that it has no plan. We knew that, but he confirmed it. The Liberals have no plan to bring high-quality Internet services to Canadians in rural and remote areas.

Let us take Chris Yeo, who is 15 kilometres outside of my city of Saskatoon. He knows the frustration of unreliable Internet service.

When will the Liberals explain why they do not support Canadians participating in the 21st-century economy?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we are working very hard to connect Canadians from coast to coast to coast through the connect to innovate program, which invested \$500 million across Canada and

leveraged over \$1 billion in partnership with provincial and territorial governments. We are making progress in 900 remote communities across Canada, which have benefited from this program. We have laid down 19,000 kilometres of fibre optic cable. The current fall economic statement allows a further tax deduction for the laying of fibre optic cable.

We are moving forward.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Veterans Affairs wrote a newspaper article attacking veteran Sean Bruyca, despite the fact that his department told him that Sean Bruyca's concerns about pension for life were correct. Now Sean Bruyca is in court to clear his name.

When a previous minister got into an argument with veterans, he apologized for losing his cool. This is far worse than losing one's cool. It was a personal attack.

Will the minister rise in the House and apologize to Canadian Force veteran Sean Bruyca?

• (1150)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that minister, in fact, that side of the House has a lot more to apologize for: for the most appalling and malicious record on our veterans that this House has ever seen. It will take us some time to get through it, when we think about men and women returning from Afghanistan only to find benefits and services being shut down, offices being shut down, and things that were rolled back as they returned and the minister walking away from veterans in this House. They have plenty to apologize for.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Foothills will come to order. Order. Also the hon. parliamentary secretary.

The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Julian Fantino got into an argument in this building with veterans, he apologized for losing his cool. At the time, the Prime Minister, then the third party leader, said that was insufficient and that he should be fired.

The minister is looking at his colleagues for approval when he is attacking and not answering the question. I would ask him to look at little further at Mr. Bruyca, who is here.

Apologize to this Canadian Forces veteran and do not make him go to court to clear his name.

Oral Questions

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand proudly in front of everyone in this House to say that we have put \$10 billion towards new programs and services for our veterans. We have reopened every one of those offices that side of the House had closed. As veterans returned from Afghanistan, they found a government that tried, and did not succeed, in balancing a budget on their backs. The Conservatives could not get that right. Their record toward veterans is shameful. We will not be apologizing on this side of the this House.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was a youth suicide crisis in Akwesasne in 2011, and since 2015, Nelson White has been trying to get federal funding for an addiction treatment centre set up by and for first nations.

Mr. White has already invested more than \$1 million, even if this should be the federal government's responsibility. When will the minister confirm that the government will invest to make the White Pine Healing Lodge a reality?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the loss of life from suicide is a tragedy beyond measure. Our government has increased the number of community-led mental wellness teams by 52 since becoming government in 2015. We also actively support community-based prevention initiatives, such as the choose life program.

With respect to the specific request by the hon. member, I do not have that information, but I will take it under advisement and communicate with the hon. member on where we are on that project.

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, social licence is not optional; it is mandatory. This is why I participated in the march against Telus last week, alongside 300 of my constituents.

Since 2014, Telus has been acting in bad faith with respect to its telecommunications tower. It is now pushing to put up its tower in a sensitive and protected environmental area. What is worse, the minister is ignoring my comments and is forcing the city to take this matter to court.

Will the minister listen to the people of Otterburn Park and step in?

[English]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take the question from the hon. member under advisement and get back to him personally with an answer.

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day, more than 40,000 residents of Lévis—Lotbinière cross the Quebec Bridge or the Pierre Laporte Bridge and lose many precious hours of their lives in traffic.

A majority of residents in the greater Quebec City metropolitan area think it is time for a third bridge. On this side of the house, we build bridges.

Why do the Liberals refuse to admit that a third bridge is needed between Lévis and Quebec City?

● (1155)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I admire the theatrics of my colleague opposite, especially on a Friday.

I remind the member that I was in Quebec City yesterday to talk to Mayor Labeaume to talk about projects in the greater Quebec City area. We are working on more than \$287 million in projects in Quebec City. We spoke about the tramway, the Quebec Bridge, and topics that matter to Quebec City residents. The people of Quebec City know one thing, and that is that they have the support of this side of the House.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third link project is very important, not only for traffic, but also for the economic development of the greater Quebec City region.

I do not think I am mistaken in saying that the hon. member for Louis-Hébert has said on the radio many times that he supports the third link project. However, his leader has just appointed a new advisor, Steven Guilbeault, who is fiercely opposed to the third link project.

I would like to give the hon. member for Louis-Hébert the opportunity to tell us today whether he has concerns in that regard and whether he still supports the third link, as he has done on the radio.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to see my colleagues on the other side of the House take an interest in infrastructure.

After 10 years of disinvestment in infrastructure, here we are on a Friday with some interesting questions about infrastructure. I can tell my colleague that, on this side of the House, we welcome Mr. Guilbeault as environmental advisor.

I can also tell my colleagues that, yesterday, I had the opportunity to talk about the third link. When a plan is submitted, we will take a very close look at it.

Those watching us in Quebec City know one thing, however, and that is that we, on this side of the House, will always be there for them.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a shame the member for Louis-Hébert was unable to answer the question. The minister said he would take a very close look at it. This is no longer hypothetical. It is going to happen. It is on the CAQ government's agenda.

Will they support the project once it is ready to go? Can they tell us right now if they support it, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that gives me an opportunity to talk about the member for Louis-Hébert today. He is doing exceptional work for the greater Quebec City area. Every time the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance rises, he reminds Canadians about what members on this side of the House have done for Canadians, Quebecers, and the people of Quebec City.

I would like to remind my colleague that I was with Mayor Labeaume just yesterday. We spent two hours together. We talked about all of Quebec City's issues. I want to make one thing clear to everyone watching: we are here for the people of Quebec City today, as we will be tomorrow and in the future.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago this week the government unveiled Canada's first ever national housing strategy, a 10-year, \$40-billion plan to give more Canadians a place to call home. The national housing strategy represents a milestone because it does not just invest in housing, it recognizes the federal government's essential role as a key partner in providing Canadians with safe, affordable, accessible housing.

Could the minister responsible for housing tell the House what this government has achieved on housing since it came into government in 2015?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank and congratulate the member for Niagara Centre for his hard work for his constituents.

Yesterday, we had one million reasons to celebrate National Housing Day, because since 2016, our housing investments have helped a million families across Canada. Yesterday we also celebrated the first anniversary of the national housing strategy, a historic 10-year, \$40-billion plan to give more Canadians a safe and affordable home.

Today, yesterday and every day, we are happy to celebrate the return of a new housing era, a renewed level of federal leadership and partnership.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in spite of recent lofty commitments, the government has increased the burden on our businesses. In my riding, Absorbent Products, a three-decade-old family business that

manufactures food grade additives for use in animal feed, has been fighting with CFIA officials for over two years. They have introduced arbitrary new regulations that will imperil not only the owner's operations in Canada but his ability to export to foreign markets.

How can the Liberals claim to be helping business, when they are forcing people like the owners of Absorbent Products out of my riding?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadians is my number one priority as the health minister. I continue to work with the CFIA. The regulations are under way, and we look forward to reporting the information very soon.

* * *

• (1200)

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, access to quality high-speed Internet is no longer a luxury. It is a necessity for businesses to grow and be competitive and for all Canadians to have full access to the goods and services available in the digital economy. Innovation exists everywhere that Canadians live and work, in northern Ontario and in rural regions.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development tell the House what the government plans to do to make Internet access more affordable?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Nickel Belt, a proud Franco-Ontarian, for the question.

Canadians deserve an equal opportunity in the digital economy. That is why we have signed an important agreement with the provincial and territorial ministers to develop a long-term connectivity strategy. Canada has made incredible advances, building mobile networks that are among the fastest in the world and deploying broadband Internet across the country. Through connect to innovate, our government is providing basic infrastructure to more than 900 rural and remote communities.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, parents who have lost a child experience unimaginable grief. In some cases, that grief is added to by the immediate loss of government benefits, which forces them back to work long before they are ready. These families deserve some compassion and support from their government. Instead, the Liberal government shut down debate on the issue and also voted against creating bereavement leave.

Words are not enough. When will that Liberal government take action to actually show these families the compassion they need?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and proud to answer this very important question.

We know and feel how difficult it is for families living in difficult circumstances to go through the hardships our colleague mentioned. That is why we have, since 2015, introduced a number of important changes to the EI system, including a new compassionate care benefit and enhanced benefits and enhanced flexibility for maternal, parental and shared parental benefits to deal exactly with those difficult circumstances about which we must be extremely concerned.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Simon Marcil (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government spends its time boasting about how it signs progressive trade agreements that are supposed to protect collective bargaining rights. Then it turns around and introduces special legislation and suspends the rules. It is taking all the bargaining power away from workers. Just a moment. I want to look at them with contempt.

Why is this always the way with this government? Why does it always say one thing and do the opposite?

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when my colleague talks about progressive governments, I think he wants me to share with him just what we have done for labour.

We have repealed Bill C-525 and Bill C-377. We have amended the Canada Labour Code and given federally regulated employees the right to flexible work. We have strengthened occupational health and safety standards and passed Bill C-65. We have ratified the ILO. We have banned asbestos, both domestic and the international trade of asbestos.

I think that is pretty progressive.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since this government took office in 2015, it has been dragging its feet and refusing to crack down on pimps. Bill C-452, which would require pimps to serve consecutive prison sentences for their crimes, received royal assent three years ago. Prevention and intervention are not enough. Punitive measures and deterrents are needed to protect our young people, but no, it seems this government would rather protect their abusers.

After three years of dilly-dallying, will the Prime Minister finally decide to sign the order to bring Bill C-452 into force?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I will find out the answer and get back to him.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Haiti is in the midst of a dangerous political conflict that inflicting casualties on the population. This is worrisome for families in Quebec who are about to be deported, since their safety is clearly compromised.

The government has suspended the removal of people to Haiti, but only until Sunday. Sunday is just around the corner, and obviously, nothing will be solved between now and then.

Will the government commit to immediately suspending all removals to Haiti until the conditions are safe?

● (1205)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has demonstrated, and CBSA specifically has demonstrated, their keen sensitivity to the situation.

Obviously CBSA has an obligation to apply Canada law. It looks to countries around the world that may be implicated in serious and dangerous situations to make sure that in the work they do of removing certain people from Canada, they are not removing them into dangerous situations.

We have demonstrated that sensitivity, and that sensitivity will continue.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Campaign 2000's 2018 report card, released this week, shows that Nunavut's child poverty rate remains the highest in Canada: 34.8% for children under 18, and a staggering 42.5% for children under the age six. It cites systemic underfunding of programs and services for indigenous children as an underlying cause of this extreme poverty.

Will the minister work with the Government of Nunavut and provide funding based on actual needs, as the government has for first nations children?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, may I first thank and congratulate the member for his heartfelt question and his hard work for the Nunavut children he so proudly serves.

Point of Order

May I also mention that we take this matter very seriously. Every Inuit child has a right to live and grow outside of poverty. That is why we have invested in the Canada child benefit, which is helping the families of 11,000 children in Nunavut and lifting many of their parents out of poverty. That is why we are investing \$110 million for indigenous early learning and child care for the benefit of Inuit children. That is why we are going to continue to work very hard with the member for Nunavut in making sure that every child in his community has the best possible—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Joliette on a point of order.
[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, especially considering the minister's response, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That this House demand that the government immediately suspend all removals to Haiti until Global Affairs Canada has informed the House that the conditions are once again safe.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe on a point of order.
[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want the parliamentary secretary to retract his statement, because he knows it is a bold-faced lie.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member knows that language is unparliamentary. I am going to have to ask her to withdraw that word.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I can withdraw the word, but I cannot change the reality.
[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I too am rising on a point of order, in reference to Standing Order 31.

There were some special procedures earlier, so the government decided to infringe upon several rights, particularly members' rights to speak to a bill and Motion No. 25, which cuts debate short. It also infringed on our rights with respect to members' statements, since it allowed only four members to deliver their S. O. 31s. It is also infringing upon the rights of workers with the legislation we will be debating shortly.

I would like to remind members of the House of the rules set out in Standing Order 31 and I would like to know who decided there would be only four statements.

I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion: In order to allow members who were unable to deliver their members' statements, I seek unanimous consent for the House to return, pursuant to Standing Order 31—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The member does not have the unanimous consent of the House.

The hon. member for Durham on a point of order.

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, it is important, when we make a mistake, particularly in the House, that we apologize for this mistake. Today I was emotional in questioning the Minister of Veterans Affairs about the lawsuit being brought by Sean Bruyeva demanding an apology from the minister. I should not have mentioned that this veteran is in the chamber today, so I apologize for that.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

The hon. member for Perth—Wellington is rising on a point of order.

● (1210)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point raised by the member for Sherbrooke. The inability of the Liberal government to manage its legislative agenda meant that S. O. 31s, for the most part, did not happen today, which meant that the House did not have the opportunity to hear from the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis and me. We were going to congratulate the teams that are participating in the Vanier Cup this weekend—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona is rising on a point of order.

Order.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, it is the government House leader above all who should know and observe the rules of this place. She created some considerable confusion earlier when, during a vote, she rose out of her seat and began to wander around the floor of the House of Commons. I understand that she attempted to resolve this informally by asking the table not to have her vote counted, but I am wondering if you could clarify for the House what the rules are with respect to where members should be in a vote, for the benefit of the government House leader.

The Speaker: Obviously, if the members wish their votes to count, they should remain in their chairs. The hon. government House leader indicated to me and to the table that she did not expect her vote to count, and so it did not.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou on a point of order.

* * *

POINT OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF TOURISM, OFFICIAL LANGUAGES AND LA FRANCOPHONIE REGARDING SERVICES FOR FRANCO-ONTARIANS

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order regarding the following statements made by the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie. On Thursday, November 22, she said:

It has been seven days since Ontario's Conservative government cut services for Franco-Ontarians, but so far, no one in the Conservative Party has condemned what is happening in Ontario. That is unacceptable.

Page 63, 22nd edition of Erskine May, refers to a resolution passed by the U.K. House of Commons: ministers have a duty to Parliament to account, and to be held to account, for the policies, decisions and actions of their departments; it is of paramount importance that ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament. Erskine May then states that ministers must correct the record at the earliest opportunity.

I would also like to draw the Speaker's attention to the Prime Minister's message to his cabinet ministers in the document "Open and Accountable Government".

[Ministers must] answer honestly and accurately about [their] areas of responsibility [and] correct any inadvertent errors in answering to Parliament at the earliest opportunity...

The Minister's statement fails to reference my public condemnation and that of the political lieutenant—

The Speaker: That would appear to be a matter of debate, but I will consider the matter and then come back to the House, if necessary.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly on a point of order.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask you to clarify the situation of my colleague from Sherbrooke. He quoted a standing order and then began reading the wording of a motion for which he wanted to seek unanimous consent.

I would like you to clarify one thing. If he is heckled while reading his motion, it does not give the House an opportunity to hear the motion and decide whether to give its consent. Does he not normally have permission to finish reading his motion without being yelled at by the other side? Could you clarify that?

The Speaker: Several times, I have seen the Speaker rise in the House of Commons in just such a situation when it was clear that there was no unanimous consent.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues is expressing a right that we have in the House of Commons, namely, to bring forward an extremely important issue, the issue of misleading the House. He has almost finished his argument, which I think is important because it is an issue of respect for parliamentary institutions.

I know the Liberals are in a hurry to steamroll Canada Post employees, but the fact remains that my colleague has a privilege, and I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to let him finish his brief speech and—

The Speaker: Unfortunately, I indicated that I thought it was a matter of debate, but that I would consider the situation and come back to the House. In such a case, when necessary, I always have the opportunity to ask the member if he would like to add anything.

[*English*]

The member for Elmwood—Transcona is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am actually rising on a point of privilege. I respect your job in terms of managing the House's time, but if a colleague of mine from any side of the floor has a

Routine Proceedings

proposal for unanimous consent in the House, I think that as a member I have a right to hear the entire proposal before I make up my mind whether I would say yes or no.

I respect that anyone saying no would cancel the motion, but we all have a right to hear what is being proposed, and members should be able to at least finish reading out any motion they propose. I would like you to consider this as a question of privilege for me, and come back to the House.

• (1215)

The Speaker: I think it is more a point of order, but I will consider it and come back if necessary. The point is that it is a question about whether there is unanimous consent for a motion. When it becomes clear there is not unanimous consent, it is not necessary to seek consent from every member because, of course, it requires only one to say no.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to three petitions.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to Orders of the Day.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 945*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag

Alghabra

Government Orders

Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fuhr
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Hajdu	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Zahid — 161	

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Barlow
Benson	Bergén
Berthold	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Cannings	Choquette
Clarke	Davies
Deltell	Doherty
Donnelly	Dubé
Dusseault	Duvall
Egliniski	Finley
Fortin	Gladu
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Hughes
Julian	Kelly
Kusie	Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
Marcel	Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore	Nater
Nicholson	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Quach
Ramsey	Richards
Sansoucy	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Stetski	Sweet
Waugh	Webber
Weir — 63	

PAIRED

Members

Beaulieu	Boudrias
Cormier	Fry
Gill	Plamondon
Sikand	Whalen — 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

POSTAL SERVICES RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION ACT

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has gone to considerable lengths to bring about the renewal of Canada Post. We believe it is a uniquely important national institution that will continue to serve all Canadians from coast to coast to coast while also helping small, medium and large businesses thrive at home and abroad.

That mission to serve Canadians is at the heart of the new vision for renewal I had the honour to put forward earlier this year. This renewed direction took into consideration the evidence and perspectives gathered during the comprehensive review launched in May 2016, including the work of the independent task force, the report by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, and input from Canadians.

Government Orders

I know the employees of Canada Post remain deeply committed to serving Canadians. They work hard every day to do exactly that. Our new vision for renewal is forward-looking, not nostalgic. We believe Canada Post and its dedicated employees will be serving Canadians for decades to come. Therefore, they must continue to innovate and adapt to the rapidly changing expectations of their customers and a competitive, dynamic business environment.

To create the foundation needed for renewal, we put in place new leadership with a mandate to implement that vision in collaboration with employees and their union representatives. In addition, this leadership is part of our work to incorporate greater diversity and broader perspectives within the corporation, including those of labour.

The new leadership has made significant efforts over recent months to reorient the relationship between the corporation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers in particular. On some fronts, progress has been made. Decisive actions have been taken to address some long-standing issues such as bullying and harassment.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

The two parties worked hard to engage in a respectful dialogue on the need to work together to renew Canada Post. This dialogue is set to continue in the coming months and years, once a new collective agreement is signed.

[*English*]

Despite considerable efforts, this work has not yet translated into success at the bargaining table. My colleague, the labour minister, has exhausted every means to assist the parties to reach a fair resolution, and still no deal has occurred. We are at the point of placing in jeopardy Canada Post's ability to deliver for Canadians during the crucial holiday season. The scale of the backlog in the national network caused by rotating strikes over the past several weeks is significant. It will take some time to clear that backlog, especially as volumes are ramping up dramatically.

What we have seen to date is about to be amplified as we enter into the absolute apex of activity in e-commerce, starting today with Black Friday and continuing with Cyber Monday just a few short days away. Canada Post is responsible for 70% of those e-commerce deliveries. That is 70% of e-commerce deliveries in our country. The rotating strikes and the backlog are clearly taking their toll.

We know that two-thirds of small and medium-sized enterprises surveyed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business report being affected by the strikes. We know that costs are around \$3,000 per business in terms of lost sales, cancelled orders, delays or costs due to the use of more expensive delivery alternatives.

[*Translation*]

We also know that, these days, more and more Canadians are shopping online, which has created a growing need for parcel delivery. During the 2017 holiday season, Canada Post delivered more parcels than in previous years. Clearly, the ability to send and receive mail is very important to Canadians.

[*English*]

In the event of a lengthy postal strike, we could start to see many companies, particularly smaller e-commerce companies, not survive the season.

The disruption is also becoming an international problem for Canada. Recently, Canada Post had no choice but to advise international partners to stop sending mail and parcels to Canada. Let me repeat: International partners have stopped sending mail and parcels to Canada. Our government is exerting enormous efforts to advance Canada's position in global trade, and action is required now to prevent postal disruption from undermining the successes that support so many middle-class jobs.

We have ample evidence of the harm to small and medium-sized enterprises that rely heavily on an efficient e-commerce delivery chain, and to charities counting on ramped-up fundraising through the mail during the holiday season.

Our government also recognizes the important services that Canada Post and its employees provide, especially for older Canadians, persons with disabilities, low-income earners and Canadians living in rural, remote and northern areas. These Canadians are hit the hardest during a postal strike.

This is precisely why we have been doing everything possible to help the parties reach agreements that work for everyone. It has been important to give the process every chance to succeed.

[*Translation*]

Our government has always recognized the right to collective bargaining. Federal conciliators and mediators have helped the parties through their negotiations for nearly one year. When the negotiations reached an impasse, we appointed a special mediator to take a fresh perspective of the situation.

• (1230)

[*English*]

To keep the momentum going, we once again appointed the special mediator in an effort to maintain that momentum, but no agreement could be reached. Voluntary arbitration was then offered and a special mediator was brought in for a third attempt to resolve the differences. When we say that all options have been exhausted, we mean it.

With negotiations completely stalled and weeks of rolling strikes going by, it has become clear that our government is left with only one remaining option.

This does not begin to describe the economic and reputational harm to Canada Post. Again, this is not a road we wanted to go down, but the stakes are too high. We must do what Canadians put us here to do, and that is to protect their interests. Now, with balanced legislation, we are acknowledging that non-intervention will cause harm to a broad swath of economic and social actors.

Government Orders

Canadians need an end to the impasse: individuals in communities of all sizes, small and micro-businesses, medium and larger enterprises and charities. We have an obligation, in the best interests of our constituents, in fact of all Canadians, to move forward with this legislation.

Canadians need Canada Post. They need the corporation's management, its dedicated employees and their representatives to deliver for them this holiday season. They need labour and management to get on with the longer-term job of renewal of Canada Post, so it continues serving the evolving needs of all Canadians for decades to come, providing safe and fairly compensated work for its dedicated people.

This is why we need to support this balanced legislation.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard time and again this morning that the government had only one option, and that was to violate the workers' constitutional right to strike. I would like to make a proposal and hear the minister's response.

There was one other option, and an equivalent option. That is to put the onus on the employer to accept what CUPW has asked at the bargaining table. Instead, it is pretty clear that the government is on one side, and that is on the side of the employer and not to protect the constitutional right of workers. I would like the minister to respond to that.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that our government is very committed to workers' rights and the labour movement itself. We have demonstrated through a number of initiatives that we are absolutely committed. I think of our groundbreaking pay equity legislation recently and what that would do for workers across the country.

With respect to Canada Post, the vision we put forward focuses on Canadians and service to Canadians. At the same time, we have asked the new leadership team to serve Canadians and renew and repair an incredibly fragmented relationship, which basically disintegrated during the Harper Conservatives. We have asked it to make this into an operational business model that will serve Canadians for decades to come, be competitive with respect to the business services it provides and be reliable so Canadians know they can get both their mail and their parcels.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about the government dilly-dallying and delaying so much in acting on Canada Post. Two and a half years ago, we went on the road for three weeks. We heard very clearly that Canada Post was in trouble. We are looking at three-quarters of a billion dollars in losses, which the taxpayers will have to absorb down the road, and there is no plan yet from the government to address it.

We have asked when Canada Post is going to have a permanent president. We were told in committee in April that it would be any month. It is seven months later and there still is no new president. The minister just stated that the government had tasked the new leadership team to address the issues, but there is no new leader for Canada Post.

Why is the government waiting so long to address these important issues: the pension liability, the new president and a long-term plan for Canada Post?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we heard clearly two things from Canadians.

First, we heard that they really loved Canada Post. If we politicians had the same approval ratings that Canada Post has, we would be in very good stead.

The other thing we heard was that Canadians did not want to pay for Canada Post. Therefore, our new vision for Canada Post includes tasking the leadership with focusing on a sustainable business model that does not rely on the government to bail it out. As it approaches these negotiations, it has to understand that this is an operating business, a competitive business.

As mail volume has decreased and parcel volume has increased, there are a lot of other players in the parcel business. We want to ensure that Canada Post has a flexible, innovative, creative business model moving forward to keep it competitive and to keep it being Canadians' parcel deliverer of choice, because that is what we heard.

With respect to the appointment of a permanent president, I can assure the member that is coming in the weeks or months ahead. We need to get the right person. I am confident we currently have the right person in the interim president, but I can assure the member there will be new leadership in the new year.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask our minister what this bill will do for Canada's economy.

Also, what does she think will happen to Canadians if such legislation is not passed at this time of year?

[*English*]

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, the impact of the rotating strikes on the Canadian economy is very real. We have heard concerns from many small business owners and from many Canadians. Some of these small businesses earn up to 25% of their annual revenue in the months preceding Christmas. Consequently, if they cannot get their fares out to their customers, they risk having to close their doors.

We have heard from business associations and from the Retail Council of Canada. We have heard from people who own small, single-person businesses that are run out of their houses to major corporations that will be taking their business elsewhere. We have no guarantee they will bring it back.

Government Orders

With respect to the future viability of Canada Post, we have to understand the impact, not only short term but long term as well. However, the short-term impact is real. Businesses are losing business. We are now at the point that although there is an agreement that government cheques will be delivered, those cheques are being delayed. People are not getting their cheques. Even though they will get them eventually, there is a delay. When people rely on a cheque to buy food, even a day or two delay can be quite consequential for them and their families.

I can assure the member that we have sufficient and significant evidence of impact on the economy.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are two things to which I want to respond.

First, the minister said that she was concerned about reputational harm to Canada Post because of the strike. This is an indication of just how backward the priorities of the Liberal government are. Last year the company had 25% of its workforce injured on the job. It has five times the injury rate of the average in the federally regulated sector, yet the government is not concerned about the reputational harm that does. This tells me that the government is concerned about what companies like eBay and Amazon think about Canada Post, not about what working people think when they look at an injury rate like that in the workplace. Therefore, let us get on to addressing the reputational harm being done to Canada Post because of its injury rate.

The second thing that needs to be addressed is this. The minister talked about government cheques. My office has been receiving emails from postal workers with evidence of the fact that management at Canada Post has ordered them to withhold those cheques and not deliver them. If we on this side of the House know that, then it is unbelievable that the minister does not know about it. Why did she not bother to do anything about it when Canada Post issued that missive? This is not the first time we have brought this up in the House.

The fact is that if she wants to raise that issue, she should be talking about why Canada Post told postal workers to withhold those cheques. They delivered those cheques on a volunteer basis in 2011, when they were locked out. Postal workers are committed to ensuring that people who need that money get paid. It is management that has been running interference. That is the minister's job. What is she doing about it?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that I understand and respect the hard work of our postal workers. That is not at all what we are talking about today.

I can also assure you that we are concerned about the occupational health and safety of postal workers and that Canada Post is absolutely committed to addressing the reality of workplace injuries. That is one of my top priorities with respect to Canada Post.

With regard to my mention, with all due respect, of the reputational harm, I actually said that in passing. I know that is not the number one concern. However, if we want the good-paying jobs for postal workers three to five years from now, we need at Canada Post.

The number one priority for us is ensuring that individuals get their cheques and get their parcels so businesses can certainly do their business going into this season, when 25% to 30% of their annual revenue is being generated. I too have received so many emails and letters from individuals who are pleading with us to find a solution. We are absolutely committed to finding a way forward on this.

As I said, this is not the ideal situation, but it is a prudent course of action, given where we are now.

● (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before resuming debate, I want to remind hon. members that when they are asking or answering a question, to use the third person and not directly at the person across the floor. It makes for a better debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to say with respect to this issue, so I am thankful for the opportunity to put some thoughts on the record about what is going on here.

There is an important thing to acknowledge at the outset. The substance of what we are talking about is a rotating strike at Canada Post that was designed to not completely interrupt the operation of Canada Post. By and large, people have actually been getting their mail. We have heard the numbers from people on the ground and in the plants who deliver the mail, and I think the government, along with management, is grossly exaggerating the extent of the backlog.

Nevertheless, we are talking about people's right to strike. We are talking about the right of Canadian workers to strike. I think it bears saying that nobody goes on strike lightly. Strikes are not pleasant or fun for the people who take part. They do it because they ultimately feel like they have no other recourse than to withhold their work to get their employer to pay attention to the demands they are making.

In this case, some of the central demands are about the injury rate and unplanned, mandatory overtime. Reasons vary from strike to strike, but the ultimate point is that it takes a lot to get workers to a place where they feel that the only thing left for them to do is not perform their work and put pressure on their employer to hear their demands so as to come to some kind of reasonable deal at the negotiating table.

Nobody should think that postal workers out there are happy to be on strike or that this is their first option. It comes at a financial price to the workers on strike, including in the case of this rotating strike. Nobody is getting paid for the days they are not working.

It is important to say that, and it is important to emphasize the right to collective bargaining. That is how workers have made gains over the past 100 or more years in order to get safe workplaces and better wages.

Government Orders

It is a right that is so important that it bears mentioning that the right itself is being contested today and has been contested in the past. In the general strike of 1919 in my home city of Winnipeg, the central demand was for the right to bargain collectively. At that time, it was typical that governments would step in and help companies bust up unions to make collective bargaining illegal in a workplace, which incidentally is what this Liberal law will do in the Canada Post workplace. That is why tens of thousands of people, both unionized and non-unionized workers, went out into the street. It was not because of a wage demand. It was because people saw the importance of collective bargaining in order to make a difference in their work life, their family life and in the life of their community.

Indeed, when workers have had that right to bargain collectively, we have seen healthier communities. On average, workers are paid in the order of about \$5 more an hour when they have a union as opposed to when they do not. We know that some of the great gains in workplace safety and health that have happened over the last 100 or 150 years have been because organized workers in their workplaces have pushed the envelope. They pushed the envelope politically by electing people out of the labour movement to come into places like this to push those gains and have them applied to all workers, not just to workers in a unionized workplace. Collective bargaining has made that possible.

It is important to emphasize again, because the government seems to have forgotten, that the Supreme Court has recognized this form of bargaining. It is about getting together in the workplace when something is wrong that is affecting everybody in the workplace, and going to an employer with a united voice to say that something has to change. They like their work. They are proud of their work. They want to keep doing their work, but they want to be treated fairly. They want to be paid fairly and they want to come home at the end of the day. That is a right that Canadians enjoy.

RCMP members who were fighting for that right and who were barred by federal legislation for 100 years from bargaining collectively fought that battle in the Supreme Court and won in January 2015, winning a victory for themselves and for workers across the country to have that confirmed.

The Ontario Supreme Court confirmed that right in 2016 when it ruled on the back-to-work legislation of the Harper government, noting that it was unconstitutional.

• (1245)

I expect that that will be confirmed again by the court, because we have back-to-work legislation, again, that impinges on the right of Canadian workers to bargain collectively in their workplace to do better for themselves and their communities. We have heard from the union representing postal workers that, unfortunately, it is going to have to take the current government to court.

What it wants is a government willing to respect and defend the right to bargain collectively without a court order. I do not think that is a lot to ask.

As I said, we are coming up on the 100th anniversary of the 1919 general strike. That strike lasted six weeks, cut across all industries, cut across already unionized members and non-unionized members,

and the point was to safeguard this right. We have made a lot of progress since then.

It is amazing to me that even now, in the 21st century, after the court has said it is a charter right of Canadians to bargain collectively, after we have seen all the evidence of the good that collective bargaining has done for Canadian workers over the last 100 years, we would be in this place, of all places, arguing against a government that is introducing legislation to deny that right to a category of Canadian workers. I think that is shameful. I wanted to just back up a little and talk about the importance of collective bargaining in general and what it has done.

Now I would like to talk a little about another aspect of what we are discussing today, which is a motion that pertains to the back-to-work legislation that will significantly curtail debate on the legislation itself. It bears noting that we are not yet even debating the legislation itself. We only saw that legislation yesterday, and by the end of the day today, or in the wee hours of Saturday morning, that will all be said and done. It will be over.

We saw the actual wording of the legislation yesterday, and sometime just after midnight tonight this whole thing is going to be said and done with. I do not think that is what people expect when it comes to serious scrutiny of legislation. I think people expect there to be a role for Parliament in making these kinds of decisions. The fact of the matter is, when that is all the time there is, there is not.

Who are the people most directly affected by this legislation? It is the postal workers. They were not here on the Hill yesterday when the government tabled the legislation. They are out, across the country, for the most part, still delivering the mail. It is only a rotating strike. Most of them are at work. Any Canadian who is receiving a letter in their mailbox today will know that those postal workers are out working, as they have been since October 22 when the rotating strikes began. There were only a few days in any one particular area that actually had a meaningful disruption of service, and otherwise the mail has been delivered on time.

The question becomes, why is it that the postal workers do not have a chance for what is in the legislation to filter down? The government is making some argument here about how it is going to have a mediator, and how it is going to do this and that. It is anything to distract from the fact that it is actually taking away those workers' constitutional right to bargain at the negotiating table, which is what they and their duly elected representatives at the Canadian Union of Post Workers have said that they want to do. It is anything to distract from that.

However, postal workers are not going to have a chance to debate or talk about that amongst themselves, because they are out doing their job. The legislation was only made public yesterday. By the time this all wraps up and the postal worker who has been out delivering the mail, Monday to Friday, has an opportunity on Saturday to try to catch up on what has been happening here, what they are going to read is that they have already been legislated to work on Monday.

Government Orders

It is not just that politicians in this place want more time to discuss the legislation. That is not the only thing that is wrong with this super closure motion that does not even allow for as many MPs as would like to get up and speak to the legislation, it puts a limit on the debate of several hours. It is ignoring the usual rules of this place, which means that only 10 or 12 MPs, at half an hour each, would be able to rise in this place to give a speech.

It is not just that. It is also the time that it takes for information about what is happening here to filter down to the real people it affects, and then for them to be able to send feedback back here, in terms of what they think.

● (1250)

However, the Liberals are taking away that opportunity from members of this place and also members of civil society and the workers who are going to be directly affected by this back-to-work legislation. I say shame on the government for that.

I want to address some of the particular issues of this strike. We are now in a position where the government has decided to get involved. I would argue that the government should have been involved on the issues, not the bargaining process, a long time ago, because none of these issues are new. None of these issues are a surprise. The fact of the matter is that one of the principal reasons Canada Post workers are out on strike is because they have an obscenely high rate of injury in the workplace.

Canada Post has a long history. It is an institution that has been around for a long time, but that injury rate has not. In the last 10 years or so there have been major changes in the way that Canada Post does its delivery, the system it uses and the equipment that it has asked postal workers to use, which has correlated with a serious increase in the injury rate. The way they plan their routes has also correlated with an increase in the use of mandatory overtime and injury rate. That is what postal workers are out there for.

If we take those injury numbers and project forward between now and Christmas, if things go just as they have been going at Canada Post, we are talking about at least 315 disabling injuries happening to postal workers between when this legislation passes and Christmas Day. That is an obscene level of injury.

I worked in the construction industry as an electrician before getting elected to this place. If I had showed up on a job site and been told that in the last year 25% of the construction workers who walked onto the site were injured, members better believe they would have a hard time finding people willing to do that. Therefore, it is a testament to the dedication of postal workers. It is exactly because they take pride in their job, and exactly because they believe in the work they are doing and understand the importance of people getting their mail, particularly vulnerable people and seniors who depend on getting that door-to-door delivery. Postal workers understand that better than anyone. It is a testament to them and their dedication that they have been out doing that work.

However, it is tough to hear the minister impugning their motives and talking about needing to do this on behalf of the vulnerable, on behalf of people who need their cheque, when we know, because we have been seen the evidence of it to our offices in pictures and emails and everything else, that there was a missive sent out by Canada Post

management ordering the withholding of those OAS, GIS or social assistance cheques. If I were a postal worker, frankly, I cannot use the word to describe how I would feel because it is not parliamentary, but I would be angry if I heard, after receiving an order like that from management, that the minister was getting up in the House and blaming a rotating strike for the fact that those people were not getting paid. We know full well that it is because management chose to withhold those cheques that people are not getting paid.

I would point to an example from 2011 when postal workers were not on strike but locked out. It was the company that said it wanted to put a kibosh on delivering the mail, because it would put pressure on the government, or give an excuse. I do not think Canada Post needed to put pressure on the Harper government to intervene, but it provided a fig leaf for the Harper government to come in and legislate them back to work. The company locked them out, but postal workers showed up voluntarily to deliver people's cheques, because they knew the effect that would have. They should have expected some reciprocity from the government.

However, the minister has the audacity to get up in this place and talk about how concerned she is about people not getting their cheques. What about the Canada Post workers that the company cut off on October 22 when the rotating strike began, who were on short-term disability and have not been paid since, or the mothers who were on maternity leave and budgeted based on a top-up in their collective agreement that the company summarily took away from them? What about those people? Where is the concern for them?

● (1255)

What about the people on long-term disability who were denied their payments because of the company? Where is the sympathy for them? Where is the action for them? There are crocodile tears, indeed, from this minister, who wants to get up and sing some big swan song about people not being paid, when we know that postal workers would be happy to make sure that those cheques were delivered.

This is a government that did not even have the decency to make sure that people who are on short-term disability, because they work in a workplace with one of the highest injury rates in the country, were getting their cheques from the government. It is too much, frankly. It really is. One can get pretty worked up about it, and I have, on occasion.

It is all pretty rich coming from a government that says that it wants to stand up for women in the workplace and that it believes in pay equity. One of the major issues of this strike, along with the injury rate, is the fact that rural and suburban mail carriers, who are predominantly women, are not paid the same for doing the exact same work as their counterparts in urban centres, where there is a higher percentage of men delivering that mail. That is one of the union's key demands.

Government Orders

We have the minister of labour, on the one hand, getting up and bragging about pay equity legislation, which, if and when passed, will come into effect some 10 years from now. We are supposed to give her a pat on the back and be really proud of her for the great work she is doing, when the government is screwing Canada Post workers with this back-to-work legislation and not letting them get meaningful action on pay equity. This is something it could do now, just by getting out of the way, at least.

It would be better if the government gave a meaningful mandate to the Canada Post managers it hired and told them to get to the bargaining table and get serious about pay equity, get serious about reducing the injury rate, and actually listen to what the union is proposing, because the government wants a deal that brings that injury rate down and brings meaningful pay equity to postal workers. That is what the government should be doing.

Instead, from the beginning, there has been inaction. The Liberals talk about how negotiations have been going on for a year but have not gotten anywhere. That is because Canada Post management clearly does not have a mandate to make progress. Canada Post does not have a mandate to take the demands of the union seriously, when it comes to the workplace injury rate or pay equity, or we would have seen some movement, and we have not. There is a reason for that.

The Liberal government is now saying that now there is a crisis, and it has no choice but to do this. It has had a choice. The Liberals have had a choice since they formed the government to put a management team in Canada Post that was going to tackle these issues and make meaningful progress so that by the time they got to the bargaining table, there was a better relationship because there was evidence of it actually reducing the injury rate and making progress on pay equity. They decided not to do that. That is how we got here.

When the rotating strike began, and Canada Post made the callous decision to punish its most sick and vulnerable workers, the government could have sent a signal that this was not okay, that it was not going to be that kind of bargaining. If management at Canada Post thought it was to go on the attack to try to break this strike instead of taking meaningful action on those demands, it was going to have to answer to the government. Instead, the government stood silent.

We stood up day after day asking the government to do something about it, and it took a pass. If my colleagues think that did not send a clear message to Canada Post that it was going to get off the hook acting like a bunch of Pinkertons and strike breakers, they have another think coming.

Two weeks into the rotating strike, when the government signalled a readiness to bring in back-to-work legislation, it poisoned the well. From that point on, at least when it was public, there was no chance that Canada Post was going to provide a negotiated deal at the table, because it knew that the government was going to come in and save its skin. For the Liberal members to get up and tell us that they had no choice or that they have not been partisan in these negotiations is just a total load of crap. Wake up.

• (1300)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a difficult conversation. I agree with the minister

when she says that a negotiated outcome and decision would be better.

The parties do not seem to be close. There are obviously consequences for the Canadian economy more broadly. I do not say that as a member of the government formally, but I can imagine sitting in the minister's shoes and looking more broadly at my responsibility to the Canadian economy and Canadian society. I have heard about the impact on small business and international commerce. How do we balance all these considerations?

The member was very insistent that this legislation would be unconstitutional. However, we know that in 2011, when the court made a decision that the 2011 legislation was unconstitutional, it was because it was not minimally impairing and did not allow the union to have an equal footing in the mediation and arbitration process, which this legislation, in my view, would do in a proper way.

I wonder if the member can speak to minimal impairment and why he thinks this legislation is unconstitutional.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I said that the union is going to be taking this legislation to court, and I suspect that it may well find that the government does not respect people's right to bargain collectively, because it should be at the table.

If we heard it from the Conservatives it would be one thing. We are hearing it from a government that swears up and down that it believes in the collective bargaining process.

I talked about all the things the government has done in terms of failing to act on the injury rate and other things. This crisis did not just come because the workers, as a last resort, decided to go out on rotating strikes. These are not new issues. They did not come out of nowhere. Instead of trying to put this on Canada Post workers, who are using their tool of last resort to get action, the government needs to own up and say that it should have been doing something about this a long time ago. It needs to recognize the fact that a number of actions the government took in this process over the last four weeks or five weeks poisoned the well. That is not what good-faith collective bargaining looks like, and it is certainly not what a government that supports collective bargaining looks like.

As long as governments that profess to be supportive of collective bargaining are the ones to undercut it and effectively take it away, then, legal point notwithstanding, we are not going to find ourselves in a position in Canada where workers are able to exercise their rights meaningfully. Companies are going to know that when they come asking, as long as they are big enough, as long as they are an eBay, a Netflix, a Facebook or an Air Canada, and I am thinking about what the Liberals did to aircraft maintenance workers with Bill C-10, which allowed Air Canada to offshore a bunch of maintenance work, contrary to what the government was saying before the election, the government is going to see to it that they get their way. Workers are not going to have meaningful rights in Canada, whatever their legal status is.

Government Orders

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague's track record in raising concerns by union members and constituents in his riding. I would like him to address two things. I have been hearing from a lot of small and medium-sized businesses in my riding, recently from a Bobcat business and The Bowmanville Foundry, about problems with payments because of the mail situation. I would like the member to comment on whether he is hearing those same concerns. I think what Parliament needs to balance are these concerns.

I would also like his comments on the parliamentary secretary and how that member, when he was in opposition, certainly took a different approach to back-to-work legislation and how it must frustrate the NDP to see the Liberals on their side in opposition and not on their side in government. I would like his thoughts on that.

•(1305)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to comment on a couple of things. I will start with the last one. It has been a real disappointment. I think we can see in the ashen look of the parliamentary secretary when he gets up to speak that he does not even believe what he is saying. However, he is part of a government, whatever the principles of the people who may happen to belong to it are, that is first and foremost committed to Bay Street.

In this case, the oddity is that it is Canada Post. It is a publicly run corporation, so the question is why the government would not do something about it. The answer is the letter from eBay. A big multinational is upset about what is going on, so the government has to jump to it. I do not think the parliamentary secretary believes what he is saying, and all the more the shame. On something this important, we should be getting a sincere answer. If the government cannot provide a sincere answer, that is how we know it is doing the wrong thing.

On the question of businesses being impacted by the rotating strikes, first of all, I express some sympathy. There is some disruption. There is no strike without disruption. Part of the point is to show the value of the work postal workers do every day, and when they are not there to do it, it is a problem. However, when 25% of them are being injured in a year, there is going to be a crisis eventually. It is not going to be because of a strike; it is going to be because they cannot maintain the workforce that is out pounding the pavement and getting those letters and parcels delivered. There is a crisis at Canada Post in terms of the injury rate, and something needs to be done about it.

I have sympathy for business. I have sympathy for Canadians. I am among them. Christmas is coming, and we do online shopping too. It is inconvenient. It is a pain. I understand that. However, I do not think it is appropriate to put this all back on workers who have been working under terrible conditions for years.

We need to be asking why Canada Post does not take responsibility for the fact that there has been a work stoppage because there is a seriously high injury rate and other issues of fairness in its workplace. It should be sorted out for the sake of business.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, we just had a government member stand up and ask the opposition to

explain why this proposed back-to-work legislation might be unconstitutional. All we know for sure is that the last time the Government of Canada ordered postal workers back to work, it was ruled unconstitutional.

A way we might be able to figure out whether this proposed legislation is also unconstitutional is by having a full debate on it in the House and a rigorous study of it at committee. If even Liberal MPs are asking whether this legislation is unconstitutional, it really seems to make the case against the motion to accelerate the back-to-work legislation and in favour of doing our due diligence as parliamentarians.

Something else the government has said is a bit rich. We heard the Minister of Public Services and Procurement say that other countries have stopped delivering mail to Canada, as though this is some sort of international crisis. It is pretty important to put on the record that the reason other countries are not delivering mail to Canada is that Canada Post itself has asked them not to. There is a problem with the government taking an action from Canada Post management and using it as a justification for applying back-to-work legislation against its employees.

I wonder if the member for Elmwood—Transcona can think of any other instances of the government using that tactic in this debate.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the great frustrations of this whole situation. We have had Canada Post management claim that there is a huge backlog. We have reports from the people who actually work in the facilities where the trucks are saying that those numbers are hugely inflated.

As the member rightly pointed out, we have Canada Post telling mail services outside of Canada not to send mail into Canada and then saying, "Oh my God, nobody's sending mail to Canada. This is terrible. We need to have back-to-work legislation". We have a minister who herself got up earlier and talked about people's assistance cheques not being delivered. She failed to mention the fact that, actually, Canada Post management told its employees that they were not allowed to deliver that mail.

This has been part of the problem all along. It is consistent with the pattern of signalling we have seen from the government when it decided to ignore the attack on sick and vulnerable workers and when it signalled, only a couple of weeks into the strike, that it was contemplating back-to-work legislation. It has been complicit in, and in fact, is now starting to repeat, these trumped-up claims by management about a crisis.

These are textbook strike-breaking techniques. It is not a mystery what they are doing or where the ideas come from. This is the way these things are done. To see a government that says that it is pro-labour and wants to defend the middle class and have a good relationship with Canada's unions using the textbook techniques of strike-breaking, right here in this place with its legislation, is just too much to take, frankly. It makes me really angry. I hope Canadians out there who are working people who want fairness in their workplaces and fair wages are paying attention and can see through this sham.

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● (1310)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of my favourite expressions is that everybody is a democrat when they win. However, the true test to determine people's commitment to a principle of democracy is how they act when they lose, because the whole system is predicated upon people ascribing to a principle that in exchange for a peaceful exchange of ideas in a competition for votes, everybody agrees to live by the end result. That is how we know if someone really believes in democracy.

It is the same thing when it comes to labour rights. A lot of people profess to believe in free collective bargaining as a fundamental right. However, the true test of whether or not they really do is how they act when presented with a situation where they have to actually implement a decision.

In this case here, we are watching a government that has clearly showed its true nature, that when push comes to shove, it absolutely rejects the notion of and will trample over the rights of Canadians to exercise their right to free collective bargaining. I will develop that idea in a moment, but I want to pause for a moment to talk about process.

With respect to democracy, the Liberal government has tabled legislation that purports to limit debate of members of Parliament in this House on something as important as back-to-work legislation that will be implemented on a national scale, country-wide, on a major Canadian Crown corporation. It wants to limit debate to a few hours. That is unbelievable.

It does not matter where we sit on the merits of the question before the House. I think all Canadians who are fair-minded, all Canadians who value democracy, all Canadians who understand the need for a free and fair exchange of ideas in debate in this chamber will condemn a government that does not have the courage to allow the people in this House to fully express not only their thoughts on this legislation but also the interests and opinions of the constituents who we come to this House to represent. That is shameful and it is cowardly.

I want to talk about free collective bargaining. People either believe in it or they do not. The way we determine whether or not politicians or policy-makers really believe in it is how they act when the chips are on the table.

Here we have a rotating strike by Canada Post workers. We have job action that is being taken. What is happening? We are being inconvenienced. The country is being inconvenienced. Customers are being inconvenienced. Businesses are being inconvenienced. We all are being inconvenienced. That is what the purpose of job action is. It is the withdrawal of services or a lockout by management which is intended to put economic pressure on the other side and the members of the public as a means for resolving the issues between the parties when they are unable to do so by agreement. That is what job action is. That is what a strike does. That is what a lockout does.

Therefore, for the Liberals to say that they believe in free collective bargaining but they will interfere to make sure that nobody will ever actually be able to take that final job action, which is the final expression of the right to free collective bargaining, makes a mockery of their so-called avowed commitment to the principle of

free collective bargaining. Saying that one believes in the right of free collective bargaining but not in the right to exercise the right to strike or a lockout is absurd. That is what the Liberal government is saying right now.

What I have noticed about the Conservatives and Liberals is that they tend to believe in the right to strike when workers are on strike and it does not have any real impact. However, the minute that workers withdraw their services and it actually has an impact on the economy, that is when they scramble for return-to-work legislation and strip those workers of their right to exercise their economic impact. Basically, people have a right to strike in this country so long as the strike has no impact. That is the net result of the approach by the Liberals and Conservatives to free collective bargaining and labour in this country, and it is wrong. It is unconstitutional and it violates Canada's signature on any number of international treaties where we say to the world that we believe in the right of free collective bargaining. We say that when we are out of Canada, yet in Canada we strip our workers of that right any time those workers take a move to act on that right and it actually has an impact.

● (1315)

The longshore union in this country does not even have a strike fund anymore. Why? Longshore workers always get ordered back to work. The longshore workers belong to a federally regulated union. They have taken the decision that under Liberal and Conservative federal governments that regulate them, they should not even bother having a strike fund because if they ever move to strike, within days they get ordered back to work. Why? When longshore workers go on strike, the government indicates to the Canadian public how important the value of their labour is to the Canadian economy. Again, workers can strike if they have no impact on the Canadian economy, but if they have a pivotal impact on the Canadian economy, then they do not have the right to strike. That lays bear the contradiction that exists in the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party in this House. There is only one party in this House that stands completely for the principle of free collective bargaining, and that is the New Democratic Party of Canada, and we are going to continue to do that.

I want to talk about the impact. In this case, the government is acting as if Canada Post is an essential service. I just pointed out that I have great respect for the value and importance of the work of Canada Post, but according to the legal definition under labour law, it is not an essential service. If the government wants to treat it as an essential service, then it can make an application to the Canada Industrial Relations Board and make the case that Canada Post should be declared an essential service. If that is the case, the government is then entitled to perhaps place some restrictions on the right to strike. The government has not done that, is not doing it and will not do it. Why? It is because Canada Post is not an essential service.

The very argument the Liberals want Canadians to believe, that they have to legislate Canada Post workers back to work because they are essential to the Canadian economy, the Liberals actually do not have the intellectual integrity to demonstrate that before an independent arbitrator to determine if that is the case because they know they cannot. Why? It is because there are alternatives.

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Yes, of course, if Canada Post workers are on a rotating strike, or even if there is a full strike and they withdraw services, that will have an impact on Canada, but there are alternatives. There is UPS. There is FedEx. There is DHL. There is Purolator, although it is owned by Canada Post. I am not sure if it is affected by this job action, but assuming it is not, there is Purolator. There is any number of courier services across this country that can make sure things still move.

That is the difference between that and true essential services like health care workers, police, firefighters or air traffic controllers, where Canadians accept that there could be meaningful limitations on the right to strike because the withdrawal of those services may put public health and safety at risk. That is not the case with Canada Post and the government is trying to slide this regressive act underneath that sort of fabric of essential service when it knows that is not the case.

I want to talk about the middle class. The government constantly repeats “middle class” ad nauseam in the House, as if the Liberal Party is the only party that cares about the middle class. My Conservative colleagues care about the middle class and the NDP cares about the middle class. We all do. However, for the Liberals, middle class is almost like their trademark. They have made it a talking point. The true test of whether the Liberals really believe in the middle class is not what they say, because I have heard more rhetoric in the last three years from the Liberals than I have heard in my lifetime, it is how they act.

What is the best way to enter the middle class? It is to carry a union card, to sign a union card. Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Prize winning economist, and any number of economists across the political spectrum will tell us that countries that have high rates of unionization have higher rates of people in the middle class. That is only common sense. Obviously, unions work to raise wages and improve working conditions. That is how people enter the middle class.

What do the Liberals do when what is happening in the private and public sectors and a union fights for improvements to its workers' wages and working conditions? They move to scuttle it. They move to restrict the ability of CUPW to improve the working conditions of its workers to enter the middle class. It is pure rhetoric on the Liberal side. The emperor has no clothes on this. If they really cared about the middle class, they would be letting CUPW and Canada Post bargain and allow CUPW come to a resolution, fight for its workers and gain improvements in the workplace that would assist them in moving to the middle class, but no, the Liberals are rushing to order them back to work.

● (1320)

I want to talk about workplace safety. About two and a half years ago, not one kilometre from here, I was present at a ceremony attended by the Prime Minister and all sorts of cabinet ministers and members of the Liberal Party. It was a function organized by Canada Building Trades Unions, where it unveiled its monument to the construction worker. It also served to remind us of those construction workers who have paid with their lives and injuries to build this country. It is a monument to injured construction workers. All the Liberals showed up and beamed with pride and it looked like they were completely happy about this and showed their support for the

building trades and union leaders across this country as they stuck up for health and safety. Now how do they act? The single most important issue going on right now in the bargaining between CUPW and Canada Post is their rates of injury, and health and safety in the workplace.

We have already heard the shocking numbers that 25% of the workers at Canada Post have a workplace health or safety incident every year. These are the issues that the unions bring to the bargaining table. They are not asking, but are seeking and demanding a response from the employer. At the end of the day, unions only have one power. Management has all the power to determine the jobs, the terms and conditions in the workplace and unions can ask, can grieve, can seek to persuade someone else, can seek to persuade the employer who has the ultimate decision. The only power unions have at the end of the day is the power to withdraw their services. When that is taken away from a union, it has no power whatsoever. That is not collective bargaining any more. It is collective begging.

That is what the Liberal government is forcing CUPW to do. Instead of letting CUPW do its job, exercise its constitutional right and reflect the constitutional rights of its members and bring those issues to the table and refuse to go back to work and to continue to put economic pressure on Canada Post until they get improvements in health and safety in the workplace, the government seeks to interfere with that process.

Do the Liberals really care about health and safety like they professed on that day when that monument was unveiled and they clapped politely? No. Now they will throw that in front of an arbitrator and that, like a lot of other issues, will be swept under the rug.

The government claims to care about pay equity. Liberals have entered their fourth year of government. With a majority government they could have done anything they want in the last three years. They have entered their fourth year and now they pat themselves on the back for introducing pay equity legislation some time in the future with no money attached to it. Other than that, it is a great pay equity scheme.

What does CUPW do at the bargaining table? It is seeking to get redress for the inequities between the wages of men and women and between urban and rural carriers and workers. Again, what is the government doing with that? When the Liberals have a chance to really see actors in the Canadian economy get real improvements now to pay equity and to health and safety in the workplace, they seek to interfere in that process and derail it. That is some commitment to pay equity.

The rights of labour in this country have been hard fought for. They were not given to them. The rights of labour in this country were paid for by the sacrifice, by the sweat, and frankly, by the blood of workers from coast to coast who stood up and sacrificed for the rights of their sisters and brothers, sons and daughters and grandchildren to be able to live in a free, democratic country where workers have rights. The government shows again by this behaviour, this anti-democratic, anti-union behaviour that it is spitting in the face of that sacrifice.

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● (1325)

I want to talk about what happens when we end job action by referring a matter to binding arbitration. I was a labour lawyer for 16 years before I was elected and I have lots of experience with this kind of situation. Something that everybody knows and the government members may or may not have the courage to admit, is that when they refer matters in the collective bargaining environment to an arbitrator in any kind of forum, whether final offer selection or any of the myriad of processes used to come to a binding dispute, they give the power to resolve the issues in dispute to one person. In that kind of environment, they always get a mediated, moderated compromise. They rarely get principled, real solutions to the crux of the issues in dispute. The only way labour really wins the day and has an opportunity to win its case is on the street when it is flexing its economic power and when it is taking the risk of having management exercise its economic power back.

Job action, as I have heard my colleagues say, is not taken lightly. It is not a picnic; it is a sacrifice. We have CUPW workers out there in the freezing cold who are receiving a fraction of their real wages. In fact, sick and injured workers have had their benefits cut off by Canada Post, as the most shameful, disgusting form of pressure to be put in a labour dispute, putting pressure on the most vulnerable workers who are sick and injured, and the Liberal MPs said nothing about it. They let Canada Post use injured workers as a pawn in a labour dispute, and they did not say a word about it.

These workers are out sacrificing, and when Canada Post loses business to companies like UPS and DHL and the other courier companies that are no doubt taking its work right now, they run the risk, when they go back to work, of not having that business there. There is risk, but that is the nature of a strike. It is economic conflict at its base. We do not like to say it, but that is what it is.

Again, I come back to my first point. People either believe in free collective bargaining in this chamber and in this country or they do not. If someone says, "I don't like the economic impact of a strike," then they do not believe in free collective bargaining. He or she should have the courage to say that then. I challenge my Liberal colleagues, in 2019, to go to the union leaders, go to all of the union halls across this country, walk in there and tell them that they believe in the right to strike as long as there is no economic impact; and tell them that if there is any economic impact, then no, unions get ordered back to work and they will let some appointed person with no interest or accountability in the process make the decision for them.

I have been in this chamber 10 years, and the worst times I am in this chamber are when I see a government violate the constitutional rights of Canadians, and I am going to end with this. The right to strike is a constitutional right. The right to join a union and exercise all of the associated benefits of that is a constitutional right. A government that will interfere with that in this case will interfere with it in any situation. Therefore, we are not just standing up for CUPW workers today or for all workers across this country, we in the New Democratic Party are standing up for all Canadians who believe that this is a country ruled by a Constitution and rights. That means sticking up for them in all situations, not only when it is convenient to do so.

● (1330)

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague with a great deal of interest. I imagine he is aware that today is November 23, one month before Christmas. This is a very busy time for e-commerce. Today is actually Black Friday, as it is called.

Seventy per cent of all e-commerce is in fact delivered by Canada Post. Right now, small and medium-sized businesses are suffering because of the situation.

Earlier, my colleague suggested using UPS or FedEx, but SMEs have very tight profit margins. It is therefore uncertain whether they can turn to another service to deliver their parcels.

I would like to hear from my colleague who does not support imposing legislation to ensure the service. Yes, the workers have rights, but so does the public; they have the right to receive their mail, here in Canada.

The NDP in Ontario has previously passed back-to-work legislation. I would like to hear from my hon. colleague on the fact that, in Ontario, the government has previously implemented back-to-work legislation, a practice which the opposition in this House opposes.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway. We are running into Private Members' Business, so I will let him give a brief answer and then he will be able to continue after with more questions coming to him when we return. The hon. member.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I will be forced to be brief.

First, there is a difference when governments bring in back-to-work legislation when dealing with essential services. Provincial governments of all stripes have done that.

Second, the Government of Ontario, under Bob Rae, never ordered teachers back to work. That is completely false. It never happened.

Third, the Liberal MPs all seem to think that the right to strike in this country depends on the month of the year. It does not. That is not the way the Constitution works.

Finally, small business does have options. Small businesses will get packages and parcels delivered. They will simply use other service modalities to do so.

I do not trade off constitutional rights of workers in this country for the convenience of the business sector, like the Liberals do.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We will break now for Private Members' Business. The hon. member will have seven minutes, 45 seconds coming to him in questions when we return to the debate.

It being 1:34 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PENSION BENEFITS STANDARDS ACT

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-405, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (pension plans), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege as the member of Parliament for Durham to rise to speak again at second reading debate on my private member's Bill C-405 on pensions, and particularly bringing to the attention of all Canadians the risks that are inherent with defined benefit pension plans that are underfunded at a time that the company is approaching insolvency challenges.

In my last speech, I spoke a lot about the underpinnings of insolvency law in Canada, both the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and also the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, which is for larger companies.

Many Canadians might be aware that there have been a lot of challenges with pensioners' benefits—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am afraid I am going to have to interrupt the hon. member for Durham. We had a bit of confusion here. The hon. member spoke to this already. The hon. member is going to have the right to reply, but we will move on the hon. member for Sherbrooke at this point. There was a little mix-up here, my apologies.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry for the confusion about the debate on the bill introduced by my colleague who has just spoken.

I am pleased to provide our party's recommendations on the bill. He is to be commended for his contribution to the debate and the quality of his approach.

Mr. Speaker, can you remind me of the number and title of the bill, please?

• (1335)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is Bill C-405, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act with regard to pension plans. We are at the second reading.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, my apologies. I was not exactly sure which bill we were debating today.

My colleague's bill, Bill C-405, deals with Canadians' pension benefits. Clearly, this is an extremely delicate subject, as we were able to see with the government's approach to Bill C-27. This sought to allow Crown corporations, and ultimately all other employers in Canada, to change the category of defined benefit retirement plans to target benefit plans.

The direction that the government took is really bad. Thanks to the pressure from many Canadians and from unions, the government

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seems to have decided to keep the idea of introducing target benefit plans on hold. That means that retirees' benefits will change over time.

When you sign a collective agreement and a defined benefit pension plan, you know what to expect when you retire. With Bill C-27, the government was ready to move forward and change that standard, replacing it with a target benefit plan, that is, one in which benefits can change over time. If that were the case, employees would not get the same amounts as if the defined benefits were maintained.

My colleague's bill is similar to that one. It seeks to enable employers who already offer defined benefit pension plans to convert them into target benefit plans or defined contribution pension plans, which are slightly different, and thereby transfer all of the risk to workers and absolve employers from the obligation to provide their employees with predictable pension benefits.

Pension plans are deferred wages. As I said earlier, they are often negotiated as part of collective agreements.

This bill would change benefits that were negotiated ahead of time and, as I just mentioned, it would also transfer the burden to employees since, in a defined benefit pension plan, the burden is on the employer to deliver what it promised to its employees.

In target benefit plans or defined contribution pension plans, the burden is on employees, who are forced to bear the brunt of any losses that may occur if a company, Crown corporation or government can no longer fulfill its retirement obligations. There has been a lot of debate about that in 2018. This reality has been catching up with workers over the past several years. Employers, whether government or private, are waking up to the fact that, in the future, they will not be able to fulfill the working conditions and retirement pensions that they promised to employees, even though they signed agreements to that effect, and so they are changing the benefits along the way. They are changing conditions that were negotiated. That is unacceptable. It goes completely against the spirit of negotiation and violates a signed agreement to which the two parties agreed and in which both parties must keep their commitments.

Unfortunately, we know what side the Conservatives are on in this kind of debate that affects workers and employers. They always side with the employer. What we are seeing today with Bill C-405 is nothing new.

The bill before us is diametrically opposed to the NDP's proposed approach to correcting major shortcomings in Canada's bankruptcy and insolvency legislation and protecting Canadian workers' and retirees' pensions and benefits. This is 2018, and workers are facing a whole new reality. We have seen it in the past, and we saw it again recently with Sears. Not only can the pension benefit terms and conditions be changed, but pensions can be cancelled altogether. I know workers in Sherbrooke, my region, who worked for 30 years and then suddenly found themselves in that very situation. The employer went bankrupt and closed up shop, and workers' pensions evaporated.

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● (1340)

Those employees worked for years to build up their pensions. That money belongs to them. It is deferred income. They worked their whole lives to save that money, and then from one day to the next, their employer was no longer in a position to give the money that belongs to them.

Sears is the latest example, but this is something we have seen in Estrie as well. I know a person who worked at Olymel in Magog. That person, along with everyone else who worked there, lost their pension because their employer suddenly announced that it was no longer able to honour the conditions they had initially agreed to. The workers' money went up in smoke.

That leads to very sad situations. Some of these people are elderly and have to go back to work because they lost all the benefits they were promised initially. They are left in the lurch. They have to go back to work and, for some of them, the working conditions are not nearly as good as when they were working for a business that was thriving and prospering but suddenly had to shut down.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives are unlikely to surprise us today with such a bill to stop executives from giving themselves excessive bonuses in any liquidation and bankruptcy procedures.

I mentioned Sears, but there have been other cases of bankruptcy where the executives took off with the employees' savings. That money does not necessarily always go to the creditors. Sometimes it winds up in the pockets of the executives of those companies. Then the executives or shareholders tell the board of directors that after liquidating the company's assets, that is, before putting the money in their own pockets, there is nothing left for everyone else. There is nothing left for the other creditors.

We in the NDP believe that workers are the priority creditors. That has always been our position. When a company goes bankrupt, the priority creditors are the workers. Whether it is salaries, unpaid sick leave or pensions, priority must be given to what has already been promised, before the banks are even consulted to proceed with the liquidation and pay out the creditors. The workers should always come first.

Unfortunately, once again, we know whose side the Conservatives are on: the employers and the executives. They allow these unacceptable situations to continue, and that is a shame. Bill C-405 does not solve anything. On the contrary, it makes matters worse.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my friend from Sherbrooke might have misunderstood what the bill sets out to do. It does in fact set out to address many of the problems he identified in his speech. There is certainly a problem with the way pension assets are addressed in a bankruptcy proceeding. I completely agree with him on that point. This legislation is part of a solution to some of these issues.

In a free and competitive economy, firms compete with each other for goods and services to consumers. This is the most efficient and effective way for people to get what they want.

However, in a free society with a market economy, businesses will fail from time to time. When a business fails, we need to have appropriate laws in place so companies that have to restructure under bankruptcy remain viable, but can minimize losses to investors, to creditors, to past and present employees and ensure fairness.

Bill C-405 addresses a weakness in Canada's balance between these competing interests in its approach to pensions and bankruptcy and insolvency law. The bill provides a timely and practical approach to an issue that concerns unfunded pensions and bankruptcy cases.

Before speaking further on the content, I want to take a moment to thank the member for Durham for tackling this issue through a private member's bill.

Private members' bills are a great way for opposition members from all parties, as well as non-government members within the governing party, to contribute to the legislative process even if they are not members of the government.

The legislation is great example of a way, through Private Members' Business, we can tackle a problem with a precisely targeted practical and non-ideological approach to a national problem. I encourage all my colleagues from all parties to support this common sense bill.

Canada's current bankruptcy and insolvency laws suffer from weaknesses, which exacerbate unfunded pensions when a business fails.

First, when administering pension plans during bankruptcy proceedings, Canadian companies are required to purchase annuities in order to make payments in the plan. These annuities return only a fraction of what pensioners are owed and prevent pensioners from agreeing to other investment options to salvage their contributions. It often has the effect of forcing the conversion of pension assets at precisely the wrong possible time.

Corporate bankruptcies are more likely to happen at exactly the same time as a general downturn in the economy and in financial markets. What actually causes the bankruptcy in the first place will also cause a conversion of pension assets at the least advantageous time and at the least advantageous valuations. It creates a perfect storm that can destroy pension assets. Administrators of pension plans currently have no flexibility for how best to preserve existing assets in a pension fund.

The second problem is that companies at any time undergoing bankruptcy proceedings need to have strong leadership to guide them back to profitability. They need to have their best employees in order to have any chance to recover.

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However, at the same time, paying retention bonuses to executives or key employees of firms with an unfunded pension liability is unfair. Employees do not want to see company executives receiving bonuses, while they are losing their job, having their wages or hours reduced or simply having to endure the strain of uncertainty during a difficult time. Key employees are going to be needed to somehow be retained if a business is going to survive. Limiting or putting conditions on key employee retention payments are needed in cases where a business that has failed has an unfunded pension liability.

The third problem is that pension plans often are opaque. Important information about a pension plans sustainability can be difficult to access by its members. Canadians should be able to see how their pension plan is doing and be able to press their employer to adequately fund a pension.

The best way to solve the problem of unfunded pension liabilities is to not allow a pension to become unfunded in the first place.

• (1345)

By introducing Bill C-405, the member for Durham proposes a solution to these three problems.

The bill would allow pension administrators to secure approval from pensioners to amend the plan or to transfer assets to other plans instead of having to buy annuities at the worst possible time. This would allow more funds to stay in the plan or be reinvested to continue earning returns while bankruptcy proceedings were in progress. It would give administrators more flexibility to salvage the value held in the plan and it would give plan members more say in how their plan would be managed. The bill would ensure plan members themselves would be the ones who would determine whether the administrators would keep the assets invested or convert them to annuities.

Bill C-405 would also improve fairness when restructuring companies have unfunded pensions. It would limit the key employee retention payments that executives could receive during the restructuring, setting pre-conditions for such payments to be made and limiting their size. These measures would prevent executives, officers and owners from profiting from mismanagement and would incentivize them to keep pension plans in good order.

The bill sets the right balance between protecting employee assets and ensuring the business has the best opportunity to recover.

Third, the bill would give past and present employees greater access to information about their plan by requiring an annual public report on its health. It would also facilitate coordination with provincial governments and securities regulators around pension sustainability.

Again, the most effective way to deal with the problem of unfunded pensions is to stop or discourage them from becoming unfunded in the first place. Greater transparency is a key to that objective. With greater transparency comes greater incentive from management to ensure pensions are viable.

These are reasonable means to increase protection for Canadian pensioners, without harming competitiveness and access to capital. The member for Durham explained these points in detail in the first hour of debate, but I will focus on why these measures are superior

to other proposals that have been put forward, in particular, the option of creating a super-priority for pensions, which some members of the House would prefer.

Like many of my parliamentary colleagues across Canada, I have received many letters from constituents urging me to protect Canadian pensioners through the creation of a super-priority for pensions in bankruptcy and insolvency cases. They often mention particular examples that are heartbreaking in the way employees have lost their savings after working for many years. They mention companies like Sears, Algoma, Nortel and many others.

We all are tremendously sympathetic to pensioners of companies like those and other failed businesses when the business could not meet its pension obligations. However, creating a super-priority for pensions will not fix the problem. In fact, a super-priority would probably make the problem worse.

Super-priority for pensions would risk creating disincentives to outside investment. It could undermine investor confidence, which would mean more business failures, bankruptcies, lost employment and lost pensions. Super-priority would also make it much more difficult for a business that is being restructured to attract investment at a critical time.

I recognize that some in the House might disagree with me on the issue of super-priority, but why not support the bill anyway? The bill clearly would move the balance of competing interests in the event of a corporate bankruptcy toward workers and pensioners. The bill is surely a move in the direction that those who favour super-priority would want to take us.

The bill would do many things. Therefore, I encourage members to vote for it for what it does rather than what it does not do. The bill would change the current rules to allow more businesses to recover from bankruptcy, more pension assets to be salvaged during bankruptcy, regulate retention bonuses to be paid during bankruptcy and increase transparency on pension plans before they become subject to a bankruptcy proceedings in the first place. The bill is good for workers, for pensioners, for shareholders and creditors.

• (1350)

In conclusion, Canadian workers deserve practical laws that protect their interests and the years of hard work they have put into their companies and pensions. Such laws must strike the best balance between allowing companies to restructure and not being a disincentive to investment. This bill would achieve that balance. I encourage all members of the House to support the bill.

Private Members' Business

• (1355)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to speak with my hon. colleagues to Bill C-405, which would amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act of 1985, or the PBSA, as well as the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, or the CCAA.

Before turning to the bill, I want to remind us all that Canadians work hard and expect their government to do the same. They expect us to make smart and responsible investments that grow the economy now and for the long term. Canadians understand that when we invest in the middle class and in people working hard to join it, everyone benefits.

Canadians expect their hard work will bring about a better quality of life, one where their families and children have greater opportunities and a bright future ahead of them. As well, after a lifetime of hard work, Canadians have earned a safe, secure and dignified retirement. That is why we have some concerns with the bill before the House today.

Bill C-405 was introduced in the spirit of providing greater flexibility for companies to address their pension deficits and protecting Canadians' retirement security. However, the bill contains problematic and unnecessary changes that would endanger Canadians' hard-earned pension benefits.

To give a bit more context, I would like to remind the House of some of the measures the government is undertaking to support Canadians' retirement goals.

In June 2016, we reached a historic agreement with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan. The strengthened CPP will provide more money to Canadians when they retire, so they can worry less about their savings and focus more on enjoying time with their families. Increased CPP contributions will be slowly phased in over a seven-year period, starting next January. It will take roughly 40 years of contributions for a worker to fully accumulate the enhanced benefit, which will raise the maximum CPP retirement benefit up to 50%.

To make this clearer, I will provide an example. Today, the current maximum benefit is just over \$13,850. If the CPP enhancement were fully in place today, it would represent an increase of nearly \$7,300 on that amount, to a maximum benefit of more than \$21,100 in today's dollars.

The increase is due to two changes. First, the government is increasing the level of earnings replacement provided by the CPP from one-quarter to one-third of eligible earnings. This means an individual making \$55,000 a year in today's dollars over their working life will receive approximately \$4,500 more per year when they retire.

Second, it will increase by 14% the maximum income range covered by the CPP, so those who earn more will receive more in retirement.

Now that similar enhancements to the Quebec pension plan are also in place, all Canadian workers can look forward to a more secure retirement. In 2017, the government built on this achievement

by reaching an agreement with provincial partners to further strengthen the CPP. Budget 2018 included measures that will give greater benefits to parents whose income drops after the birth or adoption of a child. It also included measures that will provide greater benefits for persons with disabilities, for spouses who are widowed at a young age, and for the estate of lower-income contributors.

These new benefit enhancements will be implemented without raising CPP contribution rates. Strengthening the economy and growing the middle class are important, but so too is making sure people working hard to join the middle class have the help they need to succeed. This is why the Government of Canada has taken steps to ensure more and more people benefit from Canada's economic growth.

In addition to enhancing the CPP, the government also strengthened the guaranteed income supplement. This action provides greater income security for close to 900,000 low-income, single seniors, 70% of whom are women. The enhanced guaranteed income supplement has lifted 57,000 vulnerable seniors out of poverty.

Coming back to Bill C-405, this bill would weaken the security of retirement benefits for workers and pensioners, undermining the government's achievements in enhancing our retirement income system.

• (1400)

The bill would allow the restructuring of employees to reduce pension benefits, subject only to the consent of a minority of plan members. It would allow employers to walk away from their pension promises instead of fulfilling their legal obligation to fully fund all benefits.

As such, the bill runs counter to the government's commitment to find a balanced way to address retirement security. The bill would also harm the ability of companies to retain key employees when undergoing restructuring proceedings. This could make it more difficult to complete a successful restructuring that keeps the company in business and preserves jobs.

In conclusion, over the last three years, our government has been focused on strengthening and growing the middle class, offering real help to people working hard to join it. The government is also focused on building an economy that works for everyone, and the results speak for themselves.

Since we came to office, Canadians have created more than half a million new full-time jobs; the unemployment rate is at the lowest level this country has seen in four decades, and the youth unemployment rate has dropped two percentage points since the beginning of last year. The Canadian economy was also remarkably strong last year, with growth that outpaced all the other G7 countries. It is expected that Canada will remain among the fastest-growing economies this year and next.

Private Members' Business

We are proud of these achievements, because they are proof positive that our investment and innovations are reaping rewards for all Canadians. However, Bill C-405 would weaken benefit security, running counter to the achievements our government has made and those we are pursuing. For that reason, I urge every member of this House to oppose the bill.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks by saying that today is indeed a very black Friday for workers.

In addition, the government has introduced a bill to require Canada Post mail carriers to return to work, despite the fact that they were in the middle of negotiating a collective agreement freely and in good faith. After only 11 months, the government has decided to intrude on these negotiations and force them back to work. We are being allowed less than three hours of debate for the bill, which we have already started debating and will continue to debate this afternoon. This is abominable conduct from a government that says that workers' rights should be very important. It says it respects bargaining rights, but its actions paint a different picture.

What is more, in 2011, when the Conservatives imposed back-to-work legislation for these same Canada Post employees, the Liberals got all worked up, saying that it was terribly disrespectful and violated workers' rights. Now they are doing exactly the same thing, with even fewer scruples, because they are giving MPs even less time to debate and defend workers.

In addition, today, the Conservatives are introducing a bill that will make pension benefits even more precarious. Bill C-405, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act with respect to pension plans, which was introduced by the member for Durham, seeks to transfer all the risks of deferred wages to workers by replacing defined benefits. Under defined benefit plans, when someone is working, a portion of their salary is deferred, set aside for their retirement. They know exactly how much money they will receive every year from the day they retire.

The Conservatives are doing the same thing as the Liberals did with Bill C-27. However, that bill has been put on hold for the time being because of the outcry from workers. It actually made the headlines. The NDP denounced the situation. My colleague from Hamilton Mountain did a tremendous job of demonstrating how this change would put the future of workers at risk and create two pension plans, one for those who have already accumulated some pension money and another for young people who are just entering the workforce. The young people would get a different and much more precarious pension plan. I will explain as I go along.

The end result would be that even though people would continue to have a known fixed amount at retirement, instead of receiving a fixed payment, the benefits would vary depending on the performance of the investments and the market. That is what the Conservatives are proposing. We know that investments sometimes do very well. They can yield a good amount one year, and then the next year, if the performance is negative, there might be no money for pensioners.

Do workers really want an income that fluctuates from year to year, an income that they cannot predict? I do not think so. Do they want a negative differential of \$15,000 from one year to the next? How can they budget for renovations? How can they deal with a contingency? How can they plan a trip? Pensioners have contributed and set aside money their entire lives, but that money could go up in smoke because of this bill.

This goes against NDP values. It should also be contrary to what the Liberals are proposing in the way of protections for workers. This really puts the future of workers at risk.

• (1405)

That is like telling young people entering the workforce that even though they do the same work and make the same contributions to their pension, they might not get the same pension as those who have been working for the same company for 10 years. That is what will happen under Bill C-405. Is it fair for every worker to pay the same amount but not get the same pension at the end of the line? No. I think the answer is obvious.

The NDP is strongly opposed to this type of bill. Just look at what happened in the Sears scandal. Legislation is indispensable for protecting workers' pensions when businesses go bankrupt, and Canada's legislation in this area is woefully inadequate.

Pensions are supposed to be paid, and deferred wages are supposed to be paid for by creditors, but that is not happening. Under the current Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, secured creditors always get paid first. Workers' pension funds always come second. In fact, that money is always the last to get paid out. In almost every case, there is practically nothing left to pay back the workers' pension fund.

Retired Sears employees were not the first to be severely affected by the bankruptcy of a Canadian company. Many will remember the collapse of Nortel. The star of Canada's high-tech industry was snuffed out in 2009. It was one of the largest bankruptcy cases in Canadian history. Thousands of Canadians lost their jobs, with no severance or termination pay. Nortel's pension plan had a \$2.5-billion shortfall. After eight years of negotiations, Nortel employees learned that their pension benefits would be cut by 30% to 45%.

Let us go back to the Sears case, which happened not long ago. Thousands of employees were laid off without severance or termination pay. However, we know that Sears executives paid themselves bonuses totalling several billion dollars, while their employees were thrown out on the street. Many of them had to find new jobs, which can be hard for people who worked in the same place for 25, 30 or 40 years. Some had no degrees. They found themselves in a tough spot, because it is extremely difficult to find a job at age 50 or 55 these days.

Private Members' Business

The NDP supports the idea of making it illegal to pay loyalty bonuses to executives who drove a company into bankruptcy. We also want companies to be required to keep their pension plans solvent and to limit unfunded liability. When companies are allowed to get out of these payments, they are essentially stealing workers' pensions, and this is unacceptable.

I do not find this legislation particularly surprising coming from the Conservatives. However, on this dark November 23, at a time when the government is trying to stop free negotiation for postal workers, this bill comes at a bad time.

We will certainly oppose this bill because we want to protect workers' pension plans for all generations, including workers in my generation and our children's generation, and we want to make sure that the risks are shared. In fact, the NDP does not want there to be any risk at all. We believe that all generations of workers who contribute should receive fair, defined benefits.

• (1410)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to speak to Bill C-405 at this stage. It was introduced by my colleague, the member for Durham, as distinguished an MP as ever there was, who had a brilliant career as a military officer. Before being elected by the people of Durham and serving as a minister of the crown in the Harper government, he was also a corporate litigator, so he knows this issue inside out and knows the concerns of businesses, suppliers and employees.

As a result, we believe Bill C-405 strikes a balance between all parties—the business, its employees and its suppliers—when a business, unfortunately, goes bankrupt.

Let me say that our thoughts are with all those who worked very hard for their company over the years and who were left in the lurch when their employer went belly up.

In my riding, there are people who worked for Sears and other companies. I cannot say his name since I was not able to obtain permission ahead of time, but I want to acknowledge an outstanding volunteer in my riding who is involved in charitable activities. He works a lot with the Montcalm Knights of Columbus in Loretteville. I want to acknowledge him because he has brought up the Sears situation often enough with me. I think of him when I rise in the House to talk about this subject.

As I said earlier, when it comes to pension funds, we need to find a fair balance between the workers—who are the first to be affected by a bankruptcy—and the other parties involved. This includes the company itself, which never wants to go bankrupt, unless it is run by scoundrels or boors, and the suppliers, who put their trust in the company and the owners, and who also end up high and dry when their partners unfortunately go bankrupt.

In our minds, Bill C-405 gives business owners the flexibility they need to avoid bankruptcy, and it gives employees the chance to come out on top. In addition, the bill would prevent partner companies, like the suppliers of the company affected, from having to pay the price for the mismanagement, tough breaks, or problems that led the company to bankruptcy.

This bill will give company managers more flexibility. However, the bill requires these managers to be more transparent about how they had been managing the company, especially with respect to the pension fund. This bill also provides for safeguards to prevent company administrators from playing around with the workers' pension fund.

Because it strikes that balance, we believe that this bill deserves to be appreciated and passed. It offers a solution to this very serious problem. Ultimately, we hope that all companies can avoid bankruptcy. However, it does happen that businesses go bankrupt and have no other choice but to make necessary but unfortunate decisions. Most importantly, this bill gives businesses the flexibility they need to take a step back before getting back into business in a more positive and constructive way.

Once a company goes bankrupt, it is hard to go back. As the perhaps somewhat overused saying goes, “you can't put the toothpaste back in the tube”. Once a company goes bankrupt, it has to live with the consequences, so it is important to prevent that from happening.

In general, what can be done to prevent a company from going bankrupt? First, it requires sound management. Second, the government needs to stop increasing the tax burden on businesses. This may not be the main topic of my speech, but it is important to remember that imposing a Liberal carbon tax will not do anything to help our businesses prosper.

• (1415)

Maintaining or adding more taxes, as the Liberals have been doing for the past three years, will not help either, nor will mounting frontal attacks, as the government did when it had the Minister of Finance table the proposed tax changes for small and medium-sized businesses on July 18, 2017, in which the government treated business owners as potential fraudsters who were abusing the system. As someone already said outside the House, not all small business owners behave the way the Prime Minister does in his business dealings, quite the contrary.

That is why we need to do everything we can to prevent companies from going bankrupt. The best way for the government to do that is by reducing red tape, by offering more flexibility for financial transactions, and most importantly, by not creating any new taxes as the government has done.

I am pleased to close by saying that, for us, this bill is a step in the right direction to solve the problem facing pensioners in bankruptcy proceedings. It is about having the option to prioritize the status of pensioners when companies are dealing with bankruptcy. As we know, pensioners currently rank in sixth place when a bankruptcy is being finalized. Perhaps we could increase the margin. I have spoken with unions, union members and bankruptcy trustees about this. They all say that, generally speaking, if that is done at the very beginning, it could create more problems, because it will hamper the company's access to financing and greater flexibility in an effort to possibly avoid the bankruptcy. No one wants that.

Private Members' Business

Giving employees super priority is more likely to create problems in the medium and long term than provide any short-term solutions and could have critical repercussions. That is why we think Bill C-405, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 and the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act with regard to pension plans, introduced by my colleague from Durham, deserves the support of all members of the House.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Durham has up to five minutes for his right of reply.

• (1420)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been much confusion today and much surprise, frankly, at the fact that my NDP colleagues did not even know the name, number, or the content of the bill. That should concern all pensioners. The speech given by the member for Pickering—Uxbridge shows that she did not know the bill either and spoke about unrelated terms.

I am seeking a compromise. It reminds me of the humourist Stephen Fry who said, "Compromise is stalling between two fools." Maybe I am one of those fools, but certainly when my other friends in the House today did not speak on the content of my bill, it shows that we cannot seem to get anything done.

I would welcome my friends from the NDP making comparisons with Bill C-384, which will not pass the House. If they want to talk about super-priority and a whole range of other issues related to defined benefit risks in insolvency, vote for this bill and bring forward witnesses at committee. This is a substantive measure to make progress.

I have never suggested this is the magic bullet that will solve all issues, but of the 19 million workers we have in Canada, only about 4.2 million still have a defined benefit pension plan. If a company is approaching insolvency and has an underfunded plan, those people are at risk. Our Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act allows for the preservation of firms. I have worked on this as a corporate lawyer on the preservation of Air Canada, and many members will be taking that airline home this weekend. It did not go bankrupt. All the retirees were not left in the lurch. The suppliers' jobs were preserved. Keeping a company a going concern is the goal of CCAA proceedings. We do not want to see liquidations. That is the intent. Make progress on three key areas and that is what Bill C-405 does.

First, it allows pension administrators to preserve and enhance the funds that are left. As my colleague from Calgary said quite eloquently, when there is insolvency and liquidations, there are usually bad economic times. That is the worst time possible to annuitize that remaining fund. If it is already underfunded and only 80% of the funds are available for retirees, the annuity they have to purchase at the worst time to preserve payments might take another 10% or so away from that. We need to preserve and enhance those funds. That is one thing the bill would do. Why would anyone oppose that?

If we want to argue about the threshold of how many pensioners have to vote for approval of the administrator to merge the fund with another plan or do something to preserve and enhance those assets, let us debate that at committee. Let us have experts say whether the threshold should be that one-third reject the plan or that one-third

approve it, but at least we need to have options to preserve and potentially give pensioners better returns in the future. Keep that fund going with enhanced pooling of resources and all the benefits of the plan. That is one thing.

The second thing the bill does is eliminate the abuse and unfairness of key employee retention plan payments. My friends from the NDP talked a lot about Nortel and other companies, with \$200 million being paid out unfairly in many people's view to senior executives. This would constrain that. This would curb that by changing our insolvency regime, by denying companies' ability to make unfair, large bonuses and payments while there is an underlying pension liability. It would also allow national reporting to the OSC at the provincial legislatures, because pensions are provincial and federal.

I would like to thank many people who have helped me in the process. There is Brian Rutherford and Mike Powell from GENMO. Even though they do not agree with the substance of some elements, this is what I brought forward. There are also Don Raymond, Keith Ambachtsheer, Rob Corkum, Paul Forestell, Andrea Bector at Stikeman Elliott, and Natasha Monkman, a pension lawyer from Curtis.

Pensioners are emailing all of us. Yesterday, I spoke with Vic Morden who worked on these issues for a union for many years. He thinks the bill is a step forward. Wayne Routley, Jennifer Bankay, Charlotte Wooler, Margaret Ann Dobbin, Thomas Airey and Alexander Fox all have concerns about the viability of their pensions in the future or their security in retirement.

Bill C-405 would make tangible steps and we should send it to committee. If the NDP want to look at super-priority or other issues, those can be considered at committee.

• (1425)

We are in a situation where the Liberals would rather have no progress than make substantive progress in the three areas I mentioned. I predict that a bill on super-priority will not pass in this Parliament. Therefore, why would we not at least provide the certainty for pensioners that this bill does?

I would like the other parties to put politics aside. Let us make steady progress, pass the bill at second reading, and let us talk more about the risks to pensioners at committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 28, immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF POSTAL SERVICE OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the motion, the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway had just shy of nine minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments, so we will go to that now.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to listen to a number of New Democrats stand to address this issue. One of the things that those who are following the debate should be very aware of is that we on the government side are still hopeful that an agreement will be achieved.

This is not something that makes us happy to have to do. However, in government, we have to make some difficult decisions at times. This is no different from the many, and I want to really underline this word “many”, NDP premiers and governments in Canada who have, on numerous occasions, brought in back-to-work legislation. When I listened to the member across the way, he seemed to be saying that if we bring in back-to-work legislation, we do not support unions. That is just not true. As a government we have been very sympathetic to unions, and our actions to date demonstrate very clearly that we are behind our workers in Canada.

Why does he believe that the NDP, on numerous occasions in different provinces, have brought in back-to-work legislation. Have they abandoned unions too?

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that yesterday the member for Spadina—Fort York answered a question by saying that his mother used to tell him that if he wanted to make a point he should join the NDP, and if he wanted to make a difference he should join the Liberals. I want to tell the hon. member what my mother told me. She said,

“Liberal or Tory, same old story.” She also said that the problem with the Conservatives is that they always do what they say they are never going to do, and the problem with the Liberals is that they never do what they say they are going to do.

Here we have a case of a government that likes to pretend it supports labour, but when the chips are down it absolutely does not. Right now, outside this building, our security staff are wearing green hats and ties that say “Respect” on them. Why? It is because they have been without a collective agreement for years now under the Liberal government, which refuses even to compel the people who guard us and provide safety and security for parliamentarians. They cannot even make sure that those people have decent working conditions or even a collective agreement to work under. Therefore, I will not be lectured by the Liberal government about supporting labour.

I will say this. It is the case that some provincial premiers of all stripes across the country have, at times, been compelled to bring in back-to-work legislation. The difference, if the member had listened to my speech, is that it is done when essential services are at stake, such as hospitals, police, firefighters, and air traffic controllers. Canadians accept that there have to be some parameters around the right to strike. That does not exist with Canada Post workers, so he should explain why he is ordering them back to work when they are not part of an essential service.

● (1430)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they cannot have it both ways.

My friend said there is no difference between the government's approach today and the Conservatives' approach in 2011. In 2011, the Conservative government imposed specific contractual terms. The Conservative government did not allow any input on the arbitrator, and the way the arbitration was set up was a winner-takes-all approach.

All of that is dealt with differently in this legislation. Specifically, I would ask the member what he thinks about subclause 11(3), which reads:

In rendering a decision or selecting a final offer under paragraph (1)(b), the mediator-arbitrator is to be guided by the need

- (a) to ensure that the health and safety of the employees is protected;
- (b) to ensure that the employees receive equal pay for work of equal value
- (c) to ensure the fair treatment of temporary or part-time employees...

What does the member think about that?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, there is indeed a big difference between the present government's approach to back-to-work legislation and that of the Conservatives in 2011. At least the Conservatives allowed the House to debate the back-to-work legislation.

Government Orders

For Canadians who are watching, the Liberal government has introduced back-to-work legislation with regard to a Crown corporation that affects workers in communities from coast to coast to coast, and has only allowed for a few hours of debate. We will be debating this until about two o'clock tomorrow morning. That is what the Liberals have allowed for debate. That is not democratic. That is the big difference between now and what happened the last time back-to-work legislation for Canada Post was tabled in the House.

I have not heard any Liberal members explain why they are so afraid of debate and so contemptuous of members of Parliament standing in the House to represent their constituents' views that they want to truncate debate, and do not want media attention or public attention on what they are doing, and thus are passing it in the dead of night. It is so that Canadians will not see how weak and contemptuous this Liberal government is of organized labour and the right to strike in this country.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously the member has deep of knowledge of labour law.

We were just out there a few hours ago, standing in solidarity with CUPW workers, who clearly explained the conditions that they have to work under, the health and safety risks they face, and the unequal pay, most of which is affecting women in the workplace.

Liberal MPs are wringing their hands in this place, hoping that a deal can still be reached. That is absolutely poppycock. We know a deal is not going to be reached, because Canada Post is holding the ace card. It knows its friends in the Liberal government will be there to back it up, as happens every time.

I want my hon. colleague to talk about the underlying subtext of today's debate, that all of the blame for this delay is being placed on the workers, when we know full well that Canada Post is not going to negotiate in good faith.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, there is a subtext.

One of the fundamental questions is what is the proper role for the federal government in being an honest broker, and in enforcing our charter of rights and Constitution around labour relations in this country? I say that the proper role is to be an honest broker, with integrity, and to ensure that the rules are fair.

What did the government do? Weeks ago, when Canada Post moved to cut off disability payments to its sick and injured workers, to put pressure on the most vulnerable workers in Canada, the government said nothing. The Liberal government and its Liberal MPs sat back and let Canada Post do that. They did not even criticize it.

Second, the Liberal government telegraphed several weeks ago that it would be prepared to introduce back-to-work legislation. Again, I worked for 16 years in the labour movement, and when management is on one side and it knows that it has a backstop, because back-to-work legislation is going to be introduced, it changes the bargaining dynamic. No longer is there an imperative for management to reach an agreement, because it knows that government has its back.

Finally, in the House today, have we heard any Liberal MP stand up and talk about the workers' perspective, the workers' point of view? Not a one of them. I hear them mouthing the propaganda of the employer, where the employer is saying that their post office outlets are stuffed with stuff that will not get delivered. The workers, who actually know, are saying that there is not that much backed up, and that stuff is being moved along because it is a rotating strike.

However, I hear the Liberals MPs—

● (1435)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, we are going to try to get one more question in.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has some decent arguments today. However, it is disingenuous to suggest there is not going to be enough time for debate, given the fact that today we will see just about every member from the NDP who wishes to speak on this having an opportunity to do so.

Does the member believe there are times when we need to force employees back to work? What sectors or industries does he think it would be appropriate to do that in?

Mr. Don Davies: First, Mr. Speaker, it is important to clarify what we are doing here today. We are here today debating a motion that the Liberal government has introduced that seeks to impose draconian and undemocratic restrictions on debate of back-to-work legislation that has yet to be introduced in the House. The legislation would limit debate on the bill, on the actual fundamentals of the back-to-work legislation, to a matter of mere hours. That is not democratic.

To the member's point about whether back-to-work legislation is ever justified, in my opinion, no. Our labour codes have essential services provisions in them, where it is open to any employer at any time to apply to the labour boards for a designation of essential services, which is done for police, firefighters and air traffic controllers, when obviously a full-blown strike would threaten the safety and security of the population. Therefore, we accept restrictions on those rights to strike, but that is done through a judicial process, not through a political one, and that is what the Liberals are doing here. They are showing their political stripes. They are sticking up for management and sticking it to unions. They do not support the right to strike in this country.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is no exaggeration to say I am profoundly distressed and sickened to have to stand in the House today to oppose the government's super motion and ultimately the legislation drafted with the sole purpose of forcing CUPW members back to work.

The government, in its arrogance, is ignoring the charter rights for workers to organize and to withdraw services when the employer refuses to bargain a collective agreement in good faith. Every person in this country who earns a living from employment should be aware and hopefully furious with the government's abuse of their human and constitutional rights. It is especially heinous in light of the fact that we have been down this road before in 2011.

Government Orders

In 2011, Stephen Harper was the prime minister of a majority government, and the NDP formed the official opposition. While it sickened me then as it does now, I was also never more proud to stand with Jack Layton and fight with every tool at our disposal against the back-to-work legislation imposed on CUPW to curtail its efforts and rights to bargain a fair and equitable collective agreement with Canada Post.

While there is a distinct echo of that shameful past in the air today, there are also two major differences between the proceedings in 2011 and the situation we find ourselves faced with today.

For the first part, the legislation imposed by the Harper Conservatives back then was subsequently deemed in violation of the union's charter rights. Yet, our sunny-ways Prime Minister has no qualms about following in Mr. Harper's footsteps to once again violate the union's and the workers' charter rights. It is disgusting. Of course, we all know what happened to Mr. Stephen Harper.

The other difference here is that while the Liberals have waited a little over five weeks to violate CUPW charter rights, the Conservatives took the opportunity to do so as soon as they possibly could. However, the Liberal motion, believe it or not, is even more restrictive than Stephen Harper's, in that it limits debate to the shortest possible time frame. We are expected to wrap up this farce before the end of the sitting day today. It is an abomination of democracy, and the Prime Minister does not even have the decency to be ashamed about that.

It is simply another broken promise thrown on the trash heap of abandoned election promises from 2015: electoral reform, treating veterans and their families with dignity and fairness, balanced budgets and moderate deficits, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I would like to know how purchasing a leaky, second-hand pipeline for \$4.5 billion works there. The fact is, our greenhouse gas emissions increased significantly in 2017. Let us not forget the promise to never use omnibus bills. The Liberals wanted to create an open and transparent government. Let us also remember restoring home mail delivery, and they crossed their hearts and hoped to die. All of this brings us back to Canada Post and its refusal to bargain a fair and equitable collective agreement with its CUPW union members.

If we leave the spin unexamined, we are supposed to believe that this is yet another case of greedy unions exploiting public funds to pad their executive coffers. Let us examine the facts. I am sure the Prime Minister would like to hear the facts.

Workplace injuries at Canada Post have increased by 43% over the last two years, largely as a result of postal transformation, which requires workers to walk longer routes while carrying heavier loads. Today, the disabling injury rate for a letter carrier is eight times the average of the rest of the federal sector, a sector that includes longshoremen, mining, road transport and railways. A request via Facebook from CUPW Mike Palecek for stories from injured workers yielded more than 450 responses in a matter of a couple of hours, and the stories are heartbreaking. We should be ashamed of a government that allows, and in fact seems quite prepared to condone, its Crown corporation's exploitation of workers in this way.

It is as if we are back in the dirty thirties. We hear stories of workers unable to put their children to bed because of forced overtime and being unable to return home until their routes are completed, walking in the dark in unsafe areas.

● (1440)

We hear stories of workers being told to wear a headlamp, as if that would solve everything. We hear stories of strained relationships because of the stress of the long hours endured by workers and about moms whose children think they have bad parents because those parents are unable to attend sports or school events or tuck their children in at night.

Think of this time of year, workers out late in the dark, navigating snowbanks and icy sidewalks. Workplace injuries are avoidable and preventable. It is unconscionable that the CUPW members are asked to endure this kind of risk just to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads, food, I might add, that workers are unable to share with their families and homes that they are unable to enjoy and find rest in because there are not enough hours in the day to walk the routes Canada Post expects them to walk.

We have heard stories over the course of the rotating strikes that began on October 22 of workers whose disability benefits and parental leave top-up have been discontinued by Canada Post, leaving workers anxious, stressed and at greater risk for mental health issues.

There is no other way to describe this other than mean-spiritedness on the part of Canada Post, especially in light of the fact that CUPW has been so conscientious about its job action so as to provide the least possible disruption of service to Canadians, while still making them aware of the issues that have forced them to take this action.

Please take note that there is more than money at stake here for CUPW members. Let us talk about that. Let us talk about the fact that Canada Post is entirely profitable. I quote from the 2017 annual report. They posted a 2017 before-tax profit of \$74 million, largely due to unprecedented growth in the parcel business.

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Most of parcels revenue growth of \$393 million was from domestic shipments, which speaks to the important role that Canada Post plays delivering for online shoppers and retailers across the country. In 2017, for the first time, Canada Post's segment of this profit exceeded \$2 billion in parcels revenue. That parcels revenue has grown annually by over \$900 million since 2011, the year the corporation pivoted to focus on e-commerce. By adapting to the evolving needs of Canadians, who use the postal service less for mail and more for e-commerce delivery, Canada Post became and remains Canada's number one parcel company. Interestingly or tragically, that record revenue came about because CUPW members were delivering mail and packages in a reliable and professional manner.

Let us also talk about CUPW's request for a 2.9% wage increase per year over the course of the collective agreement. Not unreasonable, especially when you consider that workers at Purolator, which is 90% owned by Canada Post, has an average wage of approximately \$5 per hour more than CUPW members for doing virtually the same work, and the Purolator employees received a wage increase of 3% in their last collective agreement.

To recap, as far as money is concerned, CUPW workers are only asking for parity with other Canada Post employees doing the same work. Speaking of parity, CUPW has only recently been successful in achieving a pay equity agreement that recognized its rural and suburban mail carriers, comprised predominantly of female workers, have been systematically discriminated against by being paid wages lower than their urban counterparts, represented largely by male workers. Let us not pretend that after decades of perpetuating this inequity that Canada Post suddenly had a change of heart and decided to pay its RSMCs fairly. No. They were forced into it in arbitration and they have yet to pay the arbitrated settlement. Not a cent has been paid. Pay equity is another reason CUPW is on strike. And all the while, Canada Post is profitable.

We do not have to stop here when speaking of profitability. CUPW understands full well the changing nature of the work environment as a result of digitization and the exploding e-commerce market. As progressive socialists, CUPW understands that they provide a vital public service that should be accessible and sustainable for all Canadians.

• (1445)

Simply put, CUPW understands how a democracy should work, something the Liberal government and the Conservative one that went before seem not to understand in the least. However, I digress.

Because CUPW understands it is tasked with providing a vital public service in a changing modern market, it has been proactive in making suggestions for ways in which Canada Post can diversify and expand services, using existing infrastructure, better serve Canadians and ensure profits that can be reinvested in the corporation.

The proposal, developed in partnership with organizations such as the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association, ACORN Canada, and Friends of Public Services, recognizes that we are at a crossroads. Our land, air and water are already feeling the effects of climate change. Economic inequality and precarious work are on the rise. Layoffs in fossil fuel extraction industries are leading to more economic uncertainty.

Canada can run entirely on renewable electricity by 2035 and transition to a 100% clean economy by 2050, if that is what we want to do. However, we have to start now.

Canada Post can drive this transition by providing vital public services, such as charging stations for electric vehicles at post offices; a renewable-energy postal fleet; door-to-door mail carriers checking in on seniors and people with mobility issues, keeping more people in their own homes and keeping them there longer; post offices as hubs for digital access and social innovation, connecting communities and climate-friendly businesses to customers; a consolidated last-mile delivery service that eases congestion in urban centres and reduces the environmental impact on our cities is entirely possible; last, but not least, postal banking that provides inclusive financial services, especially to those underserved by commercial banks, like in rural and many indigenous communities.

We have heard about postal banking in the House recently in the debate and subsequent defeat of my private member's motion, Motion No. 166, that called for a committee to study the best way of implementing a publicly delivered system of postal banking under Canada Post. There was and is no better time to make investments in the corporation, such as these proposed in "Delivering Community Power", which would ensure healthy profits continue into the future.

Pensions for postal workers must be fully supported and there remain outstanding pay equity issues with the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association that must be addressed. Greater profits and a secure source of revenue would enable the government to actually keep its campaign promises to restore home delivery to those who lost it under the previous Conservative government. Kept promises, now would that not be a switch?

Since the introduction of my private member's motion, we have also seen the release of the report titled, "It's Time for a Postal Bank for Everyone" by John Anderson, commissioned by CUPW. This report confirms what we already know to be true. Corporate banks have abandoned rural and urban Canada, leaving too many people without access to a bank or credit union. Fewer than 10% of indigenous communities have a bank or credit union branch. Without access to services, people in rural communities must travel hours to access their own money or rely on private business owners to provide cheque-cashing services at their discretion or at a high premium.

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In urban areas, payday lenders prey on people of low income who cannot afford the service fees charged by big banks. Access to one's own money is not a privilege; it is a right, a right that no Canadian should ever be denied.

We know from experience in other sectors that public services delivered publicly are more robust and economical. They provide better quality service than services delivered privately. Public service profits are returned to the corporation in order to enhance services and remunerate workers rather than lining the pockets of corporate board members and CEOs.

Despite widespread support from municipalities and individuals across the country, in urban and rural communities alike, from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the National Pensioners Federation and despite receiving thousands of postcards in support of reinstating postal banking in Canada from constituents, represented by 136 members of the House, Motion No. 166 was defeated, with the shortsighted vision and self-centeredness we have grown to expect from the government and the official opposition.

● (1450)

Postal banking, along with all the proposals included in "Delivering Community Power", serve to support Canada Post, make investments in the workforce and expand services so Canada Post remains profitable for years into the future. It is a document produced thoughtfully and with pride by CUPW and presented to the corporation as a proposal for partnership in the future. In fact, it is the best example of progressive social unionism I have seen in a very long time.

I am proud of the work CUPW has done in an effort to create a more inclusive, fair and equal Canada, with public services that are accessible, sustainable and affordable for all and with an eye to the crisis of climate change. Would the government and its members and members of the House were as concerned and creative about the issue as CUPW.

In addition to proposals included in "Delivering Community Power", the Canadian Postmasters and Assistants Association has been working on a proposal for rural transit delivered in whole or in partnership with private carriers in response to Greyhound's withdrawal of service in Canadian communities west of Sudbury, Ontario. Canada Post, with offices in rural and urban communities right across the country, has the infrastructure to deliver vital public services, such as these, in a manner that is affordable, sustainable, accessible and intelligent.

CPAA and CUPW have demonstrated principled and intelligent leadership in the proposals included in "Delivering Community Power". Canada Post Corporation would be wise to consider such a partnership seriously. It would help stranded Canadians and Canada Post. It would connect Canadians in regions and communities, and be a great boost to the economy.

Instead, it appears we are faced with a corporation and a government that does not understand that we all thrive when workers are able to function in a safe and healthy work environment.

Before postal transformation, postal workers arrived for work every day ready to deliver the mail and deliver it with pride. However, the increasing demand on them by Canada Post, excessive

demands on the bodies, family life, pocketbooks, time and mental health of CUPW workers has taken a toll, a terrible toll, all of it entirely preventable and avoidable.

With his permission, I would like to quote from Dru Oja Jay and his observations about this dispute and the legislation we are debating today. He says:

Every successful strike has to pass through a storm of negative media coverage and worse, and it's no different for Canada Post employees.

They're striking for their own health and safety (they are endlessly overworked and frequently injured) and for everyone's (they have a plan for transforming the postal service into an engine for economic and environmental transition). They're also bargaining for equal pay for rural mail carriers, who are predominantly women.

After stonewalling for months, Canada Post is playing its cards from a specially-stacked deck, putting lightly-edited offers on the table to tee up CBC headlines like:

"Union rejects Canada Post offer of 'cooling off' period with mediation amid strike"

"Canada Post strike 'just killing us,' says small business"

Those were quickly followed up by:

"Feds to legislate end to Canada Post strike if no resolution in coming days"

Which of course is the least subtle bat signal ever, indicating to Canada Post executives that they can go ahead and not bother to negotiate. Why try to reach an agreement, when the feds just promised to take away the workers' right to determine the conditions of their work?

When the propaganda gets this thick, when the "I love posties" Prime Minister becomes the "I love forced labour" prima inter pares: that's when support matters the most.

Your support, I mean. I hope everyone sets aside a little time to keep track of what our posties are up to, and what kind of support they are asking for. The time that people refer to when they say "when the time comes," is coming.

That time is now. I make no presumptions about our ability to do anything more than voice our profound disgust and sadness at this. The New Democrats are angry with the government forcing this undemocratic legislation through.

I will fight with every fibre of my being for democracy, fairness and the right of unions and workers to bargain fair collective agreements with their employers, unhindered by this kind of legislation, because it violates their charter rights.

● (1455)

In case there remains any doubt or any question, I, along with new Democrats, will not be supporting the bill. As horrible as it is, the Prime Minister has a majority and will no doubt exercise it with the abandon he has exercised since coming to power in 2015. Make no mistake, Canadians elected the government because they wanted to get rid of Stephen Harper. Sadly, they did not. He is alive and well in the current PMO.

I look forward to seeing the Prime Minister and his government reap what they have sown here today. CUPW, indeed all Canadians, deserve better.

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really interesting to listen to the member. The member and the member for Hamilton Centre sat in the Ontario legislature when the New Democrats were in government. On three separate occasions, within a few years of governance, they brought in back-to-work legislation.

The member across the way talks about fighting with every fibre of her being. She tries to give the impression that the New Democrats are the party that stands up for workers. They need to reflect on what their provincial counterparts, not only in Ontario but also British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, did on back-to-work legislation.

This government supports collective bargaining. We support our Canadian postal workers. That is the reason we have been as patient as we have in trying to ensure there is a negotiated agreement. Would the member across the way like to apologize to Canadians for giving a false impression?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, yes, I have something to say for this member. I never, and the Government of Ontario, under a New Democratic leadership never brought in back-to-work legislation. In fact, there was a three week transportation strike in Toronto, and night after night, day after day, the minister of labour sat in the legislature, trying to work out an agreement, trying desperately to ensure there was fairness. He refused to bring in back-to-work legislation. The collective in that house refused to give in to any demand for back-to-work legislation.

For the member to impugn my reputation and suggest that is a downright affront. It is not true. If there is an apology to be had, it is an apology to me from him. How dare he?

• (1500)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, who has done such great work on this file. I praise her for it.

I have heard many things from the other side on the issue of legislating workers back to work. The biggest issue is health and safety, and there is a huge impasse on that. The workers are crying out, asking their union for help in this collective bargaining. However, what the government is suggesting is that they get back to work now and their health and safety problems will be fixed later.

The government is saying that business profits are down. Does my colleague agree with me that what the government is suggesting is that business profits are worth more and are more important than protecting workers doing unsafe work?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I am calm now. It is absolutely essential that in any workplace there be respect for the people who do the work, as well as for their health and safety.

Since the post office workers were legislated back in 2011, the problem is that the working conditions they experience on a daily basis have deteriorated. They have been asked to carry more heavy parcels over longer routes. The result has been significant workplace injury. I have a huge document that shows some of the most horrific injuries.

The reality is that no one, absolutely no one, should be asked to go into a workplace and do work that is injurious to his or her health and to the family's well-being. However, that is exactly what Canada Post is doing. If we start to add in the fact that workers are constantly harassed by management at Canada Post, it makes it an extremely poisonous atmosphere.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was six years old in 1990, so I am not going to accuse anyone of anything. With respect to the current situation, there is a cost to the Canadian economy with respect to this strike. It is a matter of balancing interests.

Yes, constitutional rights are at stake if forcing workers back to work through legislation is done in an improper way. We know that it is not unconstitutional in every case, and we know this because the court has set out a pathway for doing this fairly. It is about ensuring that when an arbitrator is appointed, it is done in consultation with the union. It is about ensuring that no issue is taken off the table if it is a key issue and that we are not imposing terms. We are not doing so in this legislation.

The members have spoken about ensuring the health and safety of employees and ensuring that employees receive equal pay for work of equal value. If the members had read the legislation, they would know that those words are, in fact, guiding principles in the act.

With respect to Canada Post, is there ever a scenario in which this member would legislate workers back to work? If there is a cost to the Canadian economy for maybe a year, is that sufficient? Is there ever a point at which the cost is too much?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing the mantra of the cost to the economy. I say that it is a fabrication on the part of the government and Canada Post. We know that CUPW members who are keeping track of these so-called trailers of parcels are reporting that they do not exist. There is, of course, a delay, because this is a rotating strike, but there is no significant backup. It is nothing that cannot be addressed in two or three days.

The corporation has said to CUPW workers, "Let us have a cooling-off period. Go back to work, and we will deal with this on January 21". That is absolutely ludicrous. The corporation will pull the same stunt as was pulled in this chamber on workers who are part of our security service. They were told in the summer of 2017 to go back to work, and we would negotiate with them. That never happened.

In terms of mail delivery, CUPW has assured us that it will get back on track.

I would like to point out one last and very interesting thing. A notice was put out across the country in Canada Post sorting areas. It had to do with the government support cheques, such as the child tax credit, that were supposed to be delivered. The corporation told the mail carriers not to deliver any of them. They were ordered not to deliver any of them until November 22.

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The corporation created the crisis. It is creating and driving this scenario so that public opinion is against the workers. Public opinion should never go against workers, because members of the public are the workers.

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to my colleague for her speech.

I was here in 2011. The Liberals are telling us not to worry, that they will certainly raise the issues of pay equity, lack of security and the difficult and dangerous work that postal workers are doing.

In 2011, we rose in the House to condemn a two-tier pension system that pitted older workers against younger workers. We condemned the fact that it took a Supreme Court decision to make Canada Post respect pay equity.

Nothing has changed over the past seven and a half years since that debate. We are told that we need to trust the government and Canada Post. We have no reason to trust Canada Post.

Canada Post has been showing for years—not just this year or in recent weeks—that it is not able to negotiate in good faith. I would like my colleague to tell me how it is going to help us if the government tells Canada Post that things are working out for them?

The government is basically telling us that it does not matter if Canada Post has been negotiating in bad faith for a decade or even longer, because it is going to bail it out. That is what is at stake, and I would like her to elaborate on it.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the most salient thing here is the fact that for seven and a half years, the CUPW members of Canada Post have been working toward pay equity. They understand, absolutely, equal pay for work of equal value. They understand that women are as valuable as men and that it is important to make sure that women have financial security, yet Canada Post has been blatant in its disregard of that.

Even now, after the courts have deemed that Canada Post must bring about pay equity, we are still waiting. The decision was taken in September. It is now the end of November, and those workers still have not received any of that money.

Even worse, rural and suburban workers have been forced to do their entire routes. They are paid for six or seven and a half hours, but if it takes them 10 hours, so be it. They are not paid for the rest of the route. It is not fair. It is not right. Again, they are women trying to support families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sadly, I am not pleased to rise in the House today to once again debate this type of bill, this bludgeoning, this hammering of workers' fundamental rights.

I am rising because that is our job and that is our role. That is what the NDP is here for, why people have placed their trust in us. We are able to rise here and do the job of defending those who organize, who want improved working conditions, who want to defend their

health and safety. They know full well that we are the only party they can trust. When they see the Liberals emulating the Conservatives' strategy, people know very well who they can turn to. They know who will fight for them until the end, who will be there and who will defend the fundamental rights and working conditions of our constituents, our provinces, our towns and our regions.

That was a brief introduction because I want to bring everyone back to seven and a half years ago. In May 2011, for the first time in history, the NDP formed the official opposition. That was a great day for our party. I, along with a number of my colleagues here, was part of that election, that class, that orange wave. We were thrown into battle very quickly. The NDP had just won an historic victory by becoming the official opposition, but the Conservatives had just won a majority in the House.

That meant that, for us, as people on the left, as progressives, the season of great battles had just begun. This was a battle for public services, science, a respectable image of Canada on the world stage, the environment, the country's minorities, Statistics Canada. It was a battle on all fronts. We were there. We worked hard, with passion and devotion, and I think people remember that.

The first major battle we fought was on behalf of Canada Post workers. Members will recall that we were in a ridiculous situation where the government had imposed special back-to-work legislation when there was a lockout. A Crown corporation had stopped mail delivery, and it was the government that forced people back to work by imposing a collective agreement on 45,000 postal workers.

We did not let them get away with it. We showed them what the NDP and progressives are made of. We made an unprecedented move to slow down the passage of this special legislation and to give negotiations a chance to improve the well-being of postal workers.

I clearly recall that our leader back then, Jack Layton, gave a speech in the House that lasted more than an hour at the start of this long battle, which went on for four days. Jack Layton gave a great speech about workers and a more just and fair society where people can assert their rights to improve their living conditions. I invite those who have never read or heard this speech to look for it. It is on the Internet. It is extremely inspiring, especially coming from a man who was seriously ill at the time.

Then, for four days, NDP MPs talked non-stop; we were all greenhorns then, including my colleague from Beloeil—Chambly, who is smiling as he recalls it. We maintained our presence in the House, day and night, for four days, when the vast majority of the NDP was made up of new MPs. We had been elected about three weeks earlier, but the cause was important, and we wanted to get the message across and show exactly where we stood as progressives and New Democrats. We did not hesitate. We went for it as the NDP team.

● (1510)

We gave postal workers and their union a chance to return to the bargaining table to try to reach an agreement. In fact, negotiations were ongoing while we were doing our job as parliamentarians in the House.

I have a little anecdote I like to tell that refers to a French expression. Since we had started this battle on a Thursday and proceedings had continued without interruption or adjournment from Friday to Sunday at noon, the clerks' table indicated that it was still officially Thursday. The day had never changed over, and so, francophones and francophiles alike will understand how amused I was at the thought of having gotten through history's first ever week of four Thursdays.

However, that is not what was important. Rather, it was to defend fundamental principles. Today, seven and a half years later, it is back to the future. I feel like I took the mad scientist's car in *Back to the Future* and am seeing the exact same movie. If it is not *Back to the Future*, it is *Groundhog Day*. It is the same thing.

The Liberals are doing exactly the same thing Stephen Harper's Conservatives did. I find it staggering that they are capable of looking us, and the postal workers, straight in the eye today and telling us that they are not like the Conservatives and that it is fine this time around because the Liberals are doing it. However, we are not in the same situation at all. The situation is much less serious.

Now I want to talk about the reality on the ground and the working conditions of the 45,000 or 50,000 people who deliver mail and parcels all across the country. I want to talk about the working conditions of these people. They make an average of \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year. They provide excellent service, and they are not part of the privileged class. They are people with demanding jobs, who are definitely part of what we would consider the middle class. The words "middle class" should ring a bell for the Liberal government.

These people have been suffering for years because their collective agreement is inadequate and unsuitable. I am talking specifically about their very heavy work schedules. Their working conditions have changed, and they are being forced to work much longer hours, late into the evening. In Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and other neighbourhoods in Montreal, we have outside staircases. In the winter, it is dark after 5 p.m. Mail carriers have to climb those outside stairs, in the snow and ice, using a little headlight to try to see if the steps are safe or if there is too much ice and snow. That causes life-changing work accidents.

Here are some statistics that I find very illuminating: in the past two years alone, the number of work accidents reported by Canada Post employees has increased by 43%. Are they right to demand

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better? Yes, and we understand. It is normal for them to demand better. That is how we have organized our society, in order to improve our quality of life and make sure that we work in safe environments.

In 2017, 25% of Canada Post employees reported a workplace accident. That is one in four workers, which is a record. It is the most dangerous federally regulated sector in terms of worker health and safety. Is it not logical that these exasperated, injured, frustrated workers are resorting to pressure tactics? Of course it is. We would all do the same. We would not accept those working conditions.

I remember demonstrating with Canada Post workers in 2012 or 2013 and seeing former employees come to demonstrate with their former colleagues. I met one of them and asked how he was doing. He replied that he had changed jobs. When I asked why, he told me he had had enough. He said he was never home and never saw his wife and kids. His work-life balance was atrocious.

● (1515)

That mail carrier decided to become a taxi driver, because it was too hard for him to keep doing his job. It was too demanding for his personal and family life. That is the reality on the front lines.

I will now take a moment to talk about female rural mail carriers. They come under the protection of another union, but they are fighting alongside their colleagues who are members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. Seventy-five per cent of these women earn less than urban mail carriers. That is a serious problem. It is a problem of fairness and justice, but the Liberals are ignoring it once again. Worse still, these women are not even paid for the overtime they do. After a certain point in the day, if they have not delivered everything they have to deliver, they work for free. That is the reality.

I think those women are right to stand up, to use pressure tactics and to say that this is wrong, that this is not a respectful work environment and that they deserve better.

These workers are currently exercising a constitutional right. Also, they have decided to do so gradually. They are not on an indefinite general strike. These are rotating strikes that affect one municipality or a few municipalities for a day or two. Then the strike moves elsewhere in the country.

They did not decide to play hard ball. No, they decided to increase the pressure gradually, and it has not created any major disruptions at this time for our economy, for our SMEs or for the general public.

Let us be clear. Although we are being led to believe that there is a crisis, it is an artificial crisis, designed and manufactured out of whole cloth in an attempt to get legislation passed that would otherwise make no sense and have no purpose.

Plenty of people are receiving their letters and parcels. Online shoppers are receiving their orders.

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Does it sometimes take longer than before? Yes, it does.

Is this a national or economic crisis? It is neither. It is an excuse that has been used to ram a collective agreement that does not respect workers' rights down those workers' throats. That is the problem.

Anyone who knows anything about labour relations knows that the threat of special back-to-work legislation tips the balance at the negotiating table. That is what the Liberals have done. They have taken away workers' power to put pressure on the employer. As soon as the Liberal Party suggested that it might introduce special legislation, then management could just sit back and wait for the situation to deteriorate enough to require special legislation, leaving the union without any bargaining power.

After that, good luck improving health and safety, improving work schedules and getting pay equity. It is nice to see that included in the Liberal government's bill, but it will never happen.

The Liberals are living in an alternate universe if they think that Canada Post will suddenly give the workers everything they are asking for just because their bill says so. It has not done it in the past decade or two. It is not going to start now. That is not how things work.

In 2011-12, the Liberals were the second opposition party, which is what the NDP is now. The Liberals got themselves all worked up saying that the Conservative government's actions were totally unreasonable. Once again, they are doing exactly what the Conservatives did. Today they are showing their true colours. They are attacking a basic right, the right to free collective bargaining. I think that bears repeating, because the Liberals should be ashamed of what they are doing. They are attacking 45,000 people, they are attacking a public service, and they are attacking middle-class people and families. Those people have a constitutional right, upheld by the courts, to do what they are doing right now, and they are doing it in an extremely respectful and peaceful manner. Moreover, not only are their rotating pressure tactics minimally disruptive, but important cheques, such as old age pension, welfare and employment insurance benefits, are still being delivered on time.

• (1520)

Postal workers are so respectful of their fellow citizens in need that during the lockout in 2011, they volunteered their time to deliver those cheques. Those are the people we are talking about. They have guts, and their communities appreciate them. They are respectful, and the one thing they want is for Canada Post and the federal government to respect them. Right now, they feel betrayed by the Liberal government, which made them promises but is now stabbing them in the back. That is what is going to happen.

On the subject of the process, the most important thing is to talk about these people, their families, workers' rights and free collective bargaining. That is the issue. However, I cannot remain silent about the knife that the Liberal government has just plunged into our back with its motion, which goes further than ever before to limit our ability to act as parliamentarians. Even Stephen Harper did not dare to go so far in gagging members of this House. It is absolutely incredible.

This is an unjustified attack on a fundamental right. Discussion and debate have been limited to three hours. At third reading, opposition members will not even be allowed to ask questions, even though we have been elected to this place to represent our constituents. The Liberals have put us under a super gag order.

I am not complaining for myself or for us as parliamentarians; that is not the key issue. However, this demonstrates the Liberal government's lack of sensitivity on this issue.

In 2011, the Liberal member for Scarborough—Guildwood even said that we were confronted by a government that was taking hard right measures. In 2011, the back-to-work legislation for Canada Post employees was seen by the Liberal Party as a hard right measure. Today, the Liberals are doing the same thing, but since they are the ones doing it, it is fine. This must be progressive back-to-work legislation. This must be a progressive attack on workers. Since they are Liberals, it is easy, they just have to slap the word "progressive" on it to make it pass. No, this is absolutely unacceptable.

The NDP will speak out against this as forcefully as we can, because the right to free collective bargaining is vital in our society. Why? Like many of my colleagues, I firmly believe that it is because of the labour movement and free collective bargaining that we have people who earn \$50,000 a year and have a pension, insurance, sick leave and weekends. The middle class was created in large part by the labour movement. It is because people stood up and fought for their health and safety, their retirement and their work schedule that we have a more prosperous, fair and equitable society. The Liberals should know that.

The Liberal government should know that by attacking free collective bargaining, it is attacking the middle class. It is driving down working conditions and setting a bad example. The situation could deteriorate further because of what the Liberals are doing. Canada Post is an employer that sometimes makes decisions that are extremely harmful to the physical and mental health of its employees. Now, the Liberal government has just thrown all its weight behind Canada Post management, to the detriment of workers.

I will give an example that a member from Manitoba gave during a debate, which I found astounding. At the beginning of the rotating strikes and pressure tactics, Canada Post suspended the payment of short-term disability benefits and extended parental leave benefits to members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. This led to physical and psychological distress. Employees are being punished for exercising a right, for defending themselves, for standing up for themselves to improve their living conditions. These employees will come to see the NDP as their ally in the House. They cannot trust the Conservatives, and now they see that they cannot trust the Liberal government either.

Government Orders

• (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up with a question relating to a previous question and exchange that happened prior to his speech. It was in relation to something that happened in the early 1990s with the NDP government in Ontario. At that time, in the fall of 1993, there were three occasions when the NDP government of the day instituted back-to-work legislation for school boards in Lambton County, East Parry Sound and Windsor.

At that time, both the members for London—Fanshawe and Hamilton Centre were sitting as members of the provincial Parliament and as part of the NDP government of the time. Despite the fact that we may have heard differently, that is the reality of the situation.

Given the fact that some of the skeletons are coming out of the closet right now, would the member like to clear the air and let us know if he has ever been part of a government that has done something similar to what we are now learning happened with the NDP government in Ontario in the early 1990s, and in particular the members for London—Fanshawe and Hamilton Centre?

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, all I can say to my colleague is that making an approximation does not make something true or credible. In all honesty, I have never been part of a government that imposed return-to-work legislation against the will of unions and workers. I hope to have the opportunity to be in government after Jagmeet Singh becomes prime minister of Canada in the 2019 election.

In 1990, I was a student at the CEGEP in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. I was nowhere near these issues. That said, I find the Liberal members' tactics a bit dishonest. We are debating their bill that aims to force Canada Post employees back to work, and this is what they should be concerned about, especially since the bill could haunt them over the next 10 months.

I look forward to debating this matter in Montreal and across Quebec with Liberal Party candidates in 10 months.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his excellent speech and his unwavering commitment to workers' rights.

As his colleagues said earlier today, with special legislation being debated under a “super gag order”, as he called it, the Liberals are changing the meaning of “Black Friday”.

The situation we find ourselves in today is surreal. In my opinion, we are seeing an unprecedented conflict of interest. On the one hand, the state as legislator is introducing special legislation in favour of one party, to the detriment of the other's rights. The rights violated are those of the members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. The favoured party is the management of Canada Post, a public corporation—the state as employer. The state as legislator is tipping the scales in favour of the state as employer. The Bloc Québécois unequivocally condemns this unacceptable situation.

Could my colleague comment on the issue?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Joliette for his question and for all the years he has stood up for workers' rights. We have worked together on similar issues in the past.

My colleague is asking an excellent question. It is truly a black Friday. This is a sad day for the constitutional rights recognized by Canadian courts. It is also a day overshadowed by the Liberal government's broken promises.

Right now, the Liberal government is using legislative means to benefit one of its agencies, a Crown corporation currently in the process of negotiating with its employees. It acts as legislator and employer at the same time, which is extremely problematic. It sounds like a conflict of interest or, even worse, an abuse of power.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems pretty insistent that this is a violation of constitutional rights. Perhaps he can explain to me why this proposed legislation, Bill C-89, fails the minimal impairment test under Oakes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is not at all incompatible. The right to strike was recognized by the courts in Saskatchewan and British Columbia and by the Supreme Court. The back-to-work legislation passed in 2011 went through the same legislative process but was later challenged and found to be unconstitutional. The same thing may happen to this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my mother used to say that a Liberal is someone who sits on the fence with both ears on the ground. I am starting to see that manifest here today.

Back in 2011, Liberals opposed back-to-work legislation and here they are introducing it. The Liberal governments of Christy Clark and Gordon Campbell in British Columbia stripped teachers of their right to collectively bargain. They said, just like the Liberals here, that it was totally legal, until the Supreme Court of Canada, years later, said it was not legal. The Wynne government ordered college workers and professors back to work and, of course, we know what happened in Ontario as people passed judgment. Liberals pretend to be progressive at election time, but when they are in government, they act just like Conservatives. That is what they are doing here and workers know this.

How would it have been different if the government had instead told Canada Post that the government was not going to intervene on Canada Post's behalf, that Canada Post was going to have to sit at the table, negotiate a collective agreement with its workers and there would be no backstop by the government? What does the member think would have happened?

Government Orders

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway for his excellent question.

I think that an agreement would have been negotiated by the two parties, and that workers would have exercised their right to use pressure tactics and would have won some concessions, but not all, at the bargaining table.

However, we know how things work. The member knows more about labour relations and collective bargaining than I do. Without a third party, such as the government that just threw its weight behind the employer, there comes a time or a key moment when the parties reach an agreement that satisfies them both to some extent. The workers would have at least had the opportunity to improve their working conditions and to advance their health and safety rights, for example.

I think my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway was also right when he talked about invoking closure. There are moments that define us. We are either on one side of the fence or we are on the other. We cannot be on both sides at the same time.

The workers of this country know what side the NDP is on, and they have just understood what side the Liberal government is on.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's passionate speech. He has a real way with words.

The current situation involves two fairly powerful entities: the Canada Post Corporation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

The market is dominated by these two entities. It is not a market where there are thousands of mail carriers. We know that the union speaks for unionized workers and management speaks for Canada Post, but who is speaking for small business people?

I am talking about those that are so small that they cannot even be incorporated. They are registered and travel around in their little car, which they use to provide services and work in their field. Who speaks for small and medium-sized businesses and small business people if not the House of Commons? Members are elected to the House by Canadians, including workers from across the country.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I will provide a two-part response to my colleague's question.

First, the NDP cares about SMEs. The rotating strike is not currently preventing SMEs from getting their parcels or from doing business as usual. They are not currently in crisis.

With regard to the fact that those entities are strong and powerful, I think that is a good thing. I agree that we have a strong and powerful public service that is able to provide good service to everyone. However, on the question of parcel delivery, I have three answers: Purolator, UPS and FedEx.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, Friday, November 23, is Black Friday, an English term used in the retail sector to encourage people to do their shopping and buy gifts for the holidays. Many huge banners announce incredible deals. People are increasingly being encouraged to shop online and to have

their packages, goods and toys purchased for the holidays delivered to their homes by Canada Post, among others. It is a busy day for Canada Post workers.

Today, with the motion we have been debating since yesterday and the bill that will be passed by invoking closure, the Liberal government is giving a new meaning to the term Black Friday. Today is no sunny day, especially for our postal workers.

Today, the government is forcing the passage of a special act against Canada Post workers. It is using closure to force its passage. This is the same government that spends its time boasting about its progressive trade agreements that supposedly protect the right to collective bargaining.

The government turns around, introduces special legislation, sets aside the rules and takes away any bargaining power from workers. It is the undisputed expert in deceit. It says one thing while doing the exact opposite. This is true for the fight against climate change, for the fight against tax havens, for the defence of our farmers, for Quebec's demands, and this is again the case today with respect to workers' rights. However, we are not fooled by this deceit. The government is poised to deny postal workers' right to strike before they have even used it.

Make no mistake: the current rotating strikes are not a general strike and are only a pressure tactic before resorting to a general strike.

The right to strike is a right enshrined in labour law. This right has been recognized by the Supreme Court. In the case involving B.C. Health Services, the Supreme Court recognized the constitutional nature of the right to collective bargaining by stating that section 2(d) prevented the state from substantially interfering with a union's opportunity to participate in collective bargaining in order to have a say in defining working conditions.

In *Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan*, the Supreme Court even gave the right to strike constitutional benediction "because of its crucial role in a meaningful process of collective bargaining." Justice Abella stated, "The right to strike is not merely derivative of collective bargaining, it is an indispensable component of that right. It seems to me to be the time to give this conclusion constitutional benediction." She said that it is an indispensable component of collective bargaining. That is not insignificant. With its time-allocated special legislation, the government is flat out disregarding the whole collective bargaining process. This is why we are hearing comparisons to Black Friday.

According to Pierre Trudel, a law professor at the Université de Montréal, the right to strike is the "irreducible minimum". I want to quote from his reaction to the Supreme Court ruling:

The ability to engage in the collective withdrawal of services in the process of the negotiation of a collective agreement is therefore, and has historically been, the "irreducible minimum" of the freedom to associate in Canadian labour relations. The freedom of association guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms would have little effect if it did not protect employees' right to strike.

Government Orders

Canada has a court, a charter and a constitution that its government is not even able to obey. What contempt for the fundamental rights of our workers. What a terrible day today is for their rights.

Mr. Trudel also writes, “The Court added that the international human rights instruments to which Canada is a party also require the protection of the right to strike as part of a meaningful process of collective bargaining.”

It would seem that the federal government is quick to renege on its own international commitments when it is in its interest to do so. What is the value of federal commitments? This is how we can estimate their true value.

● (1540)

First, the highest court in the land recognizes the importance of the workers' right to strike. In addition, Canada is a party to the International Labour Organization conventions that also recognize the fundamental nature of this right. Second, the Liberal government is suppressing this right by a special act to be passed under a gag order at the same time as it declares itself to be on the side of the workers and defines itself as progressive. Clearly, a perfect match of words and deeds. Progressive, my foot.

In an article in the McGill Law Journal, legal scholars Renée-Claude Drouin and Gilles Trudeau consider the institutional and constitutional dimensions of special back-to-work legislation. They tell us that, since 1990, Ottawa has passed no fewer than 14 special back-to-work acts, if we include this one today. That is an average of one special act targeting our workers every two years. This the fourth one for postal workers. That means that those workers will see their working conditions imposed on them one out of every two times, or half the time. What contempt on the part of the government.

In Ottawa, special legislation that takes away workers' rights has become the norm rather than the exception. Drouin and Trudeau, who both teach law at the Université de Montréal, wrote that “this situation is pernicious because it essentially denies certain categories of workers the right to strike and can also turn what should be an exceptional situation into a permanent solution”. This is what we are seeing today.

We all know that the balance of power between workers and management depends on the right to take this measure of last resort. When the balance of power is sound, each party makes concessions and together they agree to negotiated working conditions. Strikes and lockouts are lose-lose situations, and when the pressure is on, the balance of power forces both parties to come to the table, negotiate and make a deal that involves compromise on both sides. The threat of special legislation upsets the balance of power and sends management the message that it no longer needs to negotiate in good faith. That ruins the union-management negotiation process. That is what we are seeing today.

Since management knew that the government was going to do this, why would it bother negotiating seriously and doing the thing where both sides relax certain conditions in order to reach a compromise? Why would it do that, knowing the government was going to play the card that would give it a leg up? Of course, rotating strikes and a possible general strike right before the holidays have a

serious impact on economic activity, especially on orders placed online at Amazon, eBay, Walmart and Best Buy. No one is denying that. Economic impact can never be an argument for infringing on the right to strike or declaring something an essential service and taking away the right to strike.

On that topic, the Committee on Freedom of Association, the wing of the International Labour Organization that interprets the conventions pertaining to freedoms, has stated:

By linking restrictions on strike action to interference with trade and commerce, a broad range of legitimate strike action could be impeded. While the economic impact of industrial action and its effect on trade and commerce may be regrettable, such consequences in and of themselves do not render a service “essential”, and thus the right to strike should be maintained.

Canada signed that, but it is not adhering to it. The language is hard to understand when read aloud. It is rather technical legal language, but the message is clear. Even though strikes have an economic impact, that right must be maintained. That is an international convention.

Passing back-to-work legislation is bad enough, but this is about passing back-to-work legislation before a strike has even been declared. Let me reiterate that postal workers are not on strike yet. The rotating strikes are being used as a pressure tactic before a general strike is declared, just like any other pressure tactic. Taking a measure like this at this stage of the negotiations is simply regressive and shows contempt for the workers and their rights. I am absolutely disgusted by this attitude.

● (1545)

This is the attitude of a government that considers itself easygoing and progressive. Time after time, we have heard the minister say that it is 2018, or 2017, or 2016, implying that it is time to be easygoing and progressive. Yeah, right. It is certainly not 2018 when it comes to workers' fundamental rights. It feels more like 100 years ago.

Legal experts Drouin and Trudeau also refer to the Supreme Court ruling in *R.W.D.S.U., Local 558 v. Pepsi-Cola Canada Beverages (West) Ltd.* to point out that our society has chosen to accept the negative economic consequences of labour disputes in order to maintain social cohesion. Yes, there are negative economic consequences, but there is a more important objective, and that is to maintain social cohesion. We do not want to go back to the way labour disputes were handled 100 or 200 years ago. Everyone would lose.

Let me quote the Supreme Court:

Labour disputes may touch important sectors of the economy, affecting towns, regions, and sometimes the entire country. The cost to the parties and the public may be significant. Nevertheless, our society has come to see it as justified by the higher goal of achieving resolution of employer-employee disputes and the maintenance of economic and social peace. The legally limited use of economic pressure and the infliction of economic harm in a labour dispute has come to be accepted as a legitimate price to pay to encourage the parties to resolve their differences in a way that both can live with.

Government Orders

That is the opposite of what this government is adopting under a gag order today. Today, this government is choosing to sacrifice the higher goal of economic and social peace in favour of economic gains before Christmas for the delivery of Amazon, eBay, Walmart and Best Buy packages. Regardless of what the court says, people still want their stockings stuffed, and for that, the government is stripping away the rights of workers. Well done, Liberals. That is what statesmanship is all about.

Since this is a government matter and since Canada Post is a Crown corporation, I would point out that we have a direct conflict of interest here. Today, the state as legislator is trampling on workers' rights to tip the scales in favour of the state as employer. This is simply unacceptable. What a conflict of interest.

Canada Post is profitable. In 2017, the Canada Post Group of Companies recorded profits of \$144 million. That is 80% more than the previous year. The Canada Post Group of Companies includes Canada Post, Purolator, the SCI Group and Innovapost. Canada Post alone recorded pre-tax profits of \$74 million. It is not going bankrupt.

In this context, it is perfectly legitimate for Canada Post employees to want to catch up and improve their working conditions. I would like to point out that, over the past 30 years, half the time, working conditions have been imposed rather than negotiated. Today's bill deprives workers of their right to negotiate in four collective agreements.

In our opinion, their demand for improved working conditions is perfectly legitimate. They are asking for job security in a context in which one-third of workers hold part-time or temporary positions. They should be given permanent positions. They are asking for the elimination of mandatory overtime and that something be done about the work overload. Management has only to hire more people to meet the increased demand for package delivery. The number of packages is growing and, instead of hiring more employees, Canada Post is imposing mandatory overtime. That is ridiculous.

They are also asking for better health and safety conditions. The number of work accidents has increased by 43% in the past two years and is directly related to the increase in the number of packages delivered.

• (1550)

The union points out that, today, the rate of disabling injuries among letter carriers is 5.4 times higher than in other sectors under federal jurisdiction. It is high time to correct the situation. It seems to me that a freely negotiated collective agreement would do just that, but no; the state as legislator is tipping the scales in favour of the state as employer.

They are also asking for equal working conditions for letter carriers in rural or suburban areas and those in urban areas. This is another important issue, which is related to pay equity. Female letter carriers account for two thirds of the first group, but they earn about 25% less than letter carriers in urban areas, 70% of whom are men. That is another good example of the type of pay equity promoted by our great progressive government. It is nice to see them practising what they preach. I am ashamed for the Liberals.

The Bloc Québécois supports postal workers in their demands. The Bloc québécois supports their basic right to the free negotiation of their working conditions. Here, we have always been, and will always be, on the side of workers. We do not merely try to get their votes and then betray them, like the Liberals do.

The Bloc québécois is against the adoption of this special law that eliminates workers' right to a negotiated agreement under gag order before they have even started their legal strike. Labour laws are the legal framework in which the different parties can legally and legitimately exert pressure. Failure to respect workers' rights violates a fundamental institution that ensures social and economic peace. That is what is at issue today.

The government's decision to enact the law under a gag order in order to improve its position in the relationship of power once again undermines the very foundations of our society. It is a situation that we wholeheartedly deplore. What a way to do business, and what disdain for Canadians. I am ashamed to be in the House today and to see a government act this way.

Black Friday will no longer conjure up images of savings in big box stores and toys in the mail; it will be a day of shame for this government that violates workers' basic rights.

Shame on them.

• (1555)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are hearing that this bill will necessarily improve the employer's position, but, unless I am mistaken, it seeks to appoint a mediator and an arbitrator. Normally, mediators and arbitrators seek to find a fair solution for all parties.

Why, then, does my colleague from Joliette think that the bill will benefit the employer to the detriment of the union?

I would also like to comment on a point raised by the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. It is true that some mail service is maintained, but not so much in the north.

Should we throw the north under the bus so that the strike can continue?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and comments.

As I said in my speech, we recognize that strikes and other pressure tactics such as the current rotating strike have a negative economic impact.

The Supreme Court of Canada and the International Labour Organization recognize that there are negative impacts, but that is the price we pay to ensure the social and economic peace guaranteed by free negotiation between parties with a view to reaching an agreement on working conditions.

Government Orders

What the government is doing today is depriving workers of their right to strike, which is a means by which they can improve their position in the relationship of power. Working conditions freely negotiated by the parties stem from this relationship of power. By eliminating this relationship of power and asking an arbitrator to rule on the matter, we are upsetting the balance that would have been achieved had there been free negotiation. That is what we are talking about.

The Supreme Court of Canada and the International Labour Organization recognize the right to strike as a basic right associated with bargaining. When working conditions are not freely negotiated, the work climate degenerates.

We condemn this situation and today's legislation and gag order.

•(1600)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Joliette spoke a bit about the history of federal back-to-work legislation. One of the problems with the bill before the House today is that it will set a precedent and that everyone in the sector expects the workers to be forced back to work. In this context, it is almost impossible to hold real negotiations.

I would like the hon. member for Joliette to tell us more about the dangerous precedent this bill would set.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Regina—Lewvan for his remarks.

I am in complete agreement with him. This is a precedent-setting day, indeed. Special back-to-work legislation that deprives postal workers of their right to strike even before they call a general strike is quite the precedent. That being said, it is not the first time that special legislation will prevent workers from striking, but the fact that it will be used even before a strike is called shows the government's bad faith.

As legal experts Drouin and Trudeau pointed out, today's bill is the 14th piece of special back-to-work legislation in 28 years, for an average of one act every two years. That is appalling. What respect does the government have for workers and for their right to unionize and negotiate freely? In my opinion, none at all. It would rather protect the economy and deem it more important than Canadians' basic rights. These short-term gains will have a terrible impact on our society in the long run.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for his support for workers.

I would like to come back to the exchange he just had with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

My colleague has just identified several elements related to the right to strike. A pressure tactic that does not exert pressure is useless. Postal workers are being told to wait under January or February. I do not have the figures in front of me, but I think that that is when there will be a significant decrease in the number of packages to be delivered. Everyone will be in debt up to their ears because of Holiday spending. It is like asking teachers to strike during the summer.

It is also reminiscent of a labour dispute going on in Quebec. Employees of the Société des alcools du Québec, the SAQ, decided to strike on a weekend. If pressure tactics do not demonstrate the value of workers, it becomes difficult to negotiate and prove that they have value. That is why these strikes were called.

I raised that point in 2011. There is also an impact on other sectors, because any cold water poured on the bargaining process between Canada Post and the CUPW also affects other federal and provincial sectors. An employer only has to wait for the government to get fed up and for employers and the companies in question to exert pressure.

I would ask my colleague to comment on this fact. We are no longer talking just about postal workers. We are with them 110%, and we will do everything we can to fight for them, but we are also talking about every other worker whose rights are being taken away by legislation like this one and by this type of motion, of course.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Beloil—Chambly for his remarks. I am in perfect agreement with his point.

Today, it is not only workers at Canada Post who will see their working conditions set back. The entire labour movement will be affected. They have just been deprived of the right to freely negotiate their working conditions. This will affect the entire labour force. We are entirely opposed to this situation.

As legal experts Drouin and Trudeau point out, what happens is that, when you enact this many pieces of special legislation, for example against the right to strike and against workers' right to freely negotiate their working conditions, special legislation ends up being trivialized.

As we can see, the two parties who have historically held power in the House are making this kind of thing commonplace.

They are eliminating rights and they do not care because buying things is more important, and they would not want to get them in the mail late. That is what we are talking about here.

They are eliminating basic rights and trivializing the situation because that is what enacting 14 pieces of special legislation in 28 years does. Trivializing the act of eliminating workers' right to freely negotiate their working conditions is a dangerous precedent. It will affect not only postal workers but every worker in Canada.

Do we want to guarantee social and economic peace? That is what a legal framework for negotiating working conditions and collective agreements is all about. Do we want to maintain social peace? We have adopted rules and we need to follow them. If we eliminate the rules during Canada Post's most profitable quarter and say that we are doing it in the interest of the economy, that is short-term vision that jeopardizes social stability over the long term.

That is what we are talking about today. That is why we stand firmly on the side of workers and condemn this situation and this special legislation. It is pretty devious of the government and the Liberal Party to claim to be progressive and on the side of workers and then not hesitate to deprive them of their rights.

They say they are progressive.

Government Orders

Some hon. members: My foot.

* * *

● (1605)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the deferred recorded division on the amendment standing in the name of the member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte to the motion for third reading of Bill C-81, an Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada, currently scheduled on Monday, November 26, 2018, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, be further deferred until Tuesday, November 27, 2018, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders and that, immediately after that recorded division, the question on the motion for third reading of the said Bill be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and taken up immediately.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

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RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF POSTAL SERVICES OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my distinguished colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

I am very sad to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 25, which we are currently debating. This motion sits in the broader context of back-to-work legislation for Canada Post employees that will be introduced and debated a little later today, from what the government is telling us. That is why Motion No. 25 was moved and is being debated today.

It is sad because I honestly never expected this. I do not want to spend too much time repeating what they said, but some of my colleagues who were here in 2011 remember the Harper Conservatives and their special back-to-work legislation. Our NDP colleagues criticized it profusely and passionately, but so did our Liberal colleagues, who were on this side of the House at the time. I remember very well their position in that debate, and so I am very surprised and sad today. I honestly never expected the Liberals to do the same thing.

Back in 2011, I would not have thought it possible that the Liberals, who were in this corner at the time and were standing up for workers, would do exactly the same thing as the Conservatives

seven and a half years later. I would never have believed that could happen, but the Liberals have shown us their true colours, and reality is staring us in the face. We now see that they too are comfortable tabling back-to-work legislation that infringes on a fundamental right in Canada, a right that is protected and recognized by our courts, a constitutional right: the right to strike.

Throughout our history, there have been some incredible battles to claim the right to strike, the right to protest by not reporting for work in order to exert pressure on the employer during negotiations. Workers also have a constitutional right to freely negotiate their working conditions with the employer without interference from a third party.

That is the core of today's debate, even though we are spending a little time talking about the process. Today, we are being hit with a motion that will fast-track the bill through all the stages so it can be passed in a few hours. As we know, bills go through many stages in the House. It normally takes weeks, if not months, before they are passed and receive royal assent. Today, we are being told that we will study and pass a bill at first reading, at second reading, at report stage and at third reading, and then send it to the Senate, all in a few hours.

Committees are often the best place to get more information and fulfill our duties as members of Parliament. This is where we can call in experts to talk about the clauses of the bill, share their opinions, and contribute to the parliamentary debate. However, today, for such an important bill, the government wants to speed through all these steps in a few hours, between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m. What a disgrace for our democracy.

I speak for all parliamentarians when I say that this government's cabinet is asking us to pass a very important bill in just a few hours without allowing us to call any witnesses or experts to give their opinions on the bill. Some Liberal members were even asking questions about whether this bill is constitutional. Why not take the time to study it?

That is what I have to say about the process. It is important to talk about it, but we must focus on the workers who will be affected by this bill, which will be rammed through a little later today.

This bill also affects the right to strike. We know that striking has consequences. Government members remind us every time they speak, but we know it. Fortunately, the union is being respectful. It could have organized an even bigger strike that would have been even more harmful to the employer, since that is its right, but it chose not to.

● (1610)

It is a strike that I think shows respect for Canadians and for society and shows a certain awareness on the part of Canada Post employees. During the lockout in 2011, Canada Post employees even agreed to deliver important cheques to many Canadians in Sherbrooke and elsewhere in Canada, citizens whose daily survival, their bread and butter, depends on getting this federal or provincial government assistance. They agreed to do it, so they are aware of the impact it can have and the value of their work. Their job is to deliver letters, cheques and parcels, which are even more numerous these days, in 2018.

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Unfortunately, the government will not even recognize that the union has shown openness and respect for Canadian society by opting for a rotating strike, which affects certain regions at a time. It has affected Sherbrooke, I must say, but there was no general panic in Sherbrooke. No one shouted from the rooftops that they were not receiving their parcels or letters. There is no general panic in Canada right now because of the Canada Post strike. The only people who see it as a panic or a disaster are the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. They see a crisis where there is none, a crisis manufactured by them, not by Canada Post. The crisis does not exist, thanks to the respect shown by the union.

Let us ask ourselves one question. If the bill is passed later today, and the right to strike is taken away from the union and the postal workers, what do they have left to negotiate with their employer? What other leverage will this union have to sit down and demand compromises?

Yes, both sides have to compromise. That is what negotiation means. If the government tells the union that it no longer has the right to strike, what other recourse does it have? Workers will no longer have the right to protest against the employer and form picket lines around their workplaces. They will no longer have the right to show the employer that they are important and that the employer is nothing without them. Without workers, the employer is absolutely nothing.

That is why there are economic impacts. That is why strikes are important. Strikes force employers to acknowledge that workers make a vital contribution to the business and to the bottom line. Without workers, Canada Post cannot make a profit at year end. Office-bound managers who have never set foot on a sidewalk to deliver the mail are certainly not going to be doing the work. That is the point of the right to strike.

The government is ready to sacrifice that power, that vital leverage in the negotiation process. It is ready to sacrifice the only tool available to Canada Post employees, the only avenue they have to make their employer listen to them. As a result, the members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers will end up with the same working conditions they have had for the past 10 or 20 years, working conditions they want the employer to acknowledge and improve.

There has been a staggering number of injuries on the job at Canada Post. There are issues of fairness between urban and rural workers, which are also leading to issues of gender inequality. The fact that the government is taking away the right to strike, and therefore the right to negotiate, will in reality only perpetuate the problems at Canada Post that the employees are trying to get the employer to recognize. The workers will no longer be able to make their case to their employer, because it is not in the employer's interest to sit down and negotiate. Once the law is passed, why would Canada Post managers negotiate? If the union asks them to improve working conditions, why would the employer agree? It can just say no. The employer will keep saying no to all union demands because the employees will no longer have any leverage to make their case. That is what the Liberals are taking away from them.

Unfortunately, this is what it took for the federal Liberals to show their true colours.

• (1615)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, some people seem to be forgetting that the bill imposes a mediator-arbitrator. Does my colleague believe that this mediator-arbitrator will not be impartial? Does he believe that there is a conspiracy against the union? Does he believe that this mediator will have a hidden agenda and favour the employer?

This does not prevent the parties from negotiating. When an arbitrator is appointed, a party that does not show good faith runs the risk of receiving a decision that is not in their favour. It is in the interest of both parties to show good faith in order to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I do not know what universe my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis is living in. I imagine he lives in a world where everything is sunshine and roses.

In the real world, the employer has no interest in sitting down and negotiating. The employer was just handed incredible bargaining power on a silver platter. It has no interest in negotiating since there is no longer a balance of power. There will be only one mediator-arbitrator. The employer can simply ignore the mediator and the negotiations.

What will change if the employer keeps saying no to all the demands? The government will still be here to protect it and say that the parties are unable to come to an agreement. Obviously, the government will blame the employees, claiming that they are unable to compromise, when it is the employer that is acting in bad faith. There is nothing stopping the employer from continuing to act in bad faith, since the government will always be there to protect it and to trample on the workers' rights.

• (1620)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we continue to hear the same thing from the NDP today, basically that we should never put ourselves in a situation where we force people to go back to work, as is being proposed today.

At what point is it acceptable? Where is the threshold according to the New Democrats? They say it has only been about a month since the rotating strikes started. Can the member give us some insight with respect to at what point it becomes sufficient to do it? If there is no maximum, if nothing ever happens and people do not return back to a harmonious work environment, do we just live with this forever?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, there is an important distinction to be made between forcing workers back to work and a government that sees when Canadians are in danger. A few of my colleagues have made that distinction.

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When we talk about essential services, we mean police and firefighters. Everyone agrees that those are essential services, because their absence puts Canadians at risk. In this case, we are talking about the economic impact. Of course this strike is having an impact; no one is denying that. However, the only means that employees have to express their point of view and demonstrate their own value to a company is to go on strike to show the company that it is nothing without its employees. No more employees means no more profits. Without its employees, a business falls apart.

Unfortunately, the government wants to take away the only means that workers have to demonstrate their value to the company.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his speech.

In his view, by attacking workers, what message is this Liberal government sending to young people who want to enter the labour market?

Labour unions fought for years to get better maternity leave and EI benefits. They fought so that children could go to school rather than work. They improved working conditions so that everyone could have a better standard of living. When the Liberals trample on the right to negotiate working conditions, they are destroying the improved working conditions created for the entire community.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Unfortunately, yes, the government is sending mixed messages. The Liberals say they care about the middle class, but Canada Post workers are part of the middle class, and this is a direct attack on them.

The Liberals are launching a direct attack on 45,000 middle-class workers. We are already seeing a race to the bottom. Employees' working conditions are being driven down because the government is caving in to large corporations, to corporate Canada. It is caving in to pressure from companies like Amazon and eBay. They are being told they are right, that employees make too much money and that cuts are needed because profits are too low.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am truly appalled to have to speak to a motion and special legislation forcing Canada Post employees back to work. I was here when the same thing happened in 2011. At the time, I had only been a member of Parliament for about two months, and I thought it was a terrible thing to do.

I was very upset with the Conservatives, but I have to say that even though we could not stop debating the motion they presented once we started, at least they did not limit the time for debate. I was therefore able to speak at each stage of the special legislation.

Now, the Liberals are doing something that I did not even think was possible. They have moved a motion to limit debate on the special legislation that would force Canada Post employees back to work. That means there will be only two hours of debate at second reading. Then, the House will resolve into a committee of the whole. Finally, only 30 minutes will be granted for debate at third reading.

That is absolutely pathetic and ridiculous. What is more, it is a serious attack on democracy. To top it all off, we will not even be able to ask those who give speeches at third reading any questions.

In concrete terms, this means that about two opposition MPs will be able to speak to the bill forcing employees of a Crown corporation back to work. This is a serious attack on workers' rights. I wish I could say that they are simply copying what the Conservatives did, but it is worse than that. What they are doing is even worse than what the Conservatives did, which I did not think was possible. At least when the Conservatives introduced their special legislation, they said they knew they would have to work, but that was the life of an MP.

However, the Liberals are too lazy. They think two hours is enough. They could not care less, because the rights of workers are not important to them. They think they can solve all this in two hours.

It is also an attack on women. One of the union's key demands is that rural mail carriers receive wages equivalent to those of urban mail carriers. Incidentally, 75% of rural mail carriers are women.

The government is attacking those women directly by imposing special legislation, preventing them from going on strike and preventing them from fighting for better working conditions.

There is another major impact on women that is caused by the current working conditions at Canada Post. Since they finish their work day at 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. because the routes are too long and they have to finish their deliveries, what are they supposed to do about day care?

Most day cares are almost ready to kick children out if they are still there five minutes after closing time. How can someone manage a family if they never know when they will finish work or when they will be able to pick up their kids? That is why many women simply have to give up their jobs at Canada Post, because it is impossible to manage if they have children, especially if they do not have a partner.

When I talk about the working conditions of rural workers, a large part of the vagaries of rural life and the working conditions are not directly related to the mail carriers. Mail carriers cannot control snow removal in rural areas. I can say that thanks to all the cuts to the transfers to municipalities, more and more municipalities are having difficulty clearing snow on rural roads.

When a mail carrier has to start delivering mail at 8 a.m., through snow that comes up to their ears, driving along a three-foot-wide track in the middle of the road, of course it takes longer for them to get around and deliver the mail.

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This is in addition to the fact that many people may not have had time to clear their front walkways. Female letter carriers have to brave the snow and the road conditions. This creates total uncertainty as to when they will finish work. How can they manage a family life when they simply have no idea when they will finish work?

To add insult to injury, after a certain number of hours of work, mail carriers work for free. They are not paid for overtime. That shows precious little respect for the working conditions of women in rural areas.

The right to strike is another key factor. It is important to understand that the right to strike is protected by the Constitution and by many court decisions.

●(1625)

Some classes of workers do not have the right to strike. They are governed by essential services legislation. Generally that means police officers, firefighters, or nurses. Their absence from work has a direct impact on public safety. Obviously, safety is at risk if there are no police officers patrolling the streets. If someone shows up at an emergency room and there are no nurses on duty, then that is not good.

Although postal workers provide a very important service to the public, it is not considered an essential service. They have the right to strike. That right is protected under the Constitution.

When the government announced two weeks ago that it was introducing back-to-work legislation, the balance of power was lost. Of course, strikes have repercussions, but that is what it takes to maintain the balance of power. It is very hard to negotiate without the right to strike.

For example, the government is failing the House of Commons security personnel, who do not have the right to strike. They have been wearing their green hats for three years now because that is all they can do, is change the colour of their uniform since they have been denied the right to strike. Their work falls under the category of essential services. If the House of Commons security officers decided not to come to work, there would be serious concerns. For three years the government has been failing them and doing nothing to speed up negotiations.

Without the right to strike it is very hard to negotiate and improve one's working conditions. I experienced that as a nurse. When the only way to pressure the employer is to go to work in pyjamas, it is pretty hard.

The workers' right to strike is protected. Nevertheless, these workers decided to hold a rotating strike because they care about the people they serve. They said that they would not hold a strike that affects the entire population all at once. There are cheques to deliver. They want to strike but they do not want to have a major impact on people. Since the start of the rotating strikes on October 22, there was no mail delivery in Abitibi—Témiscamingue on just one day, November 6. There were delays only on one day out of the entire month. Personally, I think I can live without postal service for one day a month in order to recognize the right of these workers to improve their working conditions. It is just one day a month per location.

Do we understand what the government is doing? It is imposing special back-to-work legislation. It is using the biggest hammer possible. It is mobilizing all of Parliament to force these people to go back to work even though the strike affects mail delivery only one day a month in a given region.

In real life, it can be a little complicated to get presents by mail in time for Christmas, especially when you live in the country. You do not order something just two days in advance if you want to get it by mail. As Christmas is still one month away, everyone can get their gifts in time if they order what they want in the next few days. There is no need for special legislation. People just have to get organized a little in advance.

Postal workers have said that the cheques will be delivered. All government cheques will be delivered. The less fortunate will not be impacted.

The government is totally ignoring what is really going on on the ground. It says there has to be special legislation. It is forcing that special legislation down MPs' throats by preventing them from debating it and moving the most restrictive motion I have ever seen in my entire career as a member of Parliament. This motion, the most restrictive one I have ever seen in my career as an MP, was moved not by the Conservatives, but by the Liberals.

Despite their claims of being open and working to ensure respect for democracy, the Liberals have moved the most restrictive motion to limit debate I have ever seen. They have also scrapped electoral reform and many other key measures. They are laughing in our faces. They said there would be transparency and democracy, but they are doing the exact opposite. They are failing workers, and I do not think they should ever be forgiven for that.

●(1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a double standard, and let me point out a couple of very obvious things. The member said that this is the most restrictive motion. We have seen the NDP members stand in their place and ask for unanimous support on a motion, without any debate or discussion. At the end of the day, when one is in government, there is a sense of responsibility in making decisions.

I remind my friend across the way that many New Democratic governments, NDP premiers, have recognized, as we have recognized, that at times it is in the national interest to bring in back-to-work legislation. It is only the NDP in opposition which seems to deny that fact.

We need to recognize that Canadians, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and businesses are being affected. There are going to be job losses. It is a serious situation. The NDP members need to sometimes get off their high horse and recognize, as NDP governments in the Prairies have recognized, that at times there is a need.

Would my colleague at least acknowledge that when the NDP did it in the prairie provinces and in Ontario, were they not doing the right thing at that time, as we are doing the right thing today?

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•(1635)

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to remind my colleague that he is my colleague and not my friend.

[*Translation*]

Second, we are talking about a bill on a strike that really only affects people one day a month. We are debating a labour dispute at Canada Post that affects people one day a month. Does one day a month justify back-to-work legislation? No, I think not. I do not think every dispute should be dealt with the same way. In this specific labour dispute, strikes are affecting regions one day a month. That is definitely not a good reason to trample on Canada Post employees' right to strike and force them back to work.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would certainly not be one to profess that the Conservatives and NDP would agree on a lot of issues when it comes to labour. However, I would agree with her on the point that when we brought this issue up in 2011, we did give members of the opposition every opportunity to speak for their constituents. However, this speaks to a larger narrative, and I would like my colleague's opinion on this.

When the Liberals were campaigning in 2015, they promised to do things differently. They promised they would never take veterans back to court. They promised to restore door-to-door mail delivery. They promised to have modest deficits. They have accomplished none of these things. They are certainly eroding the trust of Canadians.

In her opinion, can employees of Canada Post, CUPW employees or small business owners have any reason to trust that the Liberal government has their best interests in mind?

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, no one can trust the Liberals anymore.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in listening to the debate today, I will say there is a difference between being the third party or the opposition party and being the government. Being the government comes with a certain amount of responsibility. Earlier, one of the members mentioned essential services. In my riding, which has many rural communities since the riding is all rural, the post office is an essential service to the area so that people can get their mail.

Does the member think it fair to let people strike while seniors and families are not getting their mail, cheques or parcels, and at the same time bring business activity in the country to a standstill?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, as I have said many times, my region has had just one strike day in the entire month. My riding is a rural one, and it had one day in one month.

The government is taking a sledgehammer to Canada Post employees, when these are rotating strikes that affect people one day a month. Canada Post workers are committed to delivering cheques on time. We learned that Canada Post executives withheld the cheques to prevent workers from delivering them so that Canadians would have a negative opinion of the strike. The executives are the

ones behind the cheques not being delivered, yet the workers volunteered their time to deliver them during the lockout.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Hochelaga.

Today is a very black Friday, a day on which postal workers' rights are being completely undermined.

The Liberals promised in 2015 that they would never go as far as the Harper government to force workers back to work. They were up in arms in 2011 when the Conservatives legislated postal workers back to work. Today, they are doing the exact same thing, but it is even worse because the super closure motion currently before the House, on which the Liberals thought it would be a good idea to limit the length of debate, is completely undemocratic.

We are debating a motion that explicitly states that the bill to be debated later this evening, shortly after 8 p.m., can be debated for less than three hours. Furthermore, at third reading, we will not be allowed to ask questions.

Is this the kind of transparency and democracy that the Liberals promised when they came to power in 2015?

I do not think so.

We are here because the government that promised—and I repeat this often—with hand over heart to defend the rights of workers and the middle class is belittling the work that we can do to improve the working conditions of postal workers in particular. That sends a rather strange message to all of the other workers who may want to fight in the coming years to improve their situation and that of the entire community by extension.

The Liberals are really being shamelessly hypocritical today. I cannot believe they are doing this. They too have many workers, mail carriers, who are literally working themselves to death every day.

There has already been a 25% increase in injuries for 2017. An increasing number of mail carriers are experiencing stress because they are overworked. The number of parcels to be delivered is growing. There has been a 100% increase in the number of parcels over the past two years. Since Canada Post was restructured, there are also fewer workers. I will give more details about that a little later in my speech, but I just wanted to point out how postal workers' working conditions are becoming increasingly precarious.

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For 11 months, Canada Post did not put forward a single proposal. The government did not make a single public statement about intervening in negotiations either, and that is what would be expected of the government. Then, all of a sudden, two weeks ago, the labour minister threatened to use every means available to end the labour dispute. As many of us have pointed out here, rotating strikes—and it has been five weeks of rotating strikes, not a general strike—are a pressure tactic postal workers are using as a tool to put pressure on their employer, to make their demands heard. That is all. Yes, that job action has an economic impact. We agree that can be inconvenient. Nobody is happy about it, but at the same time, there have to be consequences at some point to prove just how important and appreciated postal workers' work is.

If businesses cannot receive their parcels and people do not receive their letters, that puts pressure on management to negotiate in good faith and consider the unionized workers' offers. If there are no consequences and no pressure, how are the workers going to make management listen to them? They will not really have any leverage.

● (1640)

This financial pressure is therefore necessary. There is no danger to public health or public safety. The Liberals need to stop saying that the government must take responsibility. There is no responsibility to be taken; all they had to do was let the employer and the union negotiate in good faith.

Labour organizations have been negotiating for years. This is not the first time. No one is outraged. No business owners have come to my office to complain about the mail carrier situation. I have not gotten any calls, any emails, or any letters. The Liberals sided with Canada Post and there is not even a national crisis. The Liberals have entirely manufactured this crisis.

I would like to acknowledge postal workers, who are doing everything in their power to ensure that no one is short of anything. They are continuing to deliver all government cheques. They do their job in a respectful manner and ensure that there are no major consequences for the public. As we have repeated today, some of them work on a volunteer basis for several hours, because in rural areas like mine, Salaberry—Suroît, where 29 out of 30 municipalities are rural, overtime is not paid. Is that normal? Would any members of Parliament agree to work overtime on a volunteer basis every week? I seriously doubt it.

However, I would like to remind MPs that union struggles have served to improve the living conditions of millions of people in Canada and around the world. They have led to employment insurance and maternity leave. Working hours were also regulated, being set at 35 or 40 hours a week. Children were also prohibited from working and given the right to attend school. Several significant improvements in workers' lives have resulted from union struggles. I tip my hat to all unionized workers who stand up every day despite the threat of special back-to-work legislation that governments can impose on them.

I would remind members that negotiation takes place between two sides. For several months now, Canada Post has said nothing and has not tried to negotiate, and then it completely dismissed the union's proposals. Today the Liberals continue to trample 50,000 workers' right to negotiate, so this is affecting 50,000 families in this country.

The Liberals continue to act as though this right does not exist, as though postal workers are not human beings. These people have families and want to see their kids in the evening. The Liberals keep going on about how important work-life balance is, yet they are doing absolutely nothing to recognize that postal workers are being affected by an explosion in the number of parcels.

Some of my staffers spoke with Julie today, a rural mail carrier who interrupted her delivery route to speak with them. She begins her route at 7 a.m. and finishes around 4 p.m. She is paid for nine hours of work, which comes out to \$20 an hour. However, when she goes over that time, she does not get any more pay and she still has to finish her route. She does not get paid for overtime.

My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue talked about road conditions. When Julie's truck breaks down, she is not paid for that time, and she also has to use her own telephone, since no phones are provided.

● (1645)

Trucks are not provided in all rural areas. As a result, there are inequities between rural and urban areas, but also between men and women. Most carriers in rural areas are women.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to a point raised by the member for Sherbrooke.

I told him that the idea of appointing a mediator-arbitrator would not benefit either the union or management. He said that, under the bill, the employer would no longer be required to negotiate. In subparagraph 11(1)(b)(ii), however, the bill states that, if there is no good faith negotiation and agreement between the two parties, the mediator-arbitrator may ask them:

to submit, within the time and in the manner that he or she may specify, that party's final offer in respect of the matter and, subject to subsection (7), select, in order to resolve the matter, either the final offer of the employer or the final offer of the union;

How can we say that this approach, as described in the bill, favours one party over the other?

I do not understand how this could harm the union.

● (1650)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Madam Speaker, I do not understand what the MPs in the Liberal camp fail to grasp.

Introducing special back-to-work legislation takes away any bargaining power from the workers. That means that the employer has won. There is no longer any incentive to negotiate because the employer knows that the workers have to return to work. In this case, the employees will have to return to work under the same conditions that they are currently challenging. The workload is excessive because Canada Post is understaffed. Workers are required to work unpaid overtime hours, in other words, mandatory volunteer work.

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It is disrespectful. I cannot understand how the Liberals can keep using this argument as though it were valid when it absolutely is not. The balance of power is completely lost if the workers can no longer use pressure tactics. What do they have on their side? They have nothing left to bargain with. They have to swallow whatever they are offered because, in any event, they no longer have the power to negotiate freely, which is a constitutional right that the government should uphold and it clearly is not today.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to follow up on that point, it is about bringing as much equality as possible to the negotiating process through the mediation/arbitration process. If the member reads the legislation, she will know that when the arbitrator is appointed, it has to be in consultation with the union. What she will also know is that when it comes to that mediator-arbitrator making any decision, it has to be after having heard the concerns of the union. The corporation cannot just say that it is not coming to the table. Actually, within 90 days, the mediator-arbitrator has to render a decision. If the corporation does not come to the table, the union wins on all counts. Both parties have to present a solution if they want their concerns heard.

To ensure that the union's concerns are heard, subclause 11(3) states:

the mediator-arbitrator is to be guided by the need

- (a) to ensure that the health and safety of employees is protected;
- (b) to ensure that the employees receive equal pay for work of equal value;

There are a number of other principles. I wonder what the member thinks about that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Madam Speaker, that sure sounds nice, but the hon. member fails to mention that it is under special back-to-work legislation imposed on postal workers.

It therefore takes away the balance of power. If we continue down this path, we forget that this prevents workers from using pressure tactics. If they no longer have any pressure tactics, then they can no longer make any demands. Management has the upper hand.

Again, this special back-to-work legislation is completely undemocratic and inconsistent with the constitutional right to strike and the ability of both parties to negotiate in good faith.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is Groundhog Day.

On June 23, 2011, the longest Thursday of my life, a day that seemed like it would never end, I rose in the House to give my first speech as the member for Hochelaga.

Seven years later, we may have replaced Stephen Harper's Conservatives with a Liberal government, but we are reliving the same sad story. What is happening today is so similar to what happened back then that I feel like I am in the Bill Murray movie where he wakes up every day and relives the same thing over and over again. I can say that we are pretty much following the preposterous storyline of that movie when we look a little closer at what the Liberals are trying to do today. It is so absurd that the bill introduced in the House yesterday has the exact same title as the bill

introduced by the Conservatives in 2011, namely an act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services.

They are not even trying to pretend it is not *Groundhog Day*. It really is not funny. I am upset by the government's attitude and actions.

For the past five weeks, 50,000 postal workers, 42,000 of them in urban areas and 8,000 in rural and suburban areas, have been holding legal rotating strikes across Canada. That means that workers in one municipality walk off the job for one day and then go back to work the next day and deliver the mail while postal workers somewhere else in Canada go on strike, and so on. They take turns because they want to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the employer, but they do not want to disrupt services and make Canadians mad at them.

The last thing public servants want to do when putting pressure on their employer is alienate Canadians. At this point, they are negotiating with the sword of Damocles hanging over their heads in the form of special legislation that will end the pressure tactics and impose working conditions. If they were to run afoul of Canadians as well, they would not last long. Postal workers have been around this block before. This really is their *Groundhog Day*.

The fact is, hardly anyone is complaining about interminable delays caused by rotating strikes, but Canada Post would have us believe the opposite and has invented a fake mail backlog crisis.

Some people have pointed out that even the Société québécoise du cannabis, which put a warning on its website saying that online orders might not be delivered within the five-day timeframe, has managed to deliver its parcels on time with the help of Canada Post's mail carriers.

One of my relatives is planning his wedding and ordered invitations that were supposed to arrive within 10 days. He got them in two days. One of my employees, who was fed up with his old ties, ordered new ones online. He received his package two days later, on the very day that the government began to talk about this special legislation. He told his mail carrier that he was surprised to receive his package so quickly.

Even after all that, the government is going to try to make us believe that the pressure tactics are disrupting the service, so they can impose working conditions on the workers. Here, we stand with the workers.

Why would they invent a fake crisis? Simply because Canada Post wants the government to intervene in the negotiations and impose conditions on their workers. It is not hard to understand. A Crown corporation is fed up with negotiating with a union with mobilized members and pretends that the house is on fire so that the government will jump in. Easy, right?

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It must not have been very difficult. The Liberals are so gullible that it only took a short time for them to fall for it and use parliamentary procedure to disrupt the balance of power that the union is trying to build legitimately and with respect for the service that mail carriers provide to Canadians. However, it has been shown that the reasons given by Canada Post to force employees back to work are only pretences to counter the balance of power that the union had managed to build.

In fact, when they returned to work two days ago, on November 21, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers discovered that the mail backlog had been somewhat exaggerated. What a surprise. The CUPW Toronto local countered the employer's claims that there were hundreds of trailers of accumulated mail and instead put the number around 70, adding that they could be cleared in a few days. Postal workers saw only one trailer in London, six in Hamilton, two in Halifax and 15 in Moncton. They did not see any in Saint John or St. John's.

Some will probably say that it is the employer's word against the union's, and we know that the NDP is always on the side of unions and workers.

•(1655)

Well, duh. Let me clarify one thing right away. The government agreed with the employer's claims without consulting the union, thus choosing sides and revealing its true colours.

[*English*]

Liberals, Tories, same old story.

[*Translation*]

The Liberal government's willingness to force workers back to work is nothing short of pointless, anti-union interference in the bargaining process between the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Crown corporation.

On top of that, the fact that the government is already saying that it will limit debate on this bill is outrageous. One thing the Liberal Party should have taken away from the debate on the Conservative bill on June 23, 2011, is that the NDP has and will always have something to say about protecting workers' rights and about the fundamental principles of free collective bargaining and the constitutional right to strike. They probably do not want to hear the truth from us. We proved this in 2011, and they remember, because at the time, they were on the same side as us.

In other words, what they forgot, and perhaps would like us to forget, is that their principles switch from one extreme to the other when they move from the opposition benches to the government benches. In the previous Parliament, the Liberals systematically rejected every bill that Stephen Harper's government introduced to force striking workers back to work. What is more, in an open letter to federal public servants in 2015, the member for Papineau, who has since become the Prime Minister, promised to put an end to the Conservatives' practices and to respect the principle of free collective bargaining. This comes as no surprise to me. It is just another one of the government's broken promises.

The issues on which the union based its negotiations were extremely important, namely workplace health and safety, excessive

workloads, job security and insecurity, pay for all hours worked, and a better work-life balance. The collective bargaining process started about a year ago, and Canada Post finally made an offer on November 14. The union responded with a counter-offer on November 17. The employer refused the union's proposals on November 19, saying, and I quote, "After having taken the time to assess them, we must advise that they cannot unfortunately form the basis of any potential settlements."

Lise-Lyne Gélinau, president of the CUPW Montreal local, said that Canada Post waited 11 months, until the last second, to make an offer that was supposed to look like the beginnings of negotiations. Now we have this special legislation. If I understand correctly, and I know I do, the union had to resort to pressure tactics for Canada Post to wake up and begin to negotiate a little more seriously.

The fact that the government is meddling in negotiations and fast-tracking this legislation is frankly unacceptable. The Liberals are trying to defend their use of the same tactics as Stephen Harper by saying that they support the bargaining process, but if that were true, they would not have done such an about-face and imposed this special legislation. Today they are showing us what side they are on. They prefer to impose back-to-work legislation rather than encourage negotiation. On top of that, they are muzzling members during debate in this bill. This is worse than anything Stephen Harper did.

Before closing, I just want to remind the Liberal government that if it decides to go ahead, to fast-track this bill and use the same tactics as the previous Conservative government, perhaps the Liberals should keep in mind that on April 28, 2016, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice found in favour of CUPW and retroactively struck down the special legislation passed in 2011 because it violated the workers' freedom of association and expression. With that in mind, perhaps I should hope that today turns out to be Groundhog Day.

•(1700)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard today, from various members of the NDP, that there should be virtually no time that such legislation should be brought forward to get employees back to work. One member did say earlier that certain circumstances, such as for the police, might warrant it, yet NDP governments across Canada provincially have never even done that for the police.

The NDP did do it once in Saskatchewan for dairy workers, and the NDP in British Columbia did it for elevator operators. I cannot understand how either of those could be deemed essential, unless one was physically stuck in an elevator.

I wonder if the member can comment as to whether she thinks the decisions made by those NDP governments were actually made in error and that they should not have done that.

Government Orders

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Madam Speaker, I wonder if my Liberal colleague knows the difference between a rotating strike and a strike. A rotating strike, as I mentioned earlier, is a day here, a day there. We saw that it had a minimal effect on mail delivery. Where, then, is this crisis?

The crisis was completely manufactured by Canada Post managers, and the Liberal Party fell for it. It is saying that the sky is falling because there is a strike. However, it is not a strike, it is a rotating strike.

There was a similar problem in 2011 when the Conservatives said that there was a strike, that it was preposterous and that people had to return to work. It was actually a lockout. A lockout occurs when the employer shuts its doors. They had no idea what they were talking about, and I think we are currently seeing the same thing on the benches opposite.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was not here in 2011, and I would have voted against that legislation because it was unconstitutional.

It was unconstitutional for a number of different reasons. It did not allow the union to have any input with respect to the arbitrator. It set specific contractual terms and took things that were key bargaining issues completely off the table to resolve the impasse. There was a winner-takes-all approach for the arbitrator. The government was biased in its decision-making with respect to the arbitrator. The court found for good reason that the legislation was not minimally impairing. This legislation is very different.

We can disagree as to whether it will be five weeks or maybe three months down the road for a significant impact on the Canadian economy. Perhaps the member would agree that would be an appropriate time.

On the constitutional question, could she at least agree that this legislation is significantly different from the legislation in 2011, and it is minimally impairing?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Madam Speaker, yes, I respect my colleague, but I do not agree with him. There is a difference between the two bills, I fully agree. However, it is still a negotiation process, and arbitration is part of it. However, when the arbitrator asks the employer what it is offering to employees, the employer will be fully aware that the government will support it and will send people back to work no matter what. As a result, regardless of the union's demands, the employer will not grant it anything.

The arbitrator is therefore caught between the two. If he sides with the employer, the same problem exists. The sword of Damocles hangs over the negotiation. Negotiation is not being done in good faith, and it is the union members, the men and women who break their backs to deliver the mail, who will once again be punished.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my colleague pointed out several times, it seems that people on

the other side of the House have difficulty understanding what the balance of power is.

I would like to come back to some comments I made when I asked the hon. member for Joliette a question earlier today. Pressure tactics must exert pressure. When teachers strike in the summer or SAQ employees strike on a Monday night, no pressure is exerted.

Perhaps my colleague can explain why it is important for employees to have this tool, especially since mail carriers are making additional effort to ensure that the public is not affected.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Madam Speaker, I negotiated collective agreements for 15 years. I know what I am talking about.

When we were on one side of the table and we told the employer what was important to the union members, they asked us what we would do if our demands were not met. If we did not have the employees behind us there was nothing we could do.

In this case, the government is taking these pressure tactics away from the union. The workers' hands are tied.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, let me say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

As some of my colleagues have said a few times, on June 23, 2011, with roughly two weeks of parliamentary experience, since the House had just started sitting on June 1, we had the chance to bear witness to two things. We had a Conservative government that wanted to convince us that the fate of the entire country for the next 100 years depended on a quick end to the labour dispute, but let us not forget that Canada Post locked out its employees. At the time, the NDP formed the official opposition and stood up for the workers. I will come back to that shortly.

It is ironic that there was talk of the economy's dependence on Canada Post given that, just two years later, there would be a direct attack on this public service when community mailboxes were imposed without consulting the communities affected. It seems that the economy's reliance on this service is always a function of who is lobbying the government. We clearly see that the employer, Canada Post, most often has the government's ear to the detriment of workers.

I had the pleasure and honour of listening to a great speech, and tragically the last speech by Jack Layton, who was then the leader of the official opposition. It was given at the beginning of the debate, here in the House, at a very late hour. He was exhausted as a result of an extremely difficult campaign and the health problems he experienced in those years.

He said one thing in particular that stood out for me.

• (1710)

[*English*]

He said that it is about greed.

[*Translation*]

That is what we are seeing again today.

Government Orders

Some people have become a laughingstock on the Internet. There are websites that make fun of people nearly killing themselves just to get \$100 off a television and smashing down the front doors of a store on a Friday looking for bargains. I do not want to focus on those people.

What I do want to focus on is the fact that this kind of phenomenon is being used to justify what the government is doing here today. This is not about lobbying by small and medium-sized businesses. As my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît just put it so well, they are not the ones knocking on our doors. Small and medium-sized businesses are not here telling us that they are suffocating and that, without this bill, they will not be able to do anything. It is Amazon, eBay and the big web giants that are complaining, when, let's face it, they are already benefiting from several advantages the federal government has thrown their way. Those businesses, like Canada Post, are the ones asking the federal government to act. As many of my colleagues put it so well, they are manufacturing a crisis out of thin air and lying to Canadians about the magnitude of the situation.

It is a rotating strike. Yes, we do keep saying that, but we are doing so in the hopes of being heard by the Liberals. When workers hold a rotating strike, it is because they realize that the public needs the service they provide. Mail carriers are very proud to offer this service to the public. We saw that today when dozens of workers joined our NDP caucus and our leader, Jagmeet Singh, to condemn what the government is doing. They spoke about their personal situations. They spoke about the pressure that their job puts on their shoulders and about how all they are asking is to be treated with dignity at work.

Before I talk more about all of the concerns we have, I want to say that we are debating a motion under the worst gag order that I have ever seen since becoming a member of Parliament. The reason I need to talk about both the gag order and the substance of the legislation is that the gag order will prevent me from rising to speak to the legislation.

Think about it. The government is not even going to allow members to ask questions or make comments to those who give speeches at third reading. That is appalling. The Liberals think it is acceptable to only let one or two members of the NDP speak.

Perhaps they think that is acceptable because they did very little when it came time to stand up to the Harper government back in the day. Let us be clear. Whether we are the official opposition or the second opposition party, we will not give up. There is no doubt about that.

There have been a number of questions over whether the bill is constitutional. Naively, and probably in vain, I continue to try to make the Liberals understand that in spite of their differences, the bill introduced by the Conservative government and the one introduced by the Liberal government have one thing in common, and that is that they both eliminate the balance of power between employees and the employer. This is the very essence of the ability to negotiate in good faith. What incentive, what reason, did Canada Post have to do anything to resolve the conflict? A few weeks ago, the Prime Minister himself said that all options were on the table. A few days ago, the minister announced that she planned to introduce

return-to-work legislation. The Liberals may see this as a way to exert pressure to mitigate or resolve the conflict. All it does is tell Canada Post that it can do absolutely nothing, since there is no more balance of power. This is absurd and goes against all of the principles of good faith bargaining in a free and democratic society.

It is funny because one of my colleagues talked about the Supreme Court's Oakes ruling, which referenced section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the notion that the government can violate certain rights and freedoms when it is for the good of a free and democratic society. I would like to know how violating the rights of people who are losing their short-term disability benefits and the rights of people on parental leave who are not receiving their benefits respects one of the values laid out in that very definition of a free and democratic society: human dignity. A free and democratic society means everyone is equal, but for the past seven and a half years or more, in spite of a Supreme Court ruling, Canada Post has still not stepped up to resolve pay equity issues for its employees. Women who work incredibly hard at Canada Post still do not get paid as much as their male colleagues. To me, that is outrageous.

A free and democratic society respects our political institutions. Our political institutions are not only what we see in the House of Commons. It is not only traditional political institutions. I am also talking about respect for a union, an important actor in the political arena that has a role to play. Taking one side at the expense of the other violates all these rights and is contrary to all these principles, in my opinion. For me, this is something totally unacceptable.

I can say that we all, as federal MPs, had the opportunity to work with mail carriers, especially during the last election. This is particularly absurd. They criticized the introduction of community mailboxes because they wanted to meet people. They considered it important for seniors or people with disabilities to receive their mail at home. It was important for many small and medium-sized businesses to benefit from the marketing effect of sending information by mail. We think that everything is done through the Internet today. Certainly that is what Amazon and eBay think when they lobby the federal government, but the post office still has a role to play.

The Prime Minister solemnly swore he would restore home mail delivery, but the best he could do was put a moratorium on the installation of new community mail boxes while making no changes to what had already been done. That decision was contrary to what those same workers wanted. I have no doubt that many of them trusted the Liberal Party. Now the Liberal Party is telling them their trust meant nothing to the party because it has flip-flopped. Maybe it did not actually have to flip-flop. Maybe that has been the real Liberal Party all along.

We are going to stand up for workers and especially for the rights of all postal workers and the right to negotiate in good faith in a free and democratic society.

Government Orders

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2011, the Conservatives introduced legislation. In 2016, a superior court found that it was unconstitutional.

My friend asked how this legislation would satisfy the Oakes test. It is very simple. In 2011, that legislation met a pressing and substantial objective, so it needs to be rationally connected, which it was. It needs to be minimally impairing, which it was not. It did not get to a proportionality analysis.

However, if we look at the factors, the court said that this was not minimally impairing, it said that it imposed terms that compromised the effectiveness and fairness of the process. This process does not impose specific terms. It allows for negotiation, mediation and fair arbitration. The union had no say in the selection of the arbitrator. In this case, it does.

The 2011 legislation imposed final offer. This allows the mediator-arbitrator to incorporate all concerns, including the concerns of the union. It actually goes further and sets out guiding principles to ensure that the mediator-arbitrator will ensure that they are guided by the need to ensure the health and safety of the employees is protected and to ensure the employees receive equal pay for work of equal value.

That would be the answer to the member's question.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I appreciate his optimism.

Ultimately, the very existence of special legislation that forces a return to work upsets the balance of power and eliminates any incentive that management might have to negotiate in good faith. Its very existence creates a power imbalance.

What is more, Canada Post would have us believe that this is an urgent situation. Once again, I disagree. When we speak to the union and when we consider our own personal experiences with getting our mail, we can clearly see that the emergency has been grossly exaggerated and that, as I said, Canada Post has lied to the public. It is not absolutely urgent that the government take action, particularly considering that this is a rotating strike.

Lastly, I really do not share the member's optimism on this issue, particularly with regard to pay equity. The Supreme Court already found that pay equity was a problem at Canada Post. Seven and half years ago, I rose here in the House at 5:30 a.m. on June 23, 2011, to talk about the lack of pay equity at Canada Post. Despite the court rulings, this issue still has not been resolved.

It is therefore difficult for me to understand how an arbitrator, who must be guided by these principles, would be able to resolve this situation when management no longer has any incentive to negotiate in good faith.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I note that on the New Democrats official

social media site, they have put out a comment that what the Liberal government is doing is much worse and much more draconian than anything the Conservatives did. I know they objected in the past to some of the measures we took, but they have identified the Liberals as being way out of line.

Could the member talk a little more about how egregious the Liberal government is and how it has gone further than anything Conservatives did in the past?

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, it would be wrong of me to defend what the Conservatives did when they were in power, purely as an election ploy. However, I will nonetheless address an important matter that my colleague raised. We have made an effort to post on social media about what is happening today. In 2011, we had the opportunity to hold a debate about a similar situation for several days. We had a 62-hour debate. All NDP members participated, and many, like me, gave their first and second speeches during the debate.

What is going to happen today? The vast majority of NDP members, and the vast majority of MPs, will not be able to participate in the debate and will not be able to ask questions at third reading. We will have spent more time debating the gag order than the bill itself. That tells us all we need to know.

[English]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is very clear that I will be opposing the government's motion, Motion No. 25.

Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers have been bargaining for over a year, and are now at an impasse. CUPW has called for a legal strike under the laws of Canada.

When in collective bargaining, several things happen. People go in, trade proposals and continue to bargain in good faith, hoping for the best outcome. When that fails, they might have other choices to make. The corporation can give notice and ask for a lockout to the workers, or the union can give notice and withdraw services, saying there will be a strike. They will no longer work, but will continue to bargain until they find a resolution.

One of the problems I am having is why the government is interfering with the process. This is a legal strike. There is nothing wrong with what the union is doing, under the law, so why is the government interfering? That is what everyone wants to know.

I have spent my entire working life protecting the rights of workers. What the government is doing with this motion and its legislation to force an end to a constitutionally legal strike by the workers at Canada Post is disgusting. The Liberals should be completely ashamed of themselves. The right to collective bargaining is a constitutional right, a moral right and a right I will fight to protect as long as I am able.

My caucus colleagues, my leader and New Democrats across the country will also stand to protect the fundamental right of every worker to take part in the collective bargaining process.

Government Orders

What the government has decided to do today, and I hope every Canadian worker is paying attention, is to interfere with and deny 50,000 Canadian postal workers their right to collective bargaining. This is outrageous. Stripping those rights from any Canadian worker should simply be illegal.

Again, I hope people realize that it is the Liberal government denying those rights, not only to our postal workers today but also to every Canadian worker.

This undemocratic motion and related legislation are so disgusting it is hard to know where to start in sharing my contempt. I am hopeful Canadians from coast to coast to coast will see the government's back-to-work legislation for what it is, a cynical, hypocritical, politically-motivated betrayal of Canadian workers and their families. This betrayal is being forced on Canadian workers by a Liberal government that likes to claim it represents the interests of workers, the middle class and their families.

Back in 2011, the Liberal member for Scarborough—Guildwood said, “We have the hard right...in the government jamming the union with legislation that it cannot possibly accept.”

Another Liberal member, the member for Humber River—Black Creek, with CUPW being forced back to work, said “How can the hon. member stand there and defend legislation that clearly has only one objective, which is to break the back of the union?”

Another Liberal member, the member for Vancouver Centre, said, “Liberals agree that the government bill is a bullying bill. It is absolutely unfair and would be decided on what the arbitration outcomes would be...”

The member for Cape Breton—Canso, said, “I appreciate and agree with the vast majority of what my colleague from Hamilton Mountain has shared with the House, and certainly the fact that this legislation is not only heavy-handed, but wrong-minded.” He was referring to Chris Charlton who was a member of the House at that time.

That is what the Liberals had to say back in 2011. I do not know what happened. Perhaps they all got into the same playroom, banged heads and came out in 2018 with the outrageous proposal they have brought to the House today.

The government is only interested in the rights of working Canadians when it is politically convenient. However, when the chips are down, it turns its back on them. When it really matters most, the Liberals show very clearly whose side they are on.

● (1725)

There is a lot of truth to the notion that there is not much difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives and about how much Liberals act like Conservatives when they get into power. It reminds me of the story of Mouseland, told by Tommy Douglas, in which he said that there may be cats with spots and there may be cats with stripes, but at the end of the day, they were still cats.

● (1730)

What is even more disgusting about this whole episode of denying rights of workers is that it really is totally unnecessary. Both parties in this dispute at the post office are in the middle of a collective

bargaining process that is working the way it is supposed to work. The government should not interfere, plain and simple. Let the process work the way it is supposed to. Let the parties negotiate and let the mediator do the job until there is an agreement.

We all know that the government interfered in the collective agreement process over the last few weeks by suggesting publicly that it would consider back-to-work legislation. What did it think would happen to negotiations? Did it not anticipate that the employer would stop negotiating in good faith, knowing that the government was going to bail it out? It is unbelievable, and it is incredibly reckless.

It is also incredibly disgusting that the government let itself get played by the management at the government post office. It is pretty clear to almost all Canadians that the rotating strikes have had very little effect on mail delivery. However, the government has chosen to believe, and to be guided by, the inflammatory rhetoric of groups like CFIB and the propaganda campaign of Canada Post.

We all know that Canada Post has been waging a public relations campaign of misinformation designed to get public opinion on its side and create a fake crisis about mail delivery prior to Christmas. Photographs showing trailers full of undelivered packages have been proven false. Stories about mail not being delivered have been greatly exaggerated.

I had some proof of this yesterday, from very close to home. It came in response to a question about pre-Christmas delivery by my wife Sherry, who was looking to make an online order from a company in B.C. This is what the company replied, “We are currently only seeing delivery delays of 1-4 days with Canada Post in most circumstances. We are finding that tracking information is not always updating properly, but otherwise we haven't had any issues thus far.” So much for the delivery crisis.

In 2015, the Prime Minister, then leader of the second opposition party, said:

While the middle class is struggling to make ends meet, Stephen Harper's plan has failed to help hard-working Canadians get ahead. Instead, the Harper Conservatives have rolled back many fundamental labour rights that affect workers' ability to organize freely, bargain collectively in good faith, and work in a safe environment.

My question for the government is this. Why are you imposing back-to-work legislation when one of the major issues is about a health and safety problem? You are asking the people to go and work, unsafe—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he is to address the questions and comments to the Chair and not to the government.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, the government is asking the workers to go back into a workforce that has unsafe conditions. The Liberals know this is a huge problem, but they are telling workers not to worry about it, that they are going to arbitrate and mediate it, that they are going to do everything they can. They say that this might take 90 or 120 days, but they want workers to get back to work because businesses have said they are suffering, of which the government has no proof.

Government Orders

Clearly, the government and the Prime Minister no longer believe in the rights of workers to bargain collectively. No government that believes in protecting the rights of Canadian workers could bring forward such a disgusting piece of back-to-work legislation and force it on Parliament and Canadians in such a shameful, undemocratic manner.

The NDP believes in free bargaining to achieve good collective agreements. The New Democrats will continue to defend the interests of workers and their right to collective bargaining. I will always be there to fight for the rights and interests of workers.

I urge the government to withdraw this motion and its back-to-work legislation. Let the collective bargaining process work like it should and let the parties get back to the negotiation table. I ask it to please not ask the workers to go back to work under unsafe conditions until this is resolved.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the first bit of his speech, the member said that the NDP across the country would always stand up for the rights of workers. However, the evidence that we have been putting out there today does not really lend itself to that statement.

In Saskatchewan, an NDP government sent dairy workers back to work. In B.C., an NDP government sent elevator operators back to work. In Ontario, in the early nineties, while two current NDP MPs were MPPs in the provincial legislature, one of whom was a cabinet minister at the time, the NDP forced school boards to send their teachers back to work.

Would the member at least like to adjust his statement to say that “some” NDP members across the country stand up for workers?

• (1735)

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, I do not know what happened back in those days. I do not.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I just told you.

Mr. Scott Duvall: You can tell me anything. You can say—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address his questions and comments to the Chair, and I would ask members on the government side not to talk back and forth. If they wish to ask another question, they should wait for that opportunity.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, I was saying that I do not know what happened then, but I know that I am an NDP member, and I am sticking to the issue we are dealing with today. I will continue to fight, not only today but also in the future, for anybody who is forced to go back to work.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is a bit hypothetical, but I think the answer would be instructive.

How long would the hon. member allow a strike to go on? Would he allow it to go on indefinitely? Does he not agree that there could come a time when the negative impacts of a strike are too great on very small businesses, perhaps even one-person operations? How long would he let it go? At what point would he say it is hurting too much and how would he know it is hurting too much? Where would

he get his information from? The NDP is saying this strike is not hurting the small business sector, but who told him it is not hurting the small business sector?

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, to answer the question of how long it should go on, a strike can last a long time. I have been involved in four of them. I am surprised the member is asking how long it should last when there is one in Hamilton that has been going on for five years. I do not see any interest by the Liberals in trying to fix that one.

Why this one? After five weeks, all of a sudden something has happened. Is it because the Liberals are under pressure? I am getting my mail. I do not see anybody being hurt. I do not know how long the member wants me to say it should go on for. It should continue until there is a settlement. Right now, small businesses are looking for alternatives. They were warned and are using them, so I do not see how they are being hurt by it.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, there has been a great deal said about the cost to the economy. We have heard that mantra over and over again.

I would like the member to speak about the cost to the economy of injuries. We know that injuries cost the Canadian economy \$26.8 billion and that CUPW members are saying that on-the-job injuries are a key reason for this strike. I would ask the member to please comment on that.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Madam Speaker, this is causing a great deal of pain not only to the workers but also to their families, because the workers get a lower rate of pay if they have to be off work. This seems to be a major issue and the workers have asked their union to represent them on it and to make sure this problem is resolved. Asking Canada Post workers to go back to work and resolve their problems later is pretty sad when we would not ask ourselves to do the same thing.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Drummond.

Before I get into the substance of the bill to be debated later tonight, I would first like to thank the postal workers for their work. I remember how excited I was as a young kid when I went to the mailbox and saw mail. I was particularly excited whenever I found mail with my name on it. I will never forget that or how important the postal workers are in the service they provide to all of us.

Because I travel a lot in my job, I am away from my children a lot. From time to time, especially when my kids were little, I would pop a letter, a card, or something into the mail for them. At two years old and three years old, they would get mail delivered to them. Sometimes the mail would arrive when I was already back home, but the delight in their eyes when they received that package, letter or card was something else. I think about the postal workers all the time, the work they do and how hard it is. I do not think any of us can really know how hard their job is until we have walked in their shoes.

I complain about carrying my bag when it is loaded with stuff, as shoulder hurts and my back aches. I think about the postal workers who every day, no matter what the weather is like, carry their mail carrier bags full of stuff and deliver it to our homes. They are kind of like Santa Claus to me. It is what they do every day.

Government Orders

As the member of Parliament for Vancouver East, I absolutely rely on them to deliver my letters to constituents, our ten percenters as we call them. I rely on them to deliver information to our constituents to let them know what we are doing, and for the information our constituents send back to us with their comments. They play a critical role in assisting me in doing my job. That is who we are talking about today. I want to thank them and tell them how much I appreciate them.

With that appreciation, as a parliamentarian, it is my role to ensure that their rights are not being trampled on. Yesterday and today, I sat in the House listening to speech after speech by the Liberals, who were crying crocodile tears about how they do not want to wield the big hammer with their draconian back-to-work legislation for Canada's postal workers.

It was funny how each speech was a template of the same talking points, devoid of reflection on what the real issues are for postal workers and what they are fighting for. It is funny how all of the Liberal members are somehow oblivious to the fact that when the government signalled two weeks ago that it would bring in back-to-work legislation, it would be actively undermining the essence of the collective bargaining process. It is funny how even yesterday, when the minister of labour was confronted about her stacking the deck against the workers and their right for better working conditions, she said with a straight face that she and her government were on the side of workers.

There is no question that when the Liberals set the stage for their back-to-work legislation on Thursday with their motion, they were speaking loudly and clearly to Canada Post's management that there was no need to even show up at the bargaining table, to bargain in good faith, to listen to workers' concerns about working conditions. The Liberals were saying that they had management's back. That is the message the Liberals gave to management, and all management needs to do is to run out the clock. That is the message none of the Liberals will acknowledge has been given.

For all the Liberals' talk about supporting workers and unions in Canada, what is clear with this bill, which will be before the House in just a couple of hours, is that they do not care one wit about the rights of working people. They do not give a toss about the working conditions of workers.

● (1740)

As the Liberals stuck it to the workers yesterday and today, their claim that they hope and dream optimistically that an agreement can be reached before they enact the legislation is nothing more than a joke or a slap in the faces of Canada Post workers, although the government members standing in the House repeatedly say that over and over again. They should feel their ears burning now while reflecting on their actions and their meaning and ramifications for these workers.

I do wonder how the Liberals will look at their letter postal carrier in the eyes the next time they receive their mail or package at home or in their office. To be here in the House today to listen to this phony optimism about supporting collective bargaining is insulting at best. One might ask what is at stake. Why has this situation reached the point it has today?

It started with the unconstitutional legislation brought against Canada Post workers by the Harper government in 2011 to force them back to work. That is right. The law and order Conservatives violated Canadians' charter rights. That is what they did back in 2011. To quote Justice Firestone, the effect of Harper's back-to-work legislation for postal workers in 2011 was to "substantially interfere with—and to disrupt the balance of—a meaningful process of collective bargaining between CUPW and Canada Post."

Under the Liberals, this legislation that will be before the House shortly will do exactly what Harper did in 2011. It would substantially interfere with and disrupt the balance of a meaningful process of collective bargaining. The Liberal government likes to claim that it is doing something different today, but everyone sees it for what it is. Their gig is putting their hand over their heart while wiping away their big crocodile tears. The gig is up. Everyone knows that the Liberals are stomping on the rights of workers.

In case the Liberals have forgotten, the right to collective bargaining is an essential component of the right of association, a protected right under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. With their charter rights having been trampled by the Harper government, Canada Post workers have been bargaining in good faith to improve their working conditions for today and tomorrow, believing that the Liberal government would respect their right to do so. What are they bargaining for?

This is what I learned from a letter from a postal worker. If Canada post workers want to take a vacation, or if they get sick or are injured, they have to find someone to sort and deliver their own route. That is correct. If an employee becomes sick or injured, it is his or her responsibility to find their own replacement worker. I want to know from the Liberal members if any of them think it is reasonable to expect a postal worker to find another worker to do their work if they are sick or injured.

Similarly, outside workers for Canada Post are forced to do overtime. This means that unless a postal worker has medical documentation stating that he or she cannot do the overtime for health reasons, they will be forced to do the overtime or face disciplinary action. It does not matter that the worker might have a doctor's appointment or that their child might be sick. It does not matter that the worker might have to pick up their child from day care. Postal workers have no choice but to do the overtime, or face disciplinary action. I want to know from the Liberal members if that sounds reasonable.

Yes, postal workers are injured at a rate four times the national average. How awful it is that postal workers want better working conditions. How dare they put pressure on their employer with these demands and their rotational strike?

Government Orders

By the way, postal workers want to improve services and standards for the public by expanding Canada Post retail services, delivery hours, and offer banking services and access via the Internet. In some communities, they do not even have access to banking services. Canada Post could fill that need. That is what they are bargaining for. Why is the government not allowing that to happen? Why is the government allowing working conditions to continue to deteriorate and not ensuring that every single worker can go home healthy because they work in a safe working environment? That is my question for the government today.

• (1745)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, obviously, it is a difficult decision for any government to enter into back-to-work legislation. That is the position we have been placed in, and it certainly is not an action that we take lightly.

The website for the Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights lists back-to-work legislation. It has been mentioned a number of times today, that there have been instances where governments have moved to enact back-to-work legislation. In NDP provinces, seven different NDP premiers have enacted back-to-work legislation 15 different times.

I would like to know what the difference was when the member was part of the NDP government in B.C. when it enacted the Public Education Support Staff Collective Bargaining Assistance Act in April 2000? That act ended a strike by support workers and cleaning staff of public schools and imposed a collective agreement. What was the difference and why did she vote for that then?

• (1750)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I know that the government is really proud to say that NDP governments in the past have also brought forward back-to-work legislation, but I have never ever heard of a situation such as the one we heard today. Postal workers were standing outside of this chamber and told us what happened. Postal workers had bundled together letters with government cheques for people with disabilities. They told management they needed to get them delivered, but guess what? It was management that decided to delay the delivery of those letters.

Then lo and behold, the labour minister made her speech and asked how members felt about those people not getting their cheques. Whose set-up was that? Was it management which did that, or was it government members who put them up to it? I actually do not know, but the postal workers tried their hardest and damndest to do what is right for the workers. The government members are paying them back by legislating them back to deplorable working conditions. Shame on the government.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member points over here, there are fingers pointing back. Shame on that member.

The member stands in her place and tries to be critical of a government that is working with labour on a number of fronts, but her government in British Columbia in 2000 brought in back-to-work legislation that affected cleaning staff. If I were to be as

dramatic as the member, I would maybe use some unparliamentary words to describe the behaviour of that NDP government.

Would the member not recognize that at times governments of different political stripes have to recognize the need for back-to-work legislation? Would those members stop the hypocrisy we are witnessing from the New Democratic benches today?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, the last time I checked, none of the NDP governments ever set up a scenario whereby management purposely deprived people who are in need receiving their cheques so they could set the stage to blame the workers. That is the first time I have ever heard that in my 25 years in elected office. We heard that story from a postal worker today.

The government members think they are on the side of workers. What do they say to postal workers who have to find their own replacements when they are sick? Do members think that is correct? Why have the Liberals not done something to fix that situation in the labour environment? Why has it come to today that these workers are forced to negotiate some basic health and safety conditions within their collective agreement? How is it possible for postal workers to work their regular hours and then they are still required to finish their route and do the overtime without pay? Do the government members think that is being on the side of workers?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sad and very angry to rise today in the House. Normally, I am always happy to speak on behalf of the people of Drummond, Canadians and Quebecers.

Today's situation unfortunately reminds me of the 2011 crisis. I remember June 23, 2011. I remember rising in the House at 3:33 a. m. to stand up for postal workers, including the mail carriers of the greater Drummond area.

Today, I rise once again in the House, on a Friday evening at 6 p. m., when I should be with the people of Drummond. I should be with the volunteers who worked very hard to set up a passport clinic that helped more than 250 people. I should be there to thank them. I should be with my constituents in Drummond, discussing the importance of climate action at a screening of the film *Earth: Seen from the Heart*.

I am here this evening because the Liberal government decided to do the same thing the Conservatives did in 2011, but even more undemocratically. Once again, I will have to spend the night here, if necessary, on a Friday night, to stand up for workers. I never thought I would have to do this twice.

Government Orders

This afternoon I was at a press conference with the leader of the NDP, Jagmeet Singh, several of my NDP colleagues, and several postal workers. The postal workers talked about how frustrated they are by the Liberal government's actions. They want to be able to negotiate their own collective agreement, as is their constitutional right, a right that was recognized in a case in Saskatchewan some years ago. They only want to do what they have the right to do.

Of course, Canada Post management tells us there is a crisis, but that is false. There is no crisis, and that is what people need to understand. The Liberal government and Canada Post management manufactured a crisis in order to introduce this illegitimate, anti-democratic special legislation that goes against workers' rights. It is shameful.

The holidays are approaching. The Liberal government says that mail and parcels have to be delivered, so what does it do? Ho! Ho! Ho! It gives a present, not to the public or the workers, but to Canada Post management. That is what is despicable in all this. I am talking about this fake crisis, of course.

On November 21, 2018, members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers who went to work discovered that the mail backlog had been greatly exaggerated. The Toronto local said that instead of the hundreds of trailers of mail that Canada Post reported, there were about 70, and they could probably be cleared in a few days. Postal workers also saw only one trailer in London, six in Hamilton, two in Halifax, 15 in Moncton, and none in Saint John. This is a legitimate rotating strike.

● (1755)

That means that postal workers are using legitimate pressure tactics. They are making sure that people in Canada, Quebec and the riding of Drummond are not affected. They are even prepared to deliver cheques and family allowances.

That is what they did in 2011. I talked with some postal workers earlier. They told me that they delivered cheques and family allowances without being paid in 2011. Today, it is being said that mail carriers are mean. I think that the successive governments, the Conservatives and Liberals, always like to go after the same people. Right now, they are going after mail carriers.

When it comes to signing international agreements, they go after dairy and cheese producers. These people are getting fed up with always being punished.

What the NDP is asking is clear. We are calling on the government not to intervene and to let the parties freely negotiate in order to come to a better agreement. How can the workers negotiate if they have no more leverage or bargaining power? If the government takes away mail carriers' right to hold rotating strikes, it is taking away all their power. That is the problem.

The NDP wants negotiations between the union and Canada Post to continue because negotiation is the only way Canada Post employees will get enhanced safety and equity on the job.

For example, one worker in Windsor has been working for Canada Post for 21 years. She is a passionate worker and loves what she does, but Canada Post's draconian management methods were endangering her family life and her health. Because of the mandatory

overtime she has to do and pressure from management, Joanne sometimes works until 10:30 at night. Working conditions like that and management's performance demands are unrealistic and harmful to workers' health.

We have been hearing some rather surprising facts, and not the nice kind of surprise. It is quite shocking. In the past two years, the rate of accident and injury among Canadian postal workers has gone up by 43%. Any other business whose illness and injury rate went up by 43% would wake up and do something.

This is proof that the government must take the situation seriously and let postal workers negotiate with the tools they have right now and in a way that is fair and does not harm Canadians.

The 42,000 urban mail carriers and 8,000 rural and suburban mail carriers care about their work. I remember very well that in 2011, no one wanted to stop working. It was a lockout. The employees wanted to get back to work, but they also wanted to negotiate their working conditions legally.

I want to talk about another thing. Pay equity, which the Liberal government likes to brag about, is extremely important. It is primarily women mail carriers who work in our rural areas. Those women mail carriers are suffering injustices and are being treated unfairly in terms of working conditions and salary. This needs to be fixed. That is why we should let the union negotiate with Canada Post. We need to let the workers negotiate in good faith. It is extremely important.

● (1800)

That is why I am calling on the government to back down before this injustice.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a little cold in here. We are not moving very much. I have a question for my hon. colleague. Today is November 23, so Christmas is a month away. E-commerce, which is made up primarily of small businesses, and retail shops use Canada Post to deliver parcels, and everything we need, to our homes. Some 70% of e-commerce in Canada is delivered by Canada Post.

This strike, which has been going on for five weeks, is having a very negative impact on our economy, especially on SMEs. Canadians need to get their mail. Negotiations have been ongoing for a year, and no deal has been reached, despite all the efforts. This bill is being introduced to get people back to the bargaining table and to make sure arbitration takes place.

I wonder if my hon. colleague can explain the fact that NDP governments in Ontario and other provinces have used this kind of back-to-work legislation in the past.

● (1805)

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, the rotating strike has not been going on for a year. It has only been a few weeks, and it is normal that there be some delay in the delivery of parcels. My constituents in Drummond are not going to come to see me and say the world is ending because of a one- or two-day delay.

The citizens of Drummond and Canada know that it is not normal to have a 43% increase in injuries and illnesses in the last two years. That is not normal.

Government Orders

It is true that there is currently a transformation at Canada Post, and this transformation requires a transformation of working conditions. That is what the mail carriers are asking for. Let them negotiate in peace.

When it was time to deal with the cuts made by Canada Post to sickness and other benefits, the government was not there to support workers. Now, when big companies like Amazon have deliveries to make that may not arrive on time, they are rushing to take care of Canadians first.

Parcels are reaching their destination. They are getting where they are going. This is not a general strike; these are rotating strikes. We are not talking here about the lockout in 2011, which was very poorly managed. I remember it very well. On June 23, 2011, I was on my feet at 3:30 a.m. to speak to it.

[*English*]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously my colleague and I will disagree on the necessity of the back-to-work legislation.

Even in 2011, we understood the seriousness of the issue. This is not something that any government should take lightly. Understanding how important it was to ensure that every member of Parliament had an opportunity to speak for their constituents, we never put forward time allocation on the back-to-work legislation. We ensured that every member of Parliament had an opportunity to participate in the debate.

What is my colleague hearing from his constituents on the fact that the Liberal government is once again trying to ram through legislation that impacts not only employees of Canada Post and CUPW members, but also small business owners across the country who are very concerned about this issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, although it is true that what the Conservatives did in 2011 was wrong, they did not use time allocation as the Liberals are doing today. It is such an undemocratic measure and just unbelievable.

We, in the NDP, are ready to fight to have the opportunity to speak at third reading and to speak to why workers must have the option of rotating strikes.

Earlier, someone said that this is horrible, that this is the holiday season. The workers said that there would be a truce during the holidays. These are all just pretences and a false crisis fabricated by the Liberal government and Canada Post management to bring in this completely illegitimate legislative measure.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it will be my pleasure to split my time with my good friend from Saskatoon West this evening.

It is a remarkable debate for me to attend and listen to the arguments being put forward by the Liberals and hearing my Conservative colleagues talk about the past experience over the same issue. It is *Groundhog Day* again. Mr. Speaker, I believe you were with us here in the chamber as well the last time this happened, when Canada Post workers were forced back to work by the Parliament of

Canada. It is a pretty heavy force. If one is a worker or a union, it is the Parliament of Canada that can intervene, with all these powerful people and the Prime Minister invoking a contract or invoking a path forward.

In the last government, let us face it, the Conservatives and Mr. Harper were not elected primarily on their strong defence of union rights in Canada or the notion of collective bargaining. They did not campaign on it, they did not promise it and they did not really do much about supporting collective rights in Canada for working people. After the 2015 election, we could understand why working people and the labour movement were quite encouraged, because they had so much encouragement from the then candidate, now Prime Minister, the member for Papineau, that if the Liberals got in things would be dramatically different. On the surface, Harper versus the Liberal leader sure looked and sounded different. However, what is important to understand is how it affects people's lives.

Let us go back to what happened to Canada Post workers before. They were in the midst of negotiations and the government of the day, the Harper government, let it be known to management that it was prepared to move back-to-work legislation forward through the House of Commons to essentially impose a contract. As has been said a few times in this chamber, the then government allowed Parliament to talk about it without invoking closure on the debate itself, which unfortunately the Liberals have done. Moving forward, Canada Post workers and workers in general would have thought that the Liberals were not going to do the same thing. However, they did exactly the same thing just a few weeks ago. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour got up publicly and said they were prepared to do whatever it takes, including all options on the table, including what we see here tonight, which is to force a position on the working people, removing all incentive from the employer to bargain.

Let us look at that for a moment. When that incentive is removed, when the employer knows that the government is going to invoke back-to-work legislation, the possibility of what we call free and fair collective bargaining is gone. There is no incentive anymore for the employer to work out the things that it needs to work out with its employees.

When we go back to what happened in 2011, a contract was imposed. It turned out that the contract, and the process that was used, was unconstitutional and thrown out of court. That took four years. Therefore, Canada Post workers were very much looking forward to this round of negotiations, because the last round went so sideways, to work out some of the significant problems they had with their contract, the one that had been imposed on them.

One of the significant pieces we have been hearing from postal workers in our riding, and I hope the Liberal members have been listening to this, is around health and safety. Canada Post workers, carriers in particular, are experiencing five times the injury rate of other federally regulated workers. Everybody wants a good postal service for our small businesses, for families sending letters back and forth and with Christmas coming. One of the ways to have a good postal service is to make sure your workers are not being injured at a rate five times higher than the equivalent. Would that not be a good thing to negotiate at the table, to fix after it has not been fixed for the last seven years?

Government Orders

The Liberals indicated to the management at Canada Post, “Don't worry, guys, we've got your back. You don't have to figure out how to make working conditions better. You don't have to figure out how to make sure that people aren't forced into mandatory overtime and late-night deliveries in the middle of winter that they simply can't say no to without being suspended or potentially fired.” We should collectively as a Parliament care about all those things. What is amazing is this. It must have been in the Liberals' notes, because each one rose to give their speech and said, “I regret this”, “I feel regret.” It was repeated over and over again. Maybe they all spontaneously had the exact same motion. I am going to suspect they were told that they had to say these two things, that they have great regret and that they support collective bargaining. It is a strange thing to say, “I support collective bargaining”, in the middle of a debate in which collective bargaining is being removed.

• (1810)

It is a bit ironic, maybe contradictory. The process we are under right now is the nuclear option for Parliament, that once the bill itself comes forward, there is no room for debate anymore.

The clock starts and the clock is over. This evening, this House will introduce a law, and two and a half, three hours later will have passed the law at first, second and third reading, and will have passed it out of this place.

It is incredibly rare that that ever happens, and the only time I have ever seen it happen properly is when the entire House agrees. In this case, that is clearly not true. What the Liberals are doing is imposing the nuclear option of shutting down every stage of debate, ordering the House to go through the stages without any discussion. That prohibits us from doing our central job, which is to hear from each other, debate the issues and maybe, shockingly, have our minds changed by what we hear.

However, the process that the Liberals have laid out makes Parliament's job impossible. It is impossible for us to do what we are supposed to do on behalf of the people who sent us here, which is to, consciously and with the best available intelligence we have, understand the issues facing the country, debate them, listen to the other side and come to some form of resolution.

This is the opposite of what is happening here tonight. The Liberals have said, “We will impose the will of a majority government. We will impose our will upon this place, and thereby impose our will upon the 40,000 or 50,000 workers at Canada Post.”

Unions have been taking a beating, in terms of reputation over the last several years, maybe even further back. It is important to recognize what has been accomplished, that some of the fights that unions and working people have engaged in have not benefited just unions but have benefited all working Canadians.

The idea of a proper length of working week, the idea of maternity leave, the idea of employment insurance and the idea of some sort of social safety net for when people fall on hard times, much of that was fought for with blood, sweat and tears by the labour movement. It is not just opportunities that only people associated with the labour community enjoy, but all working Canadians can now enjoy.

Rights are not one of these things that we get to win once; we have keep winning them over and over again. One of the rights that was

fought for and constitutionally protected is the right to negotiate, the right to engage with employers over working conditions, salary, overtime, the safety that happens at work, the ability to not be fired because of a complaint or the raising of a concern, to not be fired because a boss sexually harasses someone and they resisted. All of those rights are fought for and won at the table where there is negotiation, where a little is given and a little is taken.

The union attempted to do that here, and it was undermined. I use that word very specifically. If we listen to the Liberals, they talk about this sudden crisis that is just crushing the Canadian economy and about how this rotating strike was threatening Canada's reputation as a trading nation, about how it is all crumbling down with a five-week partially rotating strike on communities, where the backlog that has been reported will take two days to clear up.

My goodness, what an economic crisis that the government must be seized with. It must shut down debate in Parliament and force the union back into a position where it has virtually no power. That is the crisis.

I heard the Minister of Labour say yesterday that people's welfare cheques and employment insurance cheques were being held up because of this crisis. Then we find out that the union had actually gone to management and said, “Let us make sure that these important cheques get to people who need them.” Management said, “No. Oh no, no, let us hold those back.” It did this because it needed to manufacture that sense of crisis that working and poor Canadians would not get critical money they needed to stay alive.

That was manufactured, and the Liberals bought into it. They cannot have their eyes closed to this. They are not stupid. They know this is going on right now.

What is frustrating for me is that in the state of politics in the world today, cynicism grows quickly. One of the things that working people felt they had with the government was an ally. The government did some things on some legislation that revoked what the Harper administration had done. Let us give credit where credit is due.

However, when push came to shove, rather than saying to the management at Canada Post, “Sit down. Negotiate a fair wage and safe working conditions, so we have the best postal service for all Canadians to enjoy”, rather than do that, the Liberals gave them the wink and the nod and said, “Do not worry. You do not have to negotiate, you do not have to move forward. Just like in the past, we have a bill ready that will simply invoke a process upon the union, and management will not have to negotiate.”

This is a constitutionally protected right. This legislation that the Liberals are moving through will be challenged, and I believed successfully challenged, in court. It is a shame that it has come to this under the government.

• (1815)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy when my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley shares his words with this House, except when one is on the receiving end of them, and then it is not that much fun. However, I know him to be a fair and reasonable member of Parliament.

Government Orders

He was here in 2011, as was I, when the Conservatives brought forward their back-to-work legislation. In comparison, in 2011, the Conservatives appointed an arbitrator. In this legislation, we would agree, both sides, to a mediator-arbitrator, but appointed by both sides. There would have to be agreement. If there was no agreement, the minister would consult with the CIRB to appoint one.

Mediation was not part of the Conservatives' process. Mediation would be central to this process.

The Conservatives had a final offer, and their offer was instilled in the legislation, with terms and conditions set out in the legislation. The wages in that legislation were actually less than what Canada Post had agreed upon with the union. In comparison, no terms would be identified in this legislation. It would just be the process.

If I could close on the guiding principle, and he mentioned health and safety—

• (1820)

The Speaker: Sorry, I think the member will probably have other opportunities to raise his guiding principle. I know everyone enjoys hearing him, but the time is up.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: As someone also from our east coast, Mr. Speaker, I thought you would have had more sympathy for my friend that getting to the point sometimes is more of a process than it is a product.

First of all, the process the Liberals are using in terms of forcing this legislation is actually worse than what Harper did, because there was no limit on debate in the 2011 vote. The debate allowed participation by all members. The Liberals are not allowing that. That is beyond dispute. That is a fact.

In terms of the actual conditions of the bill, my concern is that there already was a mediator appointed to this process. That failed. I thought it was twice, but maybe it was three different times. If the sides are not equal, and one side feels like the government is putting its finger on the scale and prefers one side over the other, the incentive to negotiate and make those difficult concessions from both sides is greatly diminished. That has been our concern.

When the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour went out two and a half weeks ago and said she was prepared to do what we are doing here today, that tipped the scales. That dramatically reduced the incentive for the employer in this case to give up anything. That is how negotiations work. If I know there is an outcome I prefer that is already prepared, why would I bother going through the difficult process of making concessions ahead of time? That has been our struggle with this. As soon as that indication was made, the chances of that negotiating table working out were greatly diminished to the point of nothing.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's speeches during debate. I appreciate their passion. I am hoping that this is an example of the passion and commitment they will have in fighting for Alberta's oil and gas workers and for B.C.'s forestry workers. I hope they are next in line.

I want to touch on some of the things he spoke about in his speech. Certainly as Conservatives and New Democrats, we have

our differences in philosophy, but I think this comes down to a matter of trust.

During the election, the Prime Minister and the Liberals promised to never take veterans back to court. They promised to restore door-to-door mail delivery. They promised modest deficits. They have broken all those promises. Is there any reason, when they say they are going to be appointing these mediators, that there should be any trust from us and the other parties and the members of CUPW? I think they have eroded any trust that would be there.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, Canadians can tolerate quite a bit. Canadians are actually generally becoming more and more open to different political philosophies. We are seeing families no longer wedded to single partes forevermore. They move around and consider different things. However, the thing that drives them crazy is when someone stands up and says, “vote for me, I'm going to be different”, which is what the Prime Minister, I would say, very effectively argued in the last election, both in form and substance, about those things my friend pointed out.

He said, “Trust me, I'll get a pipeline to the coast.” No, he bought one. He did not promise that, but he bought an old one.

It was, “Trust me, I'm going to stand up for labour rights no matter what.” We see that the way this came to pass fundamentally eroded that promise made to working people. He said we needed the bargaining tables to work out. For that to be true and to actually be executed, the bargaining tables have to be allowed to do what they need to do without the interference we see here today by the government.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am profoundly disappointed to have to rise today to speak to a motion that will ram through back-to-work legislation. Indeed, today is the day we leave behind sunny ways and see the dark days ahead for workers' rights in Canada.

I want to remind the government that Canadian workers have a constitutional right to free and fair collective bargaining and a constitutional right to strike. However, here we are, back to the future, in 2011. We have had a change in government since then, but the new boss sounds like the old boss, it seems, when it comes to legislating workers back to work at the behest of commercial interests, and in violation of workers' rights.

It is disappointing that this government came into office promising to be different, and as we have heard, promising to respect workers' rights, but when it really matters, at the very first opportunity to really stand up and be counted to answer the question from that famous labour song, *Which Side Are You On?*, this government chooses the side of its Bay Street friends.

Government Orders

It is unconscionable for any government, let alone a government that says it respects workers' rights, to undermine the collective bargaining process with the threat of back-to-work legislation. How can postal workers expect their employer to bargain in good faith when the government has already signalled that it sides with the employer? With back-to-work legislation hanging over the bargaining table, why would Canada Post bother to bargain? It knows that the government has its back. Just wait it out, and the workers will be ordered back to work.

What about the workers? We really have not heard as much about them and their rights from members opposite. Here are some facts to bear in mind. Over the past two years, the accident and injury rate for Canada Post workers has increased by 43%. In 2017, 25% of postal workers were injured in the course of their duties. Workplace accidents among Canada Post employees are five times higher than the average in other federally regulated sectors. In rural areas, women make up 75% of Canada Post workers. Rural postal workers work under unfavourable conditions compared to their urban colleagues. Since the postal transformation, the workforce has been cut in half and the workload and volume of parcels has increased by almost 100%.

Postal workers are experiencing extreme stress and anxiety due to working conditions that currently exist at Canada Post. All they want is to have their health and safety concerns addressed at the bargaining table. I think most Canadians can understand and support that.

I am ashamed that the government has seen fit to table this bill and ram it through Parliament. This bill would reinstate the working conditions of the CUPW and Canada Post expired contract. By CUPW's calculation, that means that in the four and a half weeks between now and Christmas, at least 315 disabling injuries will happen to postal workers; rural and suburban mail carriers, mostly women, will work roughly 250,000 hours for free; urban postal workers will work thousands of hours of forced overtime, missing evenings with their families without a choice; temporary workers will continue to be stuck at that first rung of the pay scale while delivering the holidays to us; and RSMCs will continue to be treated, as Canada Post says, with pay equity but not equality. This will be the direct result of the Liberal government's proposed legislation rammed through Parliament through an undemocratic process that stifles debate.

Postal workers are our friends, neighbours, customers and part of our community. We do not want them being hurt on the job, being paid unfairly, or being expected to work excessive amounts of overtime. They have a right to negotiate with their employer for fairer conditions. I do not think Canadians would begrudge any worker this right, and neither should this government.

I want to share a letter that was sent to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour and copied to me. It is from Brian Jamieson, a postal worker from Victoria and a member of CUPW, Local 850. He says:

Canadian postal workers are trying to negotiate for safer work conditions and equality for all workers regardless of gender. I strongly believe that legislating them back to work will irreparably damage their ability to accomplish these goals.

● (1825)

One of the most important challenges postal workers are facing is inequality. Currently there are two faces to this inequality: gender inequality faced by [rural and suburban mail carriers] as addressed by Arbitrator Maureen Flynn in her recent decision; and the two tiered wage system new hires are faced with for doing the same work as their more senior counterparts.

In an article from *The Globe and Mail*...interim Canada Post CEO Jessica McDonald stated, "Pay equity is a basic human right and therefore pay disparity on the basis of gender is wholly unacceptable for Canada Post." Unfortunately to date, none of the offers presented by Canada Post address pay equity for RSMCs (mostly women) in any meaningful way going forward. This seems to suggest that Canada Post's position on pay equity is somewhat insincere....

Would you consider it to be reasonable, or fair, for Members of Parliament in rural areas to make less money than MP's from urban areas simply because they are in more isolated or less population dense regions? Or worse, because they were women? I hope not. They do exactly the same work and have the same responsibilities as their urban counterparts. But this is what is happening at Canada Post, both with [rural and suburban mail carriers], and with a two-tiered wage system that holds employees hired after February 2013 to less pay than coworkers hired before....

Canada Post and CUPW have been negotiating for almost a year now, and to date, Canada Post has made virtually no movement on the issues I have outlined herein. Now that rotating strike action is underway, and as the Christmas season approaches, Canada Post is finally feeling the pressure, and beginning to talk on these key issues. It is my fear that back to work legislation will remove that pressure and provide absolutely no incentive whatsoever for Canada Post to come to an agreement around the many equality and health & safety issues that need to be addressed.

By tabling this bill, the government has decided to tip the balance in favour of the employer. Fifty thousand Canada Post employees have been thrown under the proverbial bus.

On January 30, 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada released a landmark labour law decision, *Saskatchewan Federation of Labour v. Saskatchewan*. It concluded that the right to strike is a constitutional right.

In a democracy, free and fair collective bargaining must be allowed to happen. The power dynamic has always been and continues to be with the employer. Strikes are a last resort for workers when their employers cannot and will not negotiate, and it is not a step they take lightly, but that step is a right workers have in Canada, and it is protected under the Constitution.

It is offensive in the extreme that the government has decided to take sides in this process, and it is adding insult to injury that this legislation is going to be rammed through without proper debate. It makes one wonder who the Liberals really represent in this place.

In closing, as my colleague, the member for London-Fanshawe, has said, it is a black Friday indeed in Canada, for democracy and for Canadian workers.

Government Orders

• (1830)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member argues that there is a constitutional right. There is a constitutional right, which the Supreme Court recognized in 2015, but in 2016, the Ontario Superior Court, in looking at the 2011 legislation related to Canada Post, clearly stated that there could indeed be limitations on that right and that what was wrong was the way the 2011 legislation implemented it. I have read this legislation, and I believe that it meets all the tests of the 2016 Ontario Superior Court decision.

One of the things the hon. member mentioned was the health and safety issue. The first thing the mediator or arbitrator would be required to decide, if there was arbitration, would be to ensure that the health and safety of employees was protected. I would ask my hon. colleague this. If that is the guiding principle, why would we be concerned that the employer, in the course of negotiations, would not respect the health and safety needs of the employees?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague would have more experience with reading decisions than I do.

I will put it back to him and ask what the employer's incentive would be to follow what the member said. Those are all good words and I understand that. Everyone goes to the bargaining table with good intentions, but ultimately, both sides bargain for what they want. The actual process of free collective bargaining is that both sides need to be able to negotiate and they need to be together at the table forcing themselves to work.

Back-to-work legislation is like an awning hanging over the collective bargaining table. What is the incentive for an employer to bargain? The employer can simply sit back and wait for workers to be ordered back to work through legislation. Back-to-work legislation takes away all the power of workers to work toward things like improving health and safety. I am not suggesting that employers are not interested in health and safety but what I am saying is that to get the best health and safety in a workplace it needs to be bargained collectively free and with the ability to strike.

• (1835)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's speech. I appreciate that on an issue where there is so much passion, she delivered her speech with a lot of respect and constraint.

I listened closely to her talking about choosing a side in the interest of looking at Canada Post workers specifically and something that would be in their interests. As I perused the Canada Post pension holdings, the holdings of the pensioners of Canada Post, I noted that among those holdings the sixth highest holding is Canadian Natural Resources Limited, \$100 million; Enbridge, the seventh highest holding, \$98 million; Suncor, \$92 million; and Trans Canada, \$68 million. Those four companies alone represent \$358 million.

As the member talks about choosing in the interests of Canada Post workers, I would ask that she consider working with her party to come to a position in the interests of those workers and support Canada's energy sector. I wonder if she would take that to heart in upcoming conversations in support of Canadian postal workers.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I also listened to my hon. colleague's words about investments and pensions and I am more than willing to have a conversation outside of this debate.

However, what I am here today to talk about is the workers' constitutional rights being violated by a federal government. I think that is abhorrent. Government should be here to protect people's constitutional rights and not be part of legislation that will violate those rights.

I would invite a conversation with my hon. colleague to talk about the constitutional rights of workers. Perhaps we could share his comments on the natural resources sector.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some people have started their speeches by saying they are pleased to join in the debate. Make no mistake that it is difficult. The NDP likes to characterize it as something less than that, but members should be assured that this is an action this government has not undertaken lightly. This has been quite some time in the making.

Since coming to government after the October 2015 election, Canadians have seen, and certainly organized labour has seen, that we go about our business quite differently than the previous Conservative government did. We take a different approach to how we work with organized labour. Having been here during that 10-year period, it was nothing short of an attack on organized labour. From the outset, it was obvious that Stephen Harper had organized labour in his crosshairs and was willing to do what he had to do in order to throw a wrench into organized labour in this country.

We saw egregious bills like Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, bills which were purposeful in trying to handcuff unions in this country from being successful and from giving them any opportunity to grow and represent Canadian workers. It is unfortunate, because when we look at organized labour, we can certainly say that nobody has helped grow the middle class more than union leadership in this country, which fights for fair wages, fair benefit packages, overtime benefits and health and safety issues. It has been organized labour that has led those fights over the years. We, as Canadians, enjoy many of the benefits of those efforts.

When we became government, one of our first pieces of legislation was Bill C-4, which was legislation that led to overturning the egregious bills I just referenced, Bill C-525 and Bill C-377. We were trying to restore a fair and balanced approach to labour relations. We were trying to restore a tripartite approach to developing labour laws in this country, where we have workers, employers and the government sitting down and crafting labour laws that protect us all and benefit us all.

We saw that thrown out of balance. We saw the attempt to change the Canada Labour Code through backdoor initiatives. Rather than using a tripartite approach, we saw it being changed by private members' legislation. We saw how much benefit it brought the Conservatives in the last election. Any organized labour, any rank and file member, in this country knew two numbers. They knew the number 377 and they knew the number 525, because both those bills were earmarked for organized labour.

Government Orders

We strengthened occupational health and safety standards in this country, because we believe every worker in this country has the right to arrive home safe to be with their families. We passed Bill C-65 to protect federally regulated employees from workplace harassment and violence. I try to give credit where credit is due, and I must say that both the Conservatives and the NDP were very helpful and supportive of this legislation. We have good legislation, one which has been a long time in the making and a long time coming, but certainly both opposition parties were supportive of it.

● (1840)

We ratified ILO Convention 98 to ensure the rights to organize and to enter into collective bargaining. That convention had been advocated for for over 40 years, and it was our minister who was able to get that ratified at the ILO, something which we are very proud of as a government.

In budget implementation act No. 2, we brought forward legislation that will modernize labour standards to reflect today's workplaces. This is something from which many in organized labour will not benefit as it is for the many unorganized workspaces where shop floors are not unionized. It is for people in precarious work who are trying to knit together two or three part-time jobs in order to make a living and pay the bills. These are the most vulnerable workers in this country.

The modernization of labour standards in this country is going to be of help to all of these workers. This helps make sure that contracts are not flipped and that benefits are not lost when contracts are changed so that if there is a seniority list and certain people have worked for the company for seven years, they are able to maintain the benefits they worked for and earned over seven years and not lose those benefits in any way. We are very pleased to be able to move forward on that.

We have introduced pay equity legislation to ensure fairness. This makes sure that people and women in this country get equal pay for fair and equal work. We have also doubled the benefits in the wage earner protection program.

These are all positive initiatives we have embarked on and undertaken in this government.

The banning of the domestic use and the import and export of asbestos is very important. This is something that the CLC, Unifor, Canada's Building Trades Unions and many others in organized labour have been fighting to get for years. We are working with organized labour and employers as well, taking a tripartite approach to making sure we get right the banning and abolition of asbestos.

We as a government are committed to free, collective bargaining, and we believe that a negotiated agreement is always the best solution in any industrial dispute. That is why we refrained for so long before we got involved in this particular dispute.

This dispute has gone on for a year. We were engaged right from the start, appointing a mediator to let both sides share their grievances and find a way to come to some kind of agreement. A mediator was involved for a year. As the strike vote was taken and as the rotating strike began five weeks ago, we even appointed a second mediator and then a special mediator.

These mediators were selected from a list. We provided a list, and both sides were able to weigh in on who the mediator should be so as to build trust in the mediation process and in the mediator himself. The mediator was agreed upon.

The minister was very clear yesterday. She has worked tirelessly, as has her staff and the department. They have done everything possible to assist the parties to reach an end to this dispute. Despite their efforts, CUPW and Canada Post just have not been able to get to an agreement. Therefore, it is with great reluctance that we have been left with no other option but to introduce back-to-work legislation to get our postal service back functioning at full capacity.

● (1845)

It is important to understand that we knew as the process evolved that it was probably going to land here because both sides were very entrenched on a couple of different aspects of the negotiation. It is important that Canadians and Canadian businesses who rely on Canada Post and its crucial infrastructure are able to do their business. We know that 70% of online purchases are delivered by Canada Post. We know that Canadians rely on it as a service and that it is critical to many Canadian businesses.

In my own riding I have a small company called Galloping Cows, an exceptional company owned by Ron and Joanne Schmidt. They make pepper jellies and chutneys. They are very busy at this time of the year. We have many people from my riding and Atlantic Canada whose children have moved away and are living elsewhere, some in Fort McMurray. Thus, the packages to Fort McMurray from Port Hood are always a big part of the business that Galloping Cows does each year, which, certainly from Remembrance Day to Christmas, could make or break this young business. They have really felt the impact. It is not just that orders have not been sent, but also the fear of those who have sent parcels already. That is a big part of it, the threat of not getting the parcels to people in time for Christmas.

Throughout these negotiations, the Government of Canada has been proactive and tireless in its attempts to have the parties reach an agreement. The minister has discussed this at length. Federal conciliation officers and mediators have been assisting the parties throughout their negotiations. We know that there have been a lot of side conversations with people. Beyond the actual negotiators, many people have wanted this to be resolved and have offered their input to try to find resolution to this. We appreciate their efforts.

However, when bargaining reached an impasse, we appointed a special mediator to bring a fresh set of eyes to the table. It is always of benefit when we can take some issues and look at them with a little bit of a different perspective.

The negotiations stalled again, so we offered voluntary arbitration. That was our suggestion. However, our government's offer of voluntary arbitration was declined. Thus, we have tried pretty much every club in the bag.

We also appointed a special mediator this week, in the hope of getting a deal. We have strongly encouraged the parties to reach a mutually acceptable conclusion. We believe that a negotiated agreement is always the best solution.

Government Orders

No member of our government wants to be dealing with back-to-work legislation, but there is no end in sight and that is why we find ourselves in this situation. Canadians are feeling the effects of this dispute and it would be irresponsible for us not to act in the interests of all Canadians.

As I said initially, I can contrast our government's approach to organized labour to that of past Conservative governments. We can also look at the back-to-work legislation by the Conservatives in 2011. We know that after two weeks of rotating strikes, former prime minister Harper imposed back-to-work legislation on Canada Post and the postal workers of CUPW. It was interesting because we know that the minister at the time appointed an arbitrator herself, which is a little different from what we have done. We have appointed a mediator-arbitrator where mediation will be first and foremost.

● (1850)

That mediation I know was mentioned by the NDP member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He wanted me to remind him of the guiding principles, because he had talked about the health and safety issues.

I will quote subclause 11(3) of the legislation, which states:

In rendering a decision or selecting a final offer under paragraph (1)(b), the mediator-arbitrator is to be guided by the need

- (a) to ensure that the health and safety of employees is protected;
- (b) to ensure that the employees receive equal pay for work of equal value;

Those are the guiding principles, which are vastly different from the guiding principles of the legislation put forward by the Conservatives back in 2011. We know they worked against unions. We know that its legislation was very heavily weighted against unions.

That is certainly not the case with this legislation. We have proven to be a party that supports unions and workers, and that believes in the collective bargaining process. This is a last resort and not something that our government takes lightly.

When a strike or lockout impacts only the two parties involved, the government will help when asked and will not intervene. However, when it affects Canadians and Canadian businesses and all available avenues have been exhausted, the government has a responsibility to intervene. That is why we are bringing forward this legislation to require Canada Post workers to return to work.

In closing, Canadians need to know that the government has done and continues to do everything in its power to help the parties. In any industrial dispute, we are willing to help the parties resolve their differences without a work stoppage. A work stoppage helps no one, neither the workers and their lost wages, nor the communities and others impacted by the postal services that businesses use.

This legislation is no Harper-era legislation. We are not forcing specific conditions on the union. We just need to get to an agreement. If we had any hope at this point that the differences between CUPW and Canada Post were close to a resolution, we would not be tabling this legislation. However, after five weeks of rotating strikes, we are forced to say that it is time to act. The government has been working with CUPW and Canada Post for the last year and has done everything possible to prevent this dispute.

Let us get back to work, get the postal service functioning at maximum efficiency and get the parties to a deal.

● (1855)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute for a moment to the Canada Post workers across the length and breadth of this country. The workers work hard, in very intense conditions and the harshest climate on earth for mail delivery. The outside workers deliver mail every day through snow, sleet, blizzards and rain. They deserve our respect and confidence.

Canada Post has one of the most dysfunctional management practices in this country. We have seen Canada Post management cut off benefit payments to workers on short-term and long-term disability and maternity leave. Its sweatshop mentality has led to one of the highest accident rates of any workplace in Canada.

The Liberals have intervened and poisoned the well with this sledgehammer. They are supporting these management practices. My question is very simple. Why are the Liberals condoning these types of management practices and poisoning the well?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the member may have come in late, because, as I had indicated—

The Speaker: Order. Members are not to draw attention to the presence or absence of members.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, my apologies to the member. Obviously, he did not have the benefit of hearing the guiding principles of this legislation and the fact that—

The Speaker: The member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that those are the kind of inappropriate comments we have been hearing from Liberals all evening. He should just retract them, apologize, and try to put his case forward without the kind of insults we have seen—

The Speaker: Of course, as I already mentioned, we do not draw attention to the presence or absence of members.

I ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, allow me to read into the record once again the guiding principles of this legislation. Again, we have taken a different tack with regard to arbitrators than the Conservatives did with their legislation in 2011. As a matter of fact, the first arbitrator they appointed had no labour experience and could not speak French. When the judge removed the arbitrator from that process, the Conservatives came forward with a second arbitrator who was a three-time failed Tory candidate. Those arbitrators were all appointed by the minister. The Conservatives were not really trying to get someone who would hold the trust of both parties.

In fact, the parties under our legislation will be able to submit the names of those they would be comfortable with and can agree upon. Moreover, it would be a mediator-arbitrator.

The guiding principle are as follows:

In rendering a decision or selecting a final offer under paragraph (1)(b), the mediator-arbitrator is to be guided by the need

- (a) to ensure that the health and safety of employees is protected;

Government Orders

That speaks to the member's concerns about that. Maybe I can continue to read them in my next answer.

● (1900)

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member was preparing at the last second to make a speech today. He did not seem to be prepared to make a speech and may not have had the time or benefit of going back and seeing what he had said previously in the House about these things, but I did have a little time to look at a few things. Going back to March 13, 2012, he said the following about our minister at the time:

As I think she may be somewhat of a pioneer here, my question to the minister is this. Would she know if this is the first time that legislation to limit the debate on back to work legislation preceded that back to work legislation? Is she aware if this is the first time this has ever happened? She may be a pioneer.

On June 18, 2013, he called the use of closure “abuse of the democratic process in this House.” It is something he said repeatedly in the House during those years in opposition.

Does he think what is happening today is “an abuse of the democratic process in this House”?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, having sat in the House with the member for quite some time now, I always get a chuckle out of Conservatives when they start to bring up the use of closure by this government. We are only pikers when we look back at how the Conservatives used that particular standing order.

If the member wants to read quotes, he will know that during the debates on the 2011 back-to-work legislation, I did bring up my concerns about the guiding principles. The guiding principles that were identified by the arbitrator appointed by the minister were so heavily tilted to Canada Post. The guiding principles were aimed at providing the necessary degree of flexibility, as they said, to ensure the short and long-term economic viability and competitiveness of the Canada Post Corporation. They were all sort of tilted toward that. Members will remember that the government actually put into legislation a wage that was less than what Canada Post had agreed upon.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although the Liberals and the Conservatives may find this amusing, the New Democrats do not. That is a curious use of word by the member.

Only a Liberal would argue that the language in the back-to-work legislation is progressive in some way. That is what we have been hearing today. I cannot understand why Canada Post would bargain fairly at the table right now when it knows that in seven hours the Liberals will give it the gift for which it has asked.

The Liberals keep acting as though something miraculous is going to happen at a table that they have consistently poisoned. Nothing will happen at that table, because Canada Post knows it is going to pick up the red phone, get the hotline to the Liberals and people are going to be ordered back to work.

It is not just that they will go back to work. They are forcing workers to go back to a workplace where women are not paid equally, which is ironic because the member said how important that was to him, that women were paid equally. They are not at Canada Post, and the Liberals are going to force them back. Rural workers are not paid for all the hours they work. They work overtime every

day for which they are not paid. That is a clear violation of labour rights, yet the Liberal member is quite comfortable with that.

This is the busiest time of year. The Liberals are forcing Canada Post workers back to work in dangerous working conditions. Why?

● (1905)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, that gives me an opportunity to finish sharing the guiding principles.

As my colleagues know, I talked first about health and safety, and I shared that with my friend. It would be one of the guiding principles of the mediator or arbitrator that would have to be abided by to ensure the health and safety of employees would be protected. The second guiding principle is to ensure the employees receive equal pay for work of equal value.

Those are the guiding principles for the mediator and that is what will be front and centre as we try to get this deal done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the International Labour Organization and the Supreme Court of Canada have reminded us that the right to negotiate working conditions is a fundamental right of workers. The right to strike is also an inherent right of collective bargaining.

According to the Supreme Court, these are constitutional rights because there is nothing like a negotiated agreement. Seeking mediation to reach an agreement takes away leverage. This goes against the fundamental rights of workers.

How can the parliamentary secretary justify the fact that a government that calls itself progressive can violate in this manner the rights of workers even before they have gone on strike?

As everyone knows, a rotating strike is not a strike. The government did not even let them get that far. Has it no shame?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the member referenced ILO Convention 98. We are the government that ratified that convention, something that has been advocated for 40 years. We signed that convention. We absolutely believe the best way to get to a deal is for both sides to sit down and hammer out a deal.

Obviously, after a year of negotiation and five weeks of rotating strikes, it is imperative that a government helps Canadians, and we are doing that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, forced back-to-work legislation is an insult, but adopting forced back-to-work legislation on a closure motion is adding insult to injury.

Government Orders

In my speech, I will touch on four things about the Liberal government. The government claims to be feminist, pro-middle class, progressive and in favour of worker health and safety.

I will start with the government's claim that it is feminist. Systemic discrimination is a form of discrimination that is embedded in a system, in an established order arising from practices voluntary or otherwise that result in wage gaps between jobs traditionally held by men and those traditionally held by women.

In this particular case, the Canada Post case, there is systemic discrimination in relation to practices that I expect are involuntary. Letter carriers, whether they work in rural or suburban areas, do not have the same working conditions as their colleagues in urban areas.

If we scratch below the surface, we see that this is an important issue because it is a matter of systemic discrimination. Two-thirds of mail carriers working in rural and suburban areas are women and they earn approximately 25% less than their counterparts who work in urban areas, 70% of whom are men.

Just three weeks ago, the government introduced a pay equity bill that requires employers and unionized employees to work together to develop a plan to achieve pay equity, a bill that implements a proactive regime to guarantee equal pay for equal or equivalent work. Now, three weeks later, at the very first opportunity, the government is proving that its bill is pretty much worthless—just good intentions and nothing more. Three weeks later, at the very first opportunity, the government is passing special legislation so that it does not have to pay women mail carriers properly. It is muzzling the women who are fighting to obtain the salary conditions that the government claims to want to give them. It is muzzling elected members of the House so that it can take away women mail carriers' bargaining rights even more quickly. Three weeks later, the government is muzzling labour organizations as they try to assert their most basic right, that of having a properly negotiated collective agreement.

When the topic of workers' rights comes up, the Liberal government's fake feminism becomes quite evident. This is the same government that thinks it is acceptable for pregnant women to be ineligible for preventive withdrawal without penalty when their and their unborn baby's health is at risk. This is the same government that has refused to listen to me for three years when I saw that a new mother who loses her job at the end of her parental leave is not eligible for a penny from employment insurance.

Indeed, this is the same government that has shown us today that it thinks it is acceptable for women to be paid less than men for equal work and for women to have to take on a heavy workload that is harmful to their physical and psychological health.

Feminism is more than just a word. Feminism requires action, and I am sad to say that this government's action proves that we have a long way to go before our rights will ever be equal to those of men in Ottawa.

My second point has to do with the middle class. Just this week, the government presented an economic statement with, yet again, the term "middle class" in its title. Despite this government's claims, it is not a government for women, nor is it a government for the middle class.

The middle class is made up of ordinary people. Do the Liberals know who these ordinary people are? Would they be able to define the middle class, outside of their empty slogans?

One thing is certain: middle-class Canadians are highly courted by the Liberal Party. This was the case during the last federal election campaign, and I cannot even count the number of times that this government, all members included, has used this term since the 2015 election. This term comes up in every single budget, economic statement, speech, and almost every answer to opposition questions.

● (1910)

The Liberal members speak with trembling voices to defend the middle class, as though it were an endangered species. Yes, the middle class has become a target for political marketing, and that has been going on for decades, but I would say the Liberals have perfected the formula. Now it is all about the middle class and those working hard to join it. How many times have we heard that? It is nice, is it not? Who does not like apple pie?

What the Liberals are forgetting, after having recited these meaningless phrases so many times in the House, is that the middle class was built on great union victories, primarily in the public service. The middle class did not magically appear, and it was not the federal government that created it.

The middle class was built bit by bit, by workers who had the courage to stand up and assert their rights so they could live in dignity.

The middle class was built one gain at a time, gains that were hard won from the government and the most powerful players in the world.

The middle class was never handed anything. It fought hard, made demands and got what it needed.

The middle class is made up of teachers, nurses, bus drivers, public servants, middle managers in the public sector and, yes, postal workers. Today they are resorting to rotating strikes to assert their status as members of the middle class, and the government is taking away their right to put pressure on their employer to improve their situation.

The middle class is made up of ordinary people who work hard and serve our society. They are also people who want to live with dignity; people who want to see their family from time to time; people who want to work in environments where they feel good and safe; people for whom working conditions and the human qualities of their team are just as important as money; people who want work schedules that allow them to look ahead a bit and plan their personal life; because, indeed, these are people who have a life outside the office; people who think that men and women should earn equal pay for equal work; and yes, people who think that their work deserves adequate pay.

Government Orders

What does the government mean by middle class? It seems that the government has no understanding of the value of collective rights. It seems that when the Liberals talk about the middle class, they are talking about certain individuals only. When we take a closer look at the Liberals' language on the middle class, it looks a lot like a systematic attempt to curry votes rather than a statement in support of our families, our friends, our neighbours, our colleagues, people who surround us in real life, a life that the Prime Minister seems to have no notion of.

My third point has to do with health and safety. I knew a man who, unlike the Prime Minister, knew and loved everyday people. I knew a man who inspired me greatly. He was a man of his word. We had good conversations and that man always stood up for those whose work could make them sick or injured.

About health and safety he said that it was at the workplace that it was clear that contempt for men and women was far from over and that it is impossible to say that we are for the people while also accepting that they get hurt at work.

This man was Michel Chartrand, quoted by Fernand Foisy in the book *Les dires d'un homme de parole*.

Occupational health and safety is also a purpose of these negotiations. Why are there health and safety measures? The workplace injury rate in the postal sector is one of the highest of all sectors under federal jurisdiction. The number of accidents has increased by 43% in the past two years. It seems to me that the demands are justified in the circumstances.

● (1915)

The rate of disabling injuries is 5.4 times higher than in the rest of the federal sector. It is totally unacceptable, and the union's demands are not exorbitant. It is asking for 80% of the salary to be paid in the event of a workplace accident because no one chooses to have an accident at work. It is also calling for improvements to the short-term disability insurance program, including the appeal process. It is asking for an unlimited carry-over of personal leave days and for salary protection increased from 70% to 75%. Again, it is a matter of dignity.

It is also asking that mail carriers obtain a time value for the combination of manually sorted mail and sequentially sorted mail in the sorting bin. Again, the idea is to avoid an overload. It is requested that a provision on domestic violence be included in the collective agreement. This is a plus for families and for women in particular.

I want to read a quote from the Government of Canada website:

No one knows a workplace better than the people who work in it, so Part II of the Canada Labour Code gives the workplace parties—the employees and employers—a strong role in identifying and resolving health and safety concerns.

The provisions of the Code are designed to strengthen employers' and employees' self-reliance in dealing with occupational health and safety issues [and not through special legislation] and thereby making workplaces safer.

I could not even make this stuff up. Much like with pay equity, on paper, the government seems to recognize the role of a union. However, when a union wants to exercise its rights, the government infringes on these rights, forces special legislation down their throats and prevents elected officials from debating this legislation.

Contrary to Canada Post management, the union never stopped advocating negotiating to reach a new work agreement. The president of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec stated, and I quote:

Obviously, Canada Post dug in its heels and negotiated in bad faith while simply waiting for the government to introduce special legislation that would force mail carriers back to work. That is appalling but not surprising, since that is the kind of strategy we have come to expect from Canada Post. During the last collective bargaining process in 2011, management did the same thing. Some housecleaning is in order at Canada Post.

He concluded by saying, and I quote:

That is all the more appalling given that the right to strike has been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada. This special legislation violates a right that is recognized and protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution. The health and safety of Canadians was never in any way threatened by the union's legitimate decision to use pressure tactics to help wind up the bargaining process. By introducing this special legislation, the [Liberal] government is complicit in Canada Post's bargaining strategy, which is not to negotiate.

The government chose a side, and it did not side with women, the middle class, employee safety, progressivism, or respect for labour organizations. It chose Canada Post's side.

I will address one last point. The government claims to be progressive. Management's government is not a progressive government. The government calls itself progressive. The Prime Minister boasts about that a lot. Every time he signs a trade agreement, he insists on calling it a progressive agreement. He says that because, in his mind, these agreements guarantee workers' freedom of association and their right to collective bargaining. These are fundamental rights recognized by the UN in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. They are recognized by the International Labour Organization in its fundamental conventions and by the Canadian Constitution. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms adopted by English Canada, which the Prime Minister is extremely proud of, defines them as fundamental rights in section 2 (d).

● (1920)

When the Prime Minister talks about his progressive trade agreements, he says that being progressive means defending the right to collective bargaining. That is what being progressive means. The right to negotiate and the right to strike are linked. The right to strike is inherent in the right to negotiate because without the threat of a strike, there is no power to negotiate. I am not the one saying this. It comes from the International Labour Organization of which Canada is a member. The Supreme Court said this in 2015. Therefore, today's special legislation is not progressive.

Since the beginning of this debate, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis has repeated that having an arbitrator is a good thing, it is fair, he or she will consider both sides and will make compromises. In a hockey game, the referee is not there to listen to both sides and make compromises. An arbitrator is someone who has the authority to impose his or her decisions. In this case, the arbitrator will impose working conditions. That is the role of an arbitrator. It is the opposite of negotiating. It is the opposite of what the Prime Minister considers to be progressive.

Government Orders

Special legislation is referred to as back-to-work legislation, not negotiation legislation. Generally, it puts an end to work stoppage. In this case, there was no work stoppage, and that is the worst part. As the fiercely Liberal Denis Coderre said in the debate on the Harper government's back-to-work legislation, "A rotating strike is not a strike, it is a pressure tactic used to force a negotiated settlement." That was a true Liberal who said that.

Through this bill, the government is taking away the employees' right to use pressure tactics. It is taking away the employer's incentive to negotiate. It is attacking the right to collective bargaining, a fundamental right if ever there was one.

When I hear the Conservatives and the Liberals speak disrespectfully about the right to strike, I get the impression that they think workers like to strike. They do not. It is not some game that we can take away from them whenever we feel like it. It is a right. As François Mitterrand said in his book *The Wheat and the Chaff*, "Strike action is not enjoyable for anyone, and it primarily affects those who have no other means to defend their right to live."

These only means are what this special legislation is taking away from postal workers, and it is the exact opposite of progressivism.

• (1925)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start off by emphasizing something I said yesterday when I was addressing the motion, and that is just how much we value and appreciate the fine work that all Canada Post workers put in day in and day out. They provide a fantastic service. It is one of the reasons we have been very proactive in dealing with many of the Canada Post issues that came into being during the Stephen Harper era.

Having said that, there is at times a need for our government to make decisions, and we are not unique in that. We have said this, and we heard it on numerous occasions today already; political parties of all stripes, a number of NDP premiers and governments, Liberals and Conservatives have brought in back-to-work legislation.

Montreal is a fantastic, beautiful city. It is a city I am very proud of. I am sure there are lots of e-commerce businesses that are very much dependent on Canada Post. I am sure there are many individuals in rural Quebec who are looking forward to receiving very important items. My question for the member from the Bloc Party is: could she give an indication as to whether or not she believes that at some point we need to see Canada Post delivering those very important, essential, vital services, whether rural for consumers, or for our businesses that are already feeling the impact to the degree—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Repentigny.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question gives me an opportunity to expand on some of the points I made in my speech.

Right now, there is no crisis. Businesses are not in crisis, and neither is anyone else. We have proven that repeatedly in many of the speeches given in the House since the start of this debate.

When does the government think it would be appropriate for postal workers to go on strike, be it rotating or general?

In my former life, I was a teacher. When we went on strike to put pressure on our employer, we did not do it in July or August or over the Christmas holidays. If workers do not put their foot down, the employer will not negotiate. With this bill, the government is about to cut workers off at the knees so they cannot force the employer to negotiate.

Of course postal workers are going to go on strike over the holidays, just as teachers are going to do it during the school year, not in July or August. When people want more power, they employ effective tactics.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely congratulate my colleague from Repentigny on her excellent speech. We in the Bloc Québécois have always sided with workers, and that will not change.

This is our first term in the House, and this is the first time special legislation is being introduced. Special legislation that infringes on workers' fundamental rights, on the right to free bargaining and the right to strike, is terribly shameful. This is all being done under a gag order that muzzles the members. They could have done more to support the workers.

I want to ask my colleague whether she thinks the real boss here is also the legislator, and whether she would agree that there is a blatant conflict of interest given that the legislator is also the business owner in this negotiation.

• (1930)

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. Bloc Québécois colleague for his question. Yes, for workers in the public service, that is always the problem. Whether we are talking about teachers, nurses, support staff in hospitals or postal workers, the employer is also the legislator. We are always stuck in that position, because the legislator has no problem blocking demands by using special legislation. We see that all the time.

I am tempted to say that there is no longer any bargaining, because every time someone tries to bargain and use pressure to improve their working conditions, the legislator introduces special legislation. So, yes, there certainly is a conflict of interest.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Before going on to the next question, I want to remind members of the Standing Order that requires us not to cross between the person who is speaking and the Chair. This is really a matter of respect for the person who is speaking.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Repentigny.

Government Orders

The Liberals are allowing us to have a few hours of debate before they bulldoze this through and trample the democratic rights of the House. They are saying that their approach is gentler than that of the Conservative Party.

I was here in 2011, and the Conservatives allowed us to debate the issue for several days. I remember how Jack Layton, in his last speeches in the House, criticized the lack of democracy and the bill. However, at least the Conservatives gave us the time we needed to debate such an important issue. The Liberals are giving us just a few hours for debate at all stages.

Does the member for Repentigny see a difference between the way the Conservatives trampled on democracy and the way the Liberals are doing it?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I completely agree with what he said. Earlier, the parliamentary secretary spoke at length about Harper's Conservative government. At that time, I was the president of my union, and we kept very close track of all of the legislation that the government was passing. Quite frankly, it was despicable. It seemed as though the Conservative government wanted to do away with unions completely, to get rid of them once and for all. However, when it passed special legislation to force mail carriers back to work, it allowed time for debate. The biggest problem I have with the Liberal government on the postal worker issue is that they imposed a gag order. The fact that the Liberals introduced this special legislation was already a slap in the face, but then they went ahead and imposed a gag order to limit debate, push the legislation through and take away workers' rights even faster. That is absolutely appalling.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I posed an earlier question, the member talked about her profession as a teacher. Education is a provincial responsibility, so let me give a specific example.

New Democratic governments at the provincial level have brought in back-to-work legislation for teachers. The reason they did this, not once but on numerous occasions, was they felt it was in the best interests at the time. They were not saying they had lost confidence or as a political party they did not believe in the collective bargaining process. Rather, they recognized how important it was for the broader community as a whole.

We recognize as a government, as do other governments, at times we need to do this. It does not make any one of us on this side of the House happy that we have to do this. We do not want this.

Would the member not acknowledge that all recognized political parties inside the chamber, in one form or another, federal or provincial, have had to do this because it was for the good of the nation or the good of the province?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Other parties do it, but as we heard earlier, public service employees never have a real right to bargain. The problem is that, at both the provincial and federal levels, special legislation is introduced every time.

Governments have that power, and they use it. Public sector employees have not made much headway. Every time they make a demand, they get shot down or the government forces special legislation down their throats. This is unacceptable in a democracy. This right is recognized by the Charter, by the UN, by the International Labour Organization and by everyone.

• (1935)

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak after my colleague from Repentigny. She gave a very clear, rigorous and thorough speech. She made her point. Even though there may be disagreements, she spoke eloquently to support her position, without any vitriol or bitterness. Perhaps that is why she was voted the most collegial member in a Maclean's poll recently.

I have been sitting in on the debate pretty much all day. I listened to the member for Vancouver East, who has also taken a position that is different from that of the government. I was rather touched by her description of the place her postal worker occupies in her life and the life of her family. She mentioned how she would even send letters to her children, so they could receive mail. The letter carrier would bring it to the House. This is a wonderful memory for her.

Canada Post letter carriers and those who work at the counters at postal outlets are a significant part of our lives. When we think about it, letter carriers have visited our homes five days a week for as long as we can remember. In fact, I remember, as a young child, when postal workers would deliver mail six days a week. There was a Saturday morning mail delivery. That was not because postal workers were hard done by. Everybody worked five and a half days a week. I remember my father would work a five-day week and go to work Saturday morning. He would be back home at noon and do whatever chores he had to do around the house.

Unions have improved our lives by pushing for shorter work weeks and fighting for important social programs, better pensions and safer workplaces. The House of Commons administration goes to the max to provide a very safe workplace. That is a product of the work unions have done since they started becoming a fixture of our economy back in the 1920s and 1930s. They are very important.

No one is suggesting postal workers do not work hard. We know they do. We have a cold climate.

Two postal workers visit the building in which my riding office is located. One does the morning shift. He empties the mailboxes in front of the building at 8:30 a.m. and does it while the motor is running. He does not waste any time. He is very friendly. If I happen to be going into the building at the same time, he greets me with a smile. However, he does not have too much time to talk because he has to empty the mailboxes, put the bags in the truck and go on to the next set of mailboxes further down the street.

Government Orders

When my riding office has to send something priority post to the Ottawa office, there is a postal worker who comes to the office to pick up post packages. Again, he does not have much time to waste. At times, when I hear the door open and hear the gentleman's voice, I walk out of my office, ask my assistant where he is and I am told he has left already because he has no time to waste. He takes the priority post parcels and he is out of there. He is working hard.

● (1940)

All the letter carriers who I have known seem to really enjoy their work. They do it with a smile and they do it with an obvious sense of pride. I think they do it with an attitude of pride for a couple of important reasons.

The first is that they like to provide the service. It is a service industry in many ways and it attracts people who want to provide good service and help others. Also, when people work for Canada Post, somehow they feel they are working for the country, which they are. They are working for a Crown corporation, which was a government department at one point, so they are working for Canada. That is how important Canada Post is to our country, and it always has been.

Usually, a Crown corporation serves a purpose that goes beyond any kind of corporate entity. It usually has an important function. We usually create Crown corporations because the service or products they provide are very important for the country, for its economy and for holding the country together.

Therefore, right off the bat, Canada Post is different. It is not GM. It is not Fiat Chrysler. It is not Ford. None of these companies totally dominate the market. When one of these companies goes on strike, consumers have a choice. They can buy a car from a competing manufacturer. That actually influences the bargaining process. The workers at GM can flex their muscle, but if they flex it too much, the company will lose customers and they will not be better off because of that. That is all part of the interplay. That is all part of what the hon. members on the other side called "*rapport de force*", which is normal and healthy.

However, when we are dealing with Canada Post, we are not just dealing with another corporation. We are dealing with an entity that has enormous influence on the economic well-being the country. That is the difference. The challenge is, and has always been, in the public and para-public sector.

I remember when I was younger, the police in Montreal went on strike. It was not a pretty day. Labour relations in the para-public and public sector evolved. In fact, different dispositions were created such that essential services had to be maintained. It is a very different labour relations climate. However, that is how it is with labour relations. As it is with every other aspect of society and the economy, we evolve and we adapt.

The point is that Canada Post has a major impact on the country. Therefore, how do we handle labour negotiations when we deal with Crown corporations that are in many ways essential services? Someone said before, and I think it was my colleague, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, that 70% of online purchases went through Canada Post. That represents an incredible amount of market power. We cannot ignore that.

We have a corporation that plays an important part in the functioning of the country. We have a powerful corporation, because it has large revenues and the management is powerful. We also a powerful union. Members on the other side are saying that the union should be able to flex its muscle as much as it wants to. There is nothing wrong with that motivation. However, at what point do we say that in the interests of Canadians we need to get the two parties to the bargaining table to work out a solution so those who are not part of a union have a voice? They may not have a strong voice because they are a mom and pop shop, or they are entrepreneurs and may not even be incorporated or registered.

● (1945)

Their voice is our voice. Their voice is from those who have been elected to the House of Commons to form the government. They are speaking out in this particular labour conflict. They are telling us the effects.

Where we seem to have a difference of opinion is with members on that side, the NDP, where the prevailing opinion is that there is no problem and that the Canada Post rotating strike is not causing grief to small businesses and their families. We know that many families are supported by small businesses. Even though the prevailing opinion on the other side is that there is no problem, the Retail Council of Canada and various groups that represent small businesses are saying there is a problem and they are feeling the pressure.

Yes, there are alternatives. There is, for example, Federal Express. However, we know that these courier companies do not service the north. What happens when Canada Post is not around to service the north? Do we just drop the north and not worry about it? There are people who are telling us that this is going beyond being a major inconvenience and that it is undermining their economic interests.

There is an issue as to how we manage labour relations in these kinds of situations. There are different approaches.

When I was in university, I remember taking a labour relations course with Professor Carla Lipsig-Mummé, who is very well-respected in the labour movement. I am sure many of the members on the other side know Carla Lipsig-Mumme. She was an excellent professor because she allowed debate from all sides of the political spectrum. Her mission was to stimulate debate.

She was part of the labour movement and was proud to be, and she challenged us. I learned a lot from her. Many of the ideas I had evolved because of her teaching methods. As a matter of fact, she was on the Hill recently, I believe, to talk about work in the 21st century.

Government Orders

We have this challenge as to how to manage labour relations in a Crown corporation which can have a great impact on the economy. I think we found a positive, constructive solution through this legislation, because we talk about naming a mediator or an arbitrator. That person will be neutral. I do not understand why the NDP has this idea that the arbitrator will be a friend of business and that the arbitrator will not care about labour. Just in case the arbitrator had different ideas, what the arbitrator has to consider when mediating and doing arbitration is spelled out in the law. The arbitrator has to take account of principles like equal pay for equal work and ensuring that the health and safety of employees is protected.

Here we have a process that may not be ideal from labour's point of view, because labour obviously wants to flex its muscle as much as possible, and there is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with that at all. It is like when businesses are motivated by profit. These are not dirty words. Every party has its own motivations, but at some point it is the role of government to try to broker a fair solution in the best interests of the country and of those who do not necessarily have an organized voice. That is essentially what the government is doing.

I see there is a lot of consternation on the other side. I did not mean to be this provocative. It is quite interesting that the member for Repentigny, who made the most eloquent defence of labour rights, is not heckling right now. I think that is to her credit.

• (1950)

There are some very good guiding principles. We are not imposing work conditions like the previous Conservative government did. I was in the House when we had the debate on that legislation. The Conservative government at the time was trying to put an end to a labour dispute and I understand that, but I think it went a little too far. It was trying to make some kind of point, some kind of anti-labour point, which is clearly not in the DNA of the Liberal Party or the Liberal government regardless of what is coming from the other side.

This an attempt to find a fair solution. The labour movement has contributed greatly to improving working conditions. What Carla Lipsig-Mummé taught me was that unions have not only improved labour conditions for people who work in unions, but also for the entire society by the programs that they have fought for.

Is my time up, Mr. Speaker?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Apparently I may be the cause of some uproar, but a minute or so ago I was putting up five fingers to indicate five minutes. It is now three and a half.

The hon. member understands that he has time left in his speech, but I think he is finished.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Liberal members are making some insensitive jokes about the issue that we are facing here tonight. One thing my friend said that I want to take umbrage with—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member across the way is imputing motives of this side of the House. The government—

The Speaker: Order. This sounds like debate to me and, of course, we are supposed to have debate, but not on the point of order.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the motivations of the Liberals throughout this entire debate has been insensitive to the working rights of people across this country. I heard a comment from my friend in the middle of his speech where he said that unions are right to try to flex their muscles.

What is happening with our postal workers right now across this country is they are standing up for the basic conditions of labour rights in this country which are constitutionally protected. This is not some sort of muscle-flexing exercise on behalf of postal workers. They are defending their constitutionally protected right to have free and fair bargaining which Liberals undermined when they indicated several weeks ago that they would be prepared to introduce the legislation which we have here today.

I am wondering if my friend understands the fundamental principle of free and fair collective bargaining protected in our constitutional rights which the Liberals are undermining when they introduce legislation like this. They are thereby undermining the whole process because management knows the Liberals are going to have management's back if it is in some sort of dispute with workers, especially when workers are fighting for rights not only for themselves, but for workers right across this country.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich. Those are the terms that the other side has been using all afternoon.

[*Translation*]

They have spoken about the balance of power and showing strength. This is the terminology members on the other side have been using. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be stronger.

Does the NDP think it is wrong for the labour movement to want to have a good balance of power? This is not a bad thing. I would even say that it is healthy to want a good balance of power and free negotiations. However, a free negotiation requires that consumers have options.

For an essential service like postal services, health care or what have you, we are not talking about a free market with companies, unions and free negotiations. Negotiations with a government or Crown corporation can have far-reaching impacts on the public interest.

The idea of a balance of power is not a bad one, and that is the terminology that both parties on the other side have been using all day.

Government Orders

•(1955)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this truly is a black Friday for labour negotiations and unions across Canada. I am very proud of the work done by the men and women who deliver postal services in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. I want to read something that came from the communiqué earlier this morning from CUPW:

This morning, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) condemned the [Liberal] government's back-to-work legislation.

When one looks at what is happening here, and I think about how important the unions were in creating the kind of Canada we have today and the kinds of benefits they brought to all workers in Canada, one wonders whether those would have happened if back-to-work legislation was in place when those improvements were being suggested for Canadians. We then add to that closure on a super-closure, which is doubling down on doublespeak in this House.

I want to try to understand how the member can possibly say that Liberals support unions and labour in Canada when they are bringing in back-to-work legislation and closure on a super-closure on debate?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, are we saying then that the NDP does not support labour because provincial NDP governments over time and across history have brought in back-to-work legislation? Are we saying that the Bloc Québécois does not support labour because the PQ government in Quebec in the 1980s was pretty heavy-handed with back-to-work legislation? No, that is not what we are saying.

We are saying that this is an attempt to bring some equality to the relationship. Line number three of the bill stipulates that, on the coming into force of the act, "the employer must resume without delay, or continue, as the case may be, postal services". There is obviously an obligation on the union as well. In the bill there are also, as we have talked about during this debate all day, key principles the arbitrator must adhere to. These are principles important to labour, such as, equal pay for equal work and health and safety in the workplace.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want everybody to know I lost my speaking spot for that cheap shot. I want to make sure I am praising our labour community in Windsor—Tecumseh. Our union workers, Local 630, and their president Phil Lyons, have been watching this all unfold. Because they feel so strongly about Canada Post infrastructure and the service they provide, they put together an amazing report called "Delivering Community Power" with other postal workers.

They are the kind of people being undermined today. I have no idea what they are trying to tell themselves on the other side to get through the night, but this is not bargaining in good faith. It is a shame we have to be here tonight to explain all of this to them. The real champions in all this are the working people in Canada who have built this country. Our postal workers are an immense part of that. There is absolutely no reason for us to keep hearing more and more of this rhetoric and explaining away how they are not really

taking away any bargaining rights. It is just so insulting to everyone here tonight. What a ridiculous, argumentative logic to say that they have guiding principles when they are taking away bargaining in good faith.

Do you really know what bargaining in good faith means?

•(2000)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members to speak through the Speaker. I am sure the hon. member did not want my opinion on what good faith bargaining is.

I will let the member for Lac-Saint-Louis answer that.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing that prevents the two sides from continuing to negotiate. There is a mediator who has been appointed, a mediator-arbitrator. At some point, if the two parties do not bargain in good faith, then the arbitrator has a mandate to choose the best last offer. It is in the interest of both parties to negotiate in good faith.

I would like to say to the hon. member that I have met many times with representatives of the postal union. I have met with them to discuss options such as postal banking, and to listen to their ideas on how we can make Canada Post profitable and still gainfully employ Canadian postal workers. I am proud of that fact.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 8:01 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 25 and of the amendment now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

•(2030)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 946)

YEAS

Members

Angus

Benson

Blaikie
Boulerice
Brousseau
Caron
Christopherson
Donnelly
Dusseau
Fortin
Hughes
Julian
Laverdière
Maril
Mathysen
Nantel
Quach
Sansoucy
Stetski
Trudel

Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boutin-Sweet
Cannings
Choquette
Cullen
Dubé
Duvall
Hardeastle
Jolibois
Kwan
MacGregor
Masse (Windsor West)
Moore
Paupé
Ramsey
Ste-Marie
Thériault
Weir — 38

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Aldag
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hardie
Hogg
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Khalid
Lake
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lighthound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Mihychuk
(Soeurs)
Monsef
Murray
Nault

Albas
Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Barlow
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brisson
Carr
Chagger
Chen
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Hajdu
Hébert
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khera
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney

McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)

Morrissey
Nassif
Ng

Government Orders

O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Picard
Poissant
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandenbeld
Virani
Webber
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Petipas Taylor
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Simms
Sorbara
Stanton
Tan
Vandal
Vaughan
Waugh
Wilson-Raybould
Yip
Zahid — 172

PAIRED

Members

Beaulieu
Cornier
Gill
Sikand

Boudrias
Fry
Plamondon
Whalen — 8

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

● (2035)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (2050)

[English]

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Hon. members will notice that some members voted and then left the room, and that will be taken into account when the votes are tallied. They will not be counted.

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 947*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barlow
Baylis	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhalival	Dhillon
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fuhr
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Harvey	Hébert
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lake	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Petipas Taylor
Picard	Poilievre

Poissant	Qualtrough
Reid	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stanton	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Waugh	Webber
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesniewski
Yip	Young
Zahid — 173	

NAYS

Members

Boutin-Sweet	Brosseau
Caron	Choquette
Fortin	Hughes
Marcil	Mathysen
Paupé	St-Marie
Thériault	Trudel
Weir — 13	

PAIRED

Members

Beaulieu	Boudrias
Cormier	Fry
Gill	Plamondon
Sikand	Whalen — 8

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier today some confusion was caused when the government House leader left her chair during a vote, apparently not aware of the rules. Today a number of NDP members left their seats during the vote, quite aware of the rules and upset because the super closure motion that just passed disenfranchises them with respect to an important debate about the rights of workers in Canada and that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. I am afraid that is debate. The hon. House leader did come to the Chair and mention that her vote was not to be counted when she did get up.

* * *

POSTAL SERVICES RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION ACT

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.) moved that Bill C-89, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, a charter statement for an act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services.

Government Orders

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that this labour dispute has come to this point. I spoke at length yesterday about everything we did to try to help the parties arrive at a deal, and I want to reiterate that our government is committed to free and collective bargaining and the collective bargaining process. We know that a negotiated agreement—

Some hon. members: Shame, shame!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order.

Resuming debate, the hon. minister of employment.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, it is emotional, and I appreciate the emotion. I appreciate the discomfort many workers feel, but we do believe that negotiated agreements are always the best solution. In fact, why we believe that is because we believe that when two parties can negotiate together, it results in a strong collective agreement that actually builds and fosters positive labour relations in a corporation.

We ran on a commitment to restore fair and balanced labour laws and union management relations, and I remain committed to upholding—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (2055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. I am trying to hear what the minister has to say, but I am hearing chatter and shouting across. I want to remind hon. members—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. I did not point out any one person. It is the chatter going back and forth that is causing the disturbance. I would like to hear what the hon. minister has to say.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, we were also elected to make life better for middle-class Canadians, including owners of small and medium-sized businesses and workers all across Canada. With this time of year being the busiest retail season, Canadians need to be able to count on Canada Post to deliver the goods Canadians and businesses need.

Let me tell the House about Maureen Lyons, the owner of Mo McQueen and Sons, in Winnipeg. She is a stay-at-home mom with four children and a health disability. Here is what she had to say about the labour disruption:

If by the end of the week, by some miracle, things could resume or at least the shopping public's faith in the system of delivery could be restored, I think it would help a great deal.

We are as grassroots as it gets. I don't make a ton of money as it is. It is so frustrating. We're the little guys. And I'm not just a seller... I'm also trying to find things for my own children for Christmas that I can't get.

The Minister of Public Services and Procurement and I have been in touch with the parties directly on numerous occasions to urge them to continue to work towards reaching agreements. Despite all the efforts I listed yesterday, the two parties remain unable to find common ground on a number of outstanding issues related to wages, job security and workload.

With more than 200 communities across the country directly impacted by the strikes, we cannot afford to wait any longer. I will

repeat: Our government does not take back-to-work legislation lightly. This is the first time our government is using this tool, and we believe it should only be used as a last resort. That belief has not changed for me personally or for our government. However, having exhausted all other possibilities, we believe it is the only remaining option.

This is about protecting the public interest and avoiding further harm to Canadian businesses and communities, and indeed Canadians who rely on Canada Post. Older Canadians, persons with disabilities, low-income earners and Canadians living in rural, remote and northern areas who rely on physical mail delivery, including indigenous peoples in some of the most remote communities in our country, are disproportionately affected when their access to physical mail delivery is disrupted.

The cost of postal alternatives, such as courier companies, can be prohibitively high, especially in rural and remote communities. In some remote northern areas, there are no alternatives. Canadians in the north are twice as reliant on parcel delivery services as the rest of Canadians.

Stephanie Destree of The Silk Road Spice Merchant, in Calgary, says, "Sometimes we ship to more rural places, so we go with Canada Post. We are finding delays when we use Canada Post, and sometimes up to three weeks of delays."

A Toronto Star reader sent the following letter to the editor:

While mail disruption is an inconvenience to many of us living in Canada, it is an impossible situation for those in remote fly-in communities in Northern Canada.

Unlike other Canadians who have options of private courier services, those living in these regions must rely on Canada Post for all of their deliveries.

Through a newly formed non-profit organization...I am personally involved in sending much-needed food to shelters and soup kitchens; warm clothing to the homeless, poor and elderly; school supplies and food to daycares and schools in both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories...

For many of these children, these will be the only gifts they receive this year.

The postal strike has played havoc with our efforts to get these gifts to the children in time for Christmas. Besides the time delays and uncertainty of delivery, there is an added expense of about \$1,000 to upgrade our service level to Express Post in the hopes these parcels will receive faster service when the strike action rotates.

Weather is always a concern in the winter in getting parcels to the North in a timely manner but the strikes have made it an incredibly difficult and expensive challenge.

That was from Beverley Mitchell in Toronto.

Nearly nine million Canadians, about 30% of our population, live in rural and remote areas, where access to the Internet can be extremely limited. Today is Black Friday, and so many businesses depend on their sales today and through to the end of the holiday season to survive. This has real human impacts. Small business owners are our neighbours, and they are also significant employers in our country. We are looking at job losses and lower hours at a time of year when so many families are already over-extended.

Jim Danahy, CEO of Customer Lab, says:

We have Indigenous population in very small and sometimes isolated communities that you can only reach by water or by air. So, in those cases, the local economies can be hit quite significantly.

Government Orders

● (2100)

At the same time, our reputation as a reliable market for commerce and trade is at risk, because international partners are not able to ship mail and parcel shipments on to Canada Post. I spoke yesterday about small e-sellers whose razor-thin margins leave many of them unable to afford the higher cost of shipping through courier companies. In the event of a lengthy postal strike, many companies, particularly smaller e-commerce companies, may not make it through the season. Forty percent of online sales take place in the fourth quarter, which the strike is currently impacting.

Canadians expect us to act. We have done everything we could, and this is a last resort. That is why we are introducing this legislation, which I will take a few minutes to explain.

The legislation we are introducing today would order an immediate end to the worker stoppages and the resumption and continuation of postal services at noon EST on the day after the day on which it receives royal assent. The most recent collective agreements will be extended until new collective agreements are established.

To help the parties find common ground on outstanding issues, an impartial mediator-arbitrator will be appointed. The parties will have an opportunity to choose the mediator-arbitrator, and within 48 hours of coming into force of the bill, the parties will need to provide me with names of three persons to serve as the mediator-arbitrator. If the parties fail to propose the same person, one will be appointed from this list, taking into consideration advice from the chairperson of the Canada Industrial Relations Board. This is to ensure the impartiality of the individual who will be chosen.

The legislation would provide for the mediator-arbitrator to resolve all outstanding issues through mediation, or if mediation fails on particular issues, arbitrate them through an arbitration model of his or her choice based on guiding principles. The mediator-arbitrator will have seven days to mediate all outstanding issues between the parties, which can be extended to a maximum of 14 days if the parties consent. If the parties fail to reach agreements within the mediation period, the mediator-arbitrator must arbitrate all outstanding issues within 90 days of his or her appointment.

I will now talk about the principles that will guide the mediator-arbitrator's decisions. These have been crafted carefully to provide a balance to the mediator-arbitrator and take into consideration the concerns that we have heard throughout the negotiating process. They are: to ensure the health and safety of all employees; to ensure the fair treatment of temporary, part-time and other employees in non-standard employment as compared to full-time, permanent employees; to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Canada Post; to create a culture of collaborative labour-management relations; and for high-quality service to be provided by Canada Post at a reasonable price to Canadians. The union and Canada Post can reach a voluntary agreement at any time before the mediator-arbitrator submits his or her final report to me, which would end the mediation-arbitration process.

I believe that we have taken the steps to ensure that everything possible has been done and is done through this proposed legislation to encourage the parties to reach agreement fairly and swiftly while

in the meantime ensure services at Canada Post resume, preventing further harm. That is why I urge all of my hon. colleagues to vote in support of this legislation.

I reiterate that our government does not take this legislation lightly. We have worked hard to restore fairness and balance to the labour landscape in Canada since coming into office. Through Bill C-4, our government's first piece of legislation and our first official act in Parliament, we repealed two private members' bills that undermined unions; one that imposed excessive reporting requirements on unions, and a second that made it harder for workers to unionize. Since then, we have introduced legislation and programs that improve the lives of Canadian workers and strengthen the labour movement.

As I mentioned before, we did not intervene early, because we believe in the collective bargaining process. We believe that the collective bargaining process results in the best outcomes: strong agreements and a positive workplace culture. However, we also have a responsibility to Canadians and to the businesses that drive our economy, and when the consequences of a work stoppage become so great that they begin to result in serious and, if left unchecked, lasting harm, we have to act.

We will continue to support the parties through every means possible, as we have done from the very beginning. We strongly encourage them to reach agreements as soon as possible, and we will continue to provide the parties with the tools they need to do so.

As I said earlier, the best agreements are always the ones that parties arrive at themselves. This proposed legislation allows the parties to reach a voluntary agreement at any time before the mediator-arbitrator submits his or her final report to the minister, which would end the mediator-arbitrator process.

● (2105)

We are in no way legislating an agreement. This legislation is about ensuring the process exists to find one. The well-being of Canadians and the viability of many Canadian businesses depend on a speedy resolution. I urge everyone in this House to support this legislation so we can make that happen as quickly as possible. Canadians are counting on us.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, “the sky is falling, the sky is falling”. This is a rotating strike, not the end of the world. At this point, workers have grievances they have brought forth and the current government undermined every step of that by announcing ahead of time that it would intervene.

Government Orders

The minister is a woman who claims to be progressive. I would like to remind her that back in 1981 there was a full postal strike that lasted for 41 days without intervention from the government. After those 41 days, an agreement was reached that granted maternity leave for the first time in the federal public service union. I would ask the minister this. Does she truly believe that, if the government at the time had intervened and asked a mediator or an arbitrator to come in, that maternity leave that was non-existent in the whole public service would have been granted to the union?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concern about using back-to-work legislation. However, I will remind him that seven different NDP premiers, on 15 different occasions, have used back-to-work legislation when they have not been able to resolve disputes between parties. In fact, some members of his own caucus have voted in favour of that back-to-work legislation, so I know that he understands that this is a very difficult decision for governments to take.

Having said that, as I said in my speech, there are many Canadians who are relying on us to restore Canada Post service in a prompt way. That does not just include small and medium-sized businesses and e-commerce businesses, that also includes Canadians in very vulnerable positions in rural and remote communities who have no other way to get the goods they rely on into their communities.

We will always support the collective bargaining process. We have done so throughout these negotiations. We are confident this legislation will allow the parties to continue to work toward a deal they arrive at together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the International Labour Organization and the Supreme Court of Canada recognize the right to strike, which is inextricably tied to the right to negotiate working conditions. In fact, these organizations recognize that strikes cause economic hardship and that strikers are the first to suffer.

However, that is the price to pay to achieve a strong bargaining position in a negotiated collective agreement. That is the price to pay to maintain a minimum of economic and social cohesion. When the government passes back-to-work legislation under a gag order, such as this one, it puts at risk social peace for the economic benefit of the Amazons of this world.

I do not understand how a government that claims to be progressive can introduce such an anti-progressive law as this. How can it endorse this penny-wise, pound-foolish approach that will sacrifice social peace in the longer term? Shame on you.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Personally, I have nothing to be ashamed of. Before giving the floor to the minister, I would remind the hon. member to address his questions to the chair.

The Minister of Employment.

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite points out that the right to strike is protected by the charter. This union has been striking for five weeks. Prior to that, the parties were negotiating for over a year. We provided them with every tool possible. We started

with a federal mediation service. A variety of different mediators of all different seniority levels helped them through the early conversations. There was still an impasse. I appointed a special mediator. I appointed a special mediator again. I have met with the parties. We have had conversations with the parties. We have worked very closely with the parties. I have been at their disposal to have conversations whenever they wanted to. We know that these parties are very far apart at this point. They have worked at the table, but have not reached a deal.

Canadians rely on a Canada Post service that is delivering for them. Whether it is Canadians in rural and remote communities who are relying on essential goods and services delivered by Canada Post or small businesses that may not see another year if they cannot make the money that they typically make in a Christmas season, these are people in our communities, people who are employers, people who rely on Canada Post.

● (2110)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that when a question is asked the answer should actually be of a similar length, and I do believe the minister is actually repeating her speech, and at much longer pace than the member's question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): That is normally the case in committee, but when it is open like this, it is as long as the question takes, and within reason. However, I would ask hon. members to keep it brief, because I notice there are quite a few people who want to ask questions.

Also, while I am giving directions, I would ask members to remember to place their questions through the Chair. I know it is an emotional topic, and people's emotions get out of hand sometimes and they start talking directly at each other, and that will cause nothing but problems.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her leadership, for her speech in which she outlined a balanced approach to the mediation arbitration framework, for her recognition of the importance of collective bargaining and for the strong conclusion that this legislation is a measure of last resort.

Just before coming to the House tonight I had a chance to speak to one of my constituents who is a postal worker and member of CUPW. She and I spoke about the importance of health and safety for the women and men who work for Canada Post, particularly in the winter months. I wonder if the minister could share with the House her views of the importance of safety standards within the framework that is being proposed.

Government Orders

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the fact that members from all parties are talking to the union members. There are a variety of different concerns and perspectives out there, and those are very useful conversations, so I want to thank the member for taking the time to do that.

He is absolutely right. We have concern for the health and safety of all Canadian workers. That is why one of the principles that will be provided to the mediator-arbitrator is to consider the health and safety concerns of workers and to make sure that whatever agreement is negotiated, those concerns are considered quite seriously.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if the minister is aware that the injury rate of postal workers is more than five times that of other workers in the public sector. Many of these injuries are debilitating, very serious injuries. They are the key reason for the rotating strikes we have been seeing. Does the minister believe that given this injury rate, Canada Post is meeting its obligation to provide a safe work environment, and does she condone the perpetuation of such unsafe working conditions?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, my answer is essentially the same as to the member who spoke before her. In fact, yes, we are concerned for the health and safety of all Canadian workers. We have heard concerns from the union about the health and safety of their members, and we know that has been one of the issues that has been negotiated around and about. That is why we have included the health and safety of workers in the principles the mediator must consider.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been here the majority of the day listening to the debate that has been going back and forth, and one of the questions I continually ask the NDP is: where is that threshold of knowing that we have done enough work and that it is time to bring in a piece of legislation to move the process along? I cannot get an answer from New Democrats. They refuse to give me a straight answer on that. Therefore, I would like to ask the minister a question along the same lines. Is she confident that everything has been done to the point that we now are required to bring in this legislation? Is she confident that this is the right time to do that?

• (2115)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, there still is time for the parties to reach the deal themselves. However, having said that, I know that my department and the team that works so diligently at my department have given every effort to help these parties reach a negotiated agreement together.

As I pointed out, the mediation services started well over a year ago with the two parties. When it became apparent that the two parties were not going to reach an agreement with federal mediation services, I appointed a special mediator. That special mediator was reappointed. He was reappointed again. We have communicated on an ongoing basis with both the union and the employer, and we know that the time has come. Canadians rely on the service, so we must take the next step.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have talked a lot about some of the consequences of the rotating strikes over the last several weeks. Those on the NDP, the Conservative and Liberal

sides may disagree on a few issues when it comes to labour, but what it comes down to, in many cases, is how we approach these situations.

During the 2015 election, the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party made a lot of promises. They promised never to take veterans back to court. They promised to have modest deficits. They promised to do things differently. They promised to have a new relationship with labour. All of those promises have since been broken, including the promise to restore door-to-door mail delivery. Therefore, I can certainly understand the frustration with members of CUPW and employees of Canada Post as they see this as a betrayal of those promises that were made in the 2015 election.

Small businesses across Canada will feel the same way. They are frustrated that it has come to this point. The Liberals have said many times today that they were in negotiations with the employees of Canada Post for more than a year. They could have addressed these situations much earlier, with more definitive action. Here we are at a crisis point during the busiest season for Canada Post employees, but also the most important season for small businesses and SMEs across Canada.

Our small businesses rely on the revenue they make during the holiday season. Today is Black Friday. Cyber Monday is coming up. We just had American Thanksgiving and the Christmas season is around the corner. Businesses rely on the sales they will make over the next couple months to get them through the rest of the year. We have heard that small businesses across the country are losing upward of \$3,000 a month in lost sales because of the work disruptions at Canada Post.

I completely understand the situation and the concerns of Canada Post employees and CUPW members. However, this is a significant and profound impact on Canada's economy. Thousands of small businesses across the country have told us that many of them will not be able to sustain their businesses not necessarily through the Christmas season, but in the months afterwards if they do not have the revenue they would normally make now.

We also have to take a look at the ripple effect of that lost revenue. I know there are stay-at-home moms or dads, or single moms or dads or college and university students, who look for those jobs over the Christmas season to augment their salaries, or help pay their tuition, or put money away for their first car or a down payment on a home. Many of our small businesses across the country are not going to be hiring that additional staff because they simply do not have the reliable revenue stream because of the disruption in Canada Post.

I cannot stress enough that it is not just people coming in the door or ordering merchandise online. It is also their accounts receivable are not being delivered or being delivered at a much slower pace because of the rotating strikes.

Government Orders

Again, I do not think any of us in the House question the commitment and determination of our Canada Post employees. Looking at the weather over the last few days, we can understand some of the hardships they face doing their jobs. However, it is also important that they do their job. The Canadian economy relies on that.

Our small businesses rely on a reliable postal service to reach their customers, to pay their bills and just to do their day to day business. Nowhere is that more important than in rural communities across the country.

I have a rural riding in southwest Alberta. I do not have any major centres, but I do have very small communities that rely on Canada Post. Businesses rely on Canada Post because many of them have embraced new technology and have been selling their wares online.

● (2120)

I have several businesses in my riding that have had great success or found new opportunities by marketing not only across Alberta and the country, but around the world. One company that comes to mind is Chinook Honey Company just outside of Okotoks, which was a small beef farm only a few years ago. Now it markets its honey and honey products around the world, including its award-winning honey mead.

These companies were successful with their local marketing, but the opportunity to mail their products and market online around the world has opened up new opportunities for them. Once again, they rely on the Christmas season to survive through the winter. We cannot underestimate the impact a potential job action has on them.

One of the other things we should talk about is something I have heard a lot from people on both sides of the floor. They are saying that by having back-to-work legislation, we are somehow catering to the big corporations. In some ways, that is certainly the case. Big corporations rely on Canada Post as well. However, big corporations can also negotiate much better contracts with private sector delivery models, whether that is UPS or other couriers. Small companies do not have that same kind of leverage. They rely on Canada Post.

Many of our small and remote communities do not have any other option. They are held captive by Canada Post, and Canada Post usually provides a very reliable service. However, when we have a job disruption at the worst possible time, we can see how that will impact small businesses. It is not just corporations that are being impacted. These are owners of mom and pop shops who have found great opportunities by marketing their products online.

The other issue I want to raise when it comes to job action is the fact that many of our constituents also depend on reliable mail service. I know the Liberal government has made agreements to ensure government cheques, including child benefits and student loans, will be delivered to residents. However, that does not include cheques going to small and large SMEs that are doing business with the government. Those, at times, can be very significant revenue streams on which businesses rely and to which they will not have access because similar agreements with government departments were not reached with them. In many remote communities, the Canada Post postal service is their only option. They do not have any alternative, which makes this quite critical.

I also want to talk briefly about the international consequences. Canada Post has requested that no international post, including the United States postal service and the United Kingdom, send any mail until the backlog is clear. I know there has been some discussion tonight and throughout the day on the veracity of the backlog. Regardless of what that backlog is, when Canada Post tells other countries not to send their mail to Canada, that is a concern. It is a concern in several ways and I will address them.

It is naive to think that we do not have Canadian businesses, small and large, that do business in other countries. If they are not able to stay in touch with clients in other countries or jurisdictions, that will impact their ability to operate. It is also going to impact their ability if they are ordering parts or machinery or goods and services from other countries they can no longer access. That will also have a significant impact on their ability to do business.

It also impedes our trading relationship with other countries. Being unable to do business over the busiest time of the year further erodes the trust we have with our trading partners and our allies around the world. That comes at a small business level and at a corporate level both ways. We cannot forget the impact this has on our international reputation. Over 190 countries are part of the Universal Postal Union. The reaching of this is quite profound. We cannot ignore that.

● (2125)

Just today a small business owner, from Nova Scotia of all places, which is nowhere near my riding, told me he had heard the discussions today and really appreciated the fact that the Conservatives, in their presentations and interventions, were standing up for small business owners.

Small business owners feel like they have been attacked under the Liberal government. It started with the proposed small business tax changes that were tabled a year ago. If it was not for mom and pop business owners and farmers and ranchers standing up, saying "We're not going to stand for this" and had their small business tax revolt, the Liberal government would have gone ahead with those tax changes. In many cases, some of those tax changes still exist, especially when it comes to passive income.

Small business owners have been hit with tax increases on payroll, CPP and EI. Now the Liberal government and the Prime Minister are going to impose a federal carbon tax and putting a tax on a tax by charging it on GST and HST. All of these things add additional regulation, red tape and obstacles to small business owners.

Over the past year, when small business owners across the country saw this impending crisis coming well on the horizon, they fully expected the Liberal government to take action. However, again, the Liberal government waited until the very last minute. At the eleventh hour, the government decided to step up and do something about it.

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This started even further back when the Liberals took power in government. The Liberals knew when they took over as government, they had Canada Post as a Crown corporation. They knew there were seven or eight vacancies, and my numbers could be a bit off, on the Canada Post board. Despite a committee going across the country and talking about Canada Post and ways to improve its services and labour relations, those seven or eight vacancies remained. Canada Post still has an interim president. The government has not named a full-time president yet.

How is a Crown corporation supposed to negotiate in good faith with its largest union without having an actual board of directors and a president in place? The government should have filled these roles and these vacancies as quickly as possible. It has had more than three years to do so. That is plenty enough time to fill vacancies on the Canada Post board and certainly the position of president, knowing the issues it would be facing.

Now we find ourselves having a late night, addressing a situation that should have never reached this crisis point.

There is another thing I want to mention that is disappointing, and I echo the concerns raised by my NDP colleagues throughout the day. We have talked about this a bit. The NDP and I certainly will not agree on a lot of issues, but one thing we do agree on is the importance of democracy and the importance of members of this place having the opportunity to speak for their constituents. Several of our constituents are in the gallery tonight and have expressed their concerns. I appreciate that. They should be passionate. We are all passionate about this issue. That is one of the reasons we are here.

An issue of this magnitude is going to impact people's lives, certainly the lives of members of CUPW, but also business owners across Canada. We have been hearing from them all week. The Liberal government has given us less than a couple of hours at each stage to debate this back-to-work legislation.

I and my NDP colleagues will absolutely disagree on the steps we took in 2011, but the one thing we did do, and the one thing I am proud of, is that we did not push legislation through. We ensured that every member who wanted the opportunity to speak for his or her constituents had the opportunity at each stage to get up and do so. Members had the opportunity to speak for their constituents. They had the opportunity to speak their minds. They had the opportunity to debate the veracity of the back-to-work legislation.

● (2130)

That has not been the case tonight and it seems to be a growing trend, including with things like the 850-page omnibus budget bill. They let us down. Again, during the election campaign in 2015, the Liberals said there would be no more omnibus budget bills or omnibus bills of any kind, that they would never do that, that they were going to build a new relationship with labour, that they were going to restore door-to-door mail delivery, that they would never take veterans to court, that there would be electoral reform and that they would have modest deficits. None of those things have happened. It has been broken promise after broken promise. It is death by 1,000 cuts.

We have heard the frustration from Canadians tonight. It erodes their confidence in the government. We may agree, we may agree to

disagree, we may understand one person's viewpoint from another's, but at least we understand that we are coming from the same position. However, when Canadians were told one thing, hand over heart by the Liberals, during the 2015 campaign, they could believe they were voting for something. Throughout their mandate, the Liberals have broken those promises again and again and we have seen the consequences of that here today.

One of the frustrations the Liberals have to take responsibility for is their broken promises from the 2015 campaign and not giving members of the House the opportunity to practise their democratic right, including a frank discussion on the legitimacy of the legislation before us tonight.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been here throughout the day and was here a good portion of yesterday listening to the debate and what people are saying about the current process. I want to emphasize that this is not an easy decision for the government. At times, governments need to make some very difficult decisions. We have seen these sorts of decisions being made at the national and provincial levels. All political parties, even New Democrats and the premiers, have had to bring in legislation of this nature because it was deemed in the best interest of the community as a whole.

If we look at what this government has done since day one, we see that it has gone out of its way to promote and encourage labour harmony by repealing some of the legislation that Stephen Harper brought in, and many different initiatives.

Would the member, at the very least, recognize the difference between the legislation we are proposing that would continue to allow negotiations in good faith versus the legislation Stephen Harper introduced?

● (2135)

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about all of the things the Liberals allegedly did differently. They are in the same position. They do not have an agreement, they have brought forward back-to-work legislation and they have left everything until the 11th hour. I go back to the Trans Mountain pipeline as an example. They knew what the situation was when they became government in 2015, and yet they did nothing.

The member talks about governments taking action and having to make tough decisions. Absolutely, I could not agree more, but they never make the tough decisions. They wait. I heard all day yesterday that they were hoping an agreement would be reached, that they were hoping this and hoping that. Hope does not do it and the Trans Mountain pipeline is a perfect example. They waited until there was a crisis and ended up buying a 60-year-old pipeline and have not gotten the real pipeline built.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the hon. member said that he and I would likely disagree on how the Harper government handled the postal negotiations in 2011, and he is absolutely right about that. He said in his speech that the government has an obligation to Canadians and to small business owners to make sure that the mail is delivered, and he is absolutely right about that.

Government Orders

What is wrong is to suggest that that is somehow in opposition to our very real obligation to postal workers, and that somehow it is acceptable to undermine their right to bargain collectively in order to meet those obligations.

The government ought to have been acting on the egregious injury rate at Canada Post. It should be instructing management to do something about it. It should be giving management a mandate to go to the table and get something done, and take the demands of the union seriously. Then we could get a negotiated settlement.

The reason we do not have one is that management has not had a mandate from the government. That is the elephant in the room. We are being led to believe that there is this great opposition between the interests of small businesses and Canadians on the one hand, and postal workers on the other, but the big red elephant in the room is the government, which has sat idly by, watching Canada Post workers get injured time and time again and not done anything about it.

Could we please stop suggesting that somehow there is an opposition between the interests of Canadians and small businesses that rightly want their mail, the postal workers who want to deliver it but just want to come home healthy at the end of the day to their families with the mail delivered. It is not true that their interests are in opposition.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, this is going to be a red letter day, because we agree yet again.

I could not agree more, and I did mention in my speech that I do not think there is opposition between small business and Canada Post workers. I think I made that quite clear. They both understand they cannot operate without each another.

The problem here is that the responsibility lays solely at the feet of the Liberal government. It has been in power for more than three and a half years. It does not have a president for Canada Post. It does not have a full board of directors for Canada Post. How is any direction supposed to be given to a company of that size if there is no leadership?

We should not really be surprised, because that has been the way the Liberal government has exercised its mandate all the way through, with its lack of leadership and inability to make tough decisions and to take definitive action well before we hit a crisis point. That is where we find ourselves once again.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank the member for his intervention tonight. I learned a lot in the debate. Many of the comments are fair.

One of the comments that stuck with me was the discussion about the erosion of trust in the government, whether we are talking about this as a result of omnibus bills or other broken promises the government has failed to deliver on. That quite rightly puts in people's mind the question of erosion of trust in the government.

The big picture here is that Canada Post obviously supplies a lot of people with important things. There are the seniors who get medications and certain products through the mail, and the

businesses, small, medium and large businesses, that use Canada Post.

One of the results of the 2011 lockout and the subsequent back-to-work legislation was that a lot of people just stopped using Canada Post as their go-to source. That certainly diminishes the corporation's ability to function, as well as to serve more people, which makes it harder for it and the union to come to good terms.

As this erosion that he talked about wears away at Canada Post, because people do not depend on it like they usually would, is that not the real loss here?

● (2140)

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, my colleague hit a lot of key points in his question.

One of the unfortunate things that we are seeing is certainly that erosion in the trust of Canadians, whether CUPW workers or small business owners, in Canada Post. We have to ensure that we have a reliable service, and we talked about how important it is for our rural and remote communities, and certainly businesses of all size across Canada. However, as result of this, and as my colleague just mentioned, there is this erosion of trust on all sides, whether one is a small business owner, a member of CUPW, or an average Canadian who is unable to get out Christmas cards, not to mention the kids across Canada who may not get their letters delivered to Santa.

The fact is that the Liberal government made a lot of promises in that 2015 election. One that we have not really talked about today is the promise to restore door-to-door delivery. I say this recognizing that we have CUPW members here tonight. However, that was a significant pillar in the Liberals' election promises that never came to fruition.

Whenever one makes big promises and does not follow through or even try to follow through on them, including on a great promise made during an election, then the trust of everyday Canadians is eroded every single time. We are seeing that come to a head today. We have small business owners, Canada Post employees, as well as average Canadians and none of them can trust anything the Liberal government is telling them tonight. Why should they trust the Liberal government tonight when it says it has the back of Canada Post employees and certainly has the backs of small business owners? They are saying: "Yeah right, I have heard all of this before. Let me know when you come through and then we'll start talking."

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that my friend is fair-minded, and I would hope that he would see the difference.

When the Conservatives brought forward their back-to-work legislation, they had rigged the game for Canada Post from the outset. They brought in a final-presentation arbitrator who was appointed without any consultation. The arbitrator did not understand French and did not have any labour background. The judge booted that person out. The second arbitrator who came in was a failed Conservative candidate. When the arbitration was complete, they had even arbitrated the pay level to a lower rate than what Canada Post had already agreed to pay CUPW. That game was rigged.

Government Orders

This is a completely different approach with mediation-arbitration.

Mr. John Barlow: Mr. Speaker, this is kind of the crux of this problem. I appreciate my colleague's question, but again, he is going back to something that happened seven years ago. It is time for the Liberals to take responsibility for the situation they have placed themselves in now. This is their failed negotiation. This is their failed promise. They need to take responsibility for it once and for all.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as you can see, there are very few of our NDP colleagues here. The reason, as you saw, is that we decided to protest the Liberal government's disrespectful approach to this situation by walking out during the vote on the super closure motion to prevent a real debate on the bill.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member in his statement referenced the fact that some members might not be in the House. As you know, Mr. Speaker, it is not appropriate to do that. Perhaps you could remind the member of that.

• (2145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is a point of order, but I thought I would let it slide.

[Translation]

Would the hon. member like to retract his statement?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I did not name any MP.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Okay. I will allow the hon. member to continue.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, my Kingston colleague's speech is indicative of the problem. To them, this is a big joke. Our members were respectfully speaking out against this approach, but people across the way, especially cabinet members, were laughing out loud at what was going on.

When we are debating a bill that will take away 50,000 Canadians' right to strike, a modicum of decorum and respectful parliamentary debate is called for. We did not see that from the government—

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Oh, oh!

Mr. Guy Caron: We did not see that from the member for Gatineau either, Mr. Speaker.

The reason we walked out is that this kind of bill, which takes away people's right to strike, is very serious. The government and the Minister of Labour said that the situation had gone far enough and they had no choice but to take action. First of all, it is not a general strike; it is a rotating strike. Service is still being provided, unlike what happened during the 1981 strike I mentioned in my question. That was a general strike and service was disrupted.

That is why it is so surprising that the minister, who has the nerve to call herself progressive, would say that, after a month of rotating strikes with no service disruption, the government has no choice but to take away the union's right to strike.

[English]

That is part of the problem. We have a Prime Minister who says he is a progressive. We have a labour minister who claims to be a progressive. Now they have introduced back-to-work legislation which is the last thing progressive governments should be doing. Why did they do it? They did it because they had gone to the full extent of how long they could wait. The reason the minister is actually doing this is that the Prime Minister's Office told her, Gerald Butt told her, it was time to put an end to the strike. The government kneeled down to the Ebays and the Amazons who heavily lobbied the government to put an end to this strike.

[Translation]

What exactly are the union's demands? The deadlock is primarily around improved working conditions pertaining to health, safety and fairness. Someone in the gallery told us that she works 14 hours a day but is paid for only six hours. She works in the rural sector. The union wants to fix that and make sure that all hours worked are paid hours. In the urban sector, workers are being forced to work overtime, so they are missing out on time with their families, because the employer refuses to hire more employees. It is unacceptable.

We have also heard a lot about the injury rate, which has increased by 43% in the last two years. The reason is simple: Canada Post delivers far fewer letters and far more parcels, and although the government is perfectly aware of that, the regulations have not changed. Procedures have not been adapted to the new reality.

[English]

We would like Canada Post to actually negotiate in good faith, but it will not negotiate in good faith when the government immediately said that it might possibly intervene. It is really funny because when Canada Post is depriving the workers at Canada Post of sick leave provisions, especially short-term disability payments as a measure to put pressure on the most vulnerable of the workers, the Liberals said they could not intervene. However, once the rotating strike reached a certain point, they needed to intervene. The impact regardless of what the minister is saying, regardless of what the Liberal benches are saying, is giving power to Canada Post.

Worse than the government making people believe that Canada Post is an outside entity that it cannot do anything about, it is interesting that in January, John Ibbitson from The Globe and Mail wrote this about Canada Post:

In a move bound to frustrate reform advocates of both the left and the right, the Liberal government announced on Wednesday that it has decided not to proceed with major changes to Canada Post.

Analysts predict that such an arrangement will lead to a funding shortfall and escalating losses for the postal service. To prevent that, the government will install a new management team at the Crown corporation, charged with finding new methods to cut costs and increase revenues.

• (2150)

[Translation]

He concluded his article by saying:

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[English]

“Chief executive Deepak Chopra”, who was actually at his post when bargaining started, “has already announced he will step down at the end of March. The new board and CEO will have full authorization”, from the government, “to explore potential revenue sources and cost savings.”

Canada Post is working under the government's orders. Where can we get obvious cost savings during bargaining? We can get them from the workers by refusing to give them what should actually be something very simple to give them, which is health and safety.

[Translation]

The government says there is nothing it can do, but Canada Post is a Crown corporation. The government gave Canada Post the authorization, the permission and the mandate to bring in cost-saving measures. My colleagues mentioned that no board chair has been appointed. Indeed, no board chair has been permanently appointed, but whether my colleagues like it or not, in 2018, the Liberal government appointed several board members. The Liberal government is responsible for stacking Canada Post's board of directors with people who have absolutely no interest and no desire to come to a fair and equitable agreement.

Several people have commented on contradictions expressed by certain Liberal members who were here in 2011. They were in this place in 2011, and they opposed the Conservatives' response to Canada Post locking its workers out. I remember that very well. We were here debating it for three days. I have a quote that is a bit long, but I think it is important for people to hear it. It is by a former member of Parliament, Bob Rae. In 2011, he was a Liberal MP.

On June 21, 2011, he said:

The right to bargain collectively, to create a union and to be able to legally strike is a constitutional right that must be recognized. Yet, because of a public interest greater than this right, or because of a public emergency, the government may decide that it has the right to do what it is doing now [that is, back-to-work legislation]. However, if the government exercises this right, it has a responsibility to protect the public interest. ...But this right must be exercised intelligently and in a way that respects the rights of individuals and communities.

If the government takes away the right to collective bargaining, it has to be careful how it does it. It has to recognize that it is interfering in an important constitutional right and it cannot be done just any old way...

However, when a government exercises its duty to protect the public interest, it has to do it in a way that is careful and thoughtful because it is taking away an existing right, even if it is popular.

The laughter I heard from the Liberal side was caused by the suppression of this right and by our reaction, on the NDP side, to the suppression of a fundamental right, which is the right to strike. The Liberals can laugh all they want. They are currently in power. They could say whatever they wanted to say in 2015. They could vote however they wanted to in 2011. However, they cannot expect us to stop pointing out their contradictions to them.

At the time, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood said:

[English]

“We have the hard right ideologues in the government jamming the union with legislation that it cannot possibly accept”. The member for Cape Breton—Canso said, “Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and agree with the vast majority of what my colleague from Hamilton

Mountain”, who at the time was Chris Charlton, “has shared with the House, and certainly the fact that this legislation is not only heavy-handed, but wrong-minded.”

[Translation]

I am not short on arguments and I could continue all night, but I am trying to understand why a Liberal government that calls itself progressive and a friend of unions could act this way. Let us remember that if Canada Post were to negotiate in good faith, an agreement could be reached. We can identify the problem by looking at Canada Post's history.

[English]

Going back to the 1970s and 1980s, Canada Post has demonstrated time and time again that it is probably one of the worst employers when it comes to dealing with employees. The biggest win, which I raised with the member, was obtained by the union back in 1981. That was after 41 days of a full strike, which was done to get 17 weeks of maternity leave.

• (2155)

If at that point the then government, which was a Trudeau government, decided to bring in back-to-work legislation after however long it took for a full strike to be too long, two or three weeks of no service across the country, do members think that a mediator or arbitrator would have given maternity leave when it did not exist before? Up to that point, no sector in the public service had maternity leave.

There are serious issues with respect to this conflict regarding health and safety. It is estimated that the Liberal government will force the union to go back to the previous collective agreement, which the workers are trying to get out of by negotiating an improved one, contrary to the situation in 2011, when the union actually asked to have the same agreement reinstated. This is not what we are seeing now. The union wants the agreement to be updated to reflect the changing mandate of Canada Post. Canada Post does not agree with this. It does not agree with the members who were put in place by the government. These workers have a right to health, a right to safety, a right to be with their families instead of being forced by their employer to abide by the decisions of their bosses.

If the government were serious, if it were truly progressive, it would have ensured that Canada Post would have borne the responsibility of this strike. It is easy to say the economy will suffer, but why should it be the fault of the workers? Why is it not the fault of the Canada Post executives? Why is it not the fault of the Canada Post negotiators?

[Translation]

The Canada Post negotiators negotiated in bad faith. Everyone knows that. They did the same thing in 2011. They have no incentive to negotiate in good faith, especially since the government will invariably come to their rescue. Whether it be Liberal or Conservative, the government always comes to Canada Post's rescue. That needs to stop.

Government Orders

Instead of forcing workers back to work in unsafe conditions, why did the government not begin a review of the work that is being done by Canada Post's board of directors? Is it like hockey, where it is easier to trade a player than to fire a coach? It is ridiculous.

The government has a responsibility to workers. A progressive government has a responsibility to ensure that workers are treated properly, particularly in the public service and Crown corporations. Unfortunately, the current government has failed in that regard.

We, on this side of the House, stand with workers because they deserve our support. However, apparently, they deserve the support of only a few members of the House since the Liberals and Conservatives seem to be working hand-in-hand to expedite the passage of this bill and to ensure that everyone goes back to once again working in unsafe conditions as of Monday.

If the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour were truly progressive, if the minister responsible for Canada Post were truly progressive and if the Prime Minister were truly progressive, they would revise Canada Post's mandate and would start reviewing the roles each member of the Crown corporation's board of directors played in the 2015 negotiation fiasco.

I am not holding out hope that they will do so, because if there is one thing I have learned from the Liberals in my time here, and even before my time here, it is that there are, largely, two groups of Liberals. There are the ones who are progressive on the inside. We know who they are. Then there are the others who, fundamentally, are beholden to Bay Street. When there is a conflict between the two of them, Bay Street always wins. The economic Liberals always win out over the progressive Liberals. This needs to stop, but it will not, because this is how it has always been.

[English]

If the Liberals wanted to do something about this they could. However, they refuse to do so.

● (2200)

The Liberals laugh when we highlight their contradictions. They laugh when we protest the insane measures being proposed tonight. We have basically had a full day of debate on procedures to have two hours of debate on the bill at second reading and then 30 minutes of debate at third reading. It is all we will have to debate this bill that would force 50,000 workers back to work. It is a shame.

I would like every progressive, or those who call themselves progressives on the Liberal benches, to think hard about what they are doing right now. They have a choice. We have seen and heard Liberal MPs say that they would be opposing this bill. I am thinking, for example, of the member for Saint John—Rothesay, who has been in debate on social media with postal workers and has said that he will do what he can but that he is just a local MP. He is an MP. He can stand and express his vote. Does he have to vote the way the Prime Minister's Office is asking him to vote? He does not have to. He chooses to do so, if that is the case.

There are a few MPs who I know are opposed to this, because they have been telling the postal workers in their ridings that they are opposed. Some of them even went as far as saying that they would be opposing it. I cannot wait to see that tonight. I will not be holding

my breath, because the way I see it, the Prime Minister's Office has a strong grip on the backbench of the Liberals. The backbench has not really shown much of a spine so far in opposing decisions it did not agree with. Unfortunately, I do not expect things to be changing for the workers, some of whom have been voting for Liberals. They are sorely disappointed by what they are seeing and the spectacle they are facing tonight.

[Translation]

I will conclude simply by saying that the NDP has spent all day talking about the unfairness of this gag order being imposed on the House and this back-to-work legislation being introduced not after a 41-day general strike, like in 1981, but after a rotating strike during which service continued.

SMEs were still able to count on their service. There might have been the occasional inconvenience, but service continued nevertheless. The government is telling us that the sky is falling and that we absolutely must do something about it. It has chosen the most draconian solution possible, by forcing the employees to go back to work and taking away their right to strike.

Coming from a progressive government that was elected on a progressive platform, there is nothing more disappointing.

On this side of the House, we will go to the wall to defend workers and their right to safety, health and fair treatment. Both tonight and after the vote, we will make sure the Liberals pay, now and in the future, for what they did to workers this evening.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has spent the better part of the day trying to demonstrate how it would never get into a situation where it would force unions back to work. The reality of the situation is that there have been seven provincial NDP governments that have done that, and they have done it 15 times.

As a matter of fact, the member talked about the rich display of solidarity they showed through their theatrical voting procedure during the last vote. Is he aware that three of the NDP members who did that were part of those provincial governments? One of them was a cabinet minister and would have had a direct role in doing that back in the Ontario legislature in the early nineties.

I have taken the liberty of having the Library of Parliament compile a list of all those times. I think we would all agree that there is no better source. Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I am sure you will find unanimous consent to table the following list, compiled by the Library of Parliament, of back-to-work legislation passed by NDP provincial governments.

The Deputy Speaker: Motions cannot be proposed in the course of questions and comments.

● (2205)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Before introducing that, I took the opportunity to bring it up with the Speaker, who was in the chair before you. He consulted with the Clerk, and we were told that it was completely in order.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member for Kingston and the Islands have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques has the floor.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, with the shenanigans we have seen from the Liberals, I am not surprised that he went this way. We could talk about Tommy Douglas opposing the War Measures Act. We could go back to Mackenzie King or Laurier. The point is what they are doing right now, after rotating strikes, without doing anything about Canada Post.

I would like to see if my friend would actually be in favour of reviewing their mandate and what the government-appointed board members of Canada Post have done in this strike. This is the government that is responsible for putting those executives on the board. This is the government that is responsible for removing the workers' right to strike, and it has to be accountable for that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I watched the voting process, the member for Hamilton, for example, was one of the individuals who participated in what I would suggest was that token effort. He was, in fact, part of a government that not once, not twice, but three times brought in back-to-work legislation. If we were to listen to the debate over the last couple of days, we would hear a lot of hypocrisy on the other side.

I am wondering if my colleague, in trying to point out our reactions, reflects on some of the comments from the New Democrats. Perhaps they should be just a little embarrassed about how they are trying to manipulate something the government has regretted having to do but feels obligated to do, much like many other governments have in the past.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, once again, someone else did something before.

They would actually be implementing measures that would remove the right to strike from workers. They would be doing so with a Crown corporation to which they have appointed the members. They should be accountable right now, not passing the buck everywhere else. They are responsible for this, and they will be held accountable.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, the minister described back-to-work legislation as a last resort. It is important to note that these negotiations have not even reached a full-scale strike, and it is a huge stretch to describe rotating strikes as reaching a last resort.

The minister also indicated that one of the criterion the arbitrator would consider is financial sustainability. One of the ways to improve Canada Post's financial situation would be to move it into new lines of business, such as postal banking, which the government has ruled out.

I would also note that one of the reasons there are questions about Canada Post's financial sustainability is that the government forces it to value its pension plan on a solvency basis, which is unrealistic. Would the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques agree that it would make far more sense to assess Canada Post's pension on a going-concern basis, like the rest of the federal public service?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. When we talk about postal banking, we know that five or six years ago, Canada Post actually asked for a report on the viability of such an option. It never made it public. A journalist got the document through an access to information request, and actually that document revealed that postal banking would be a win-win situation for Canadians and for Canada Post. Still, it refused to implement it. The government is doing nothing to implement it. In fact, the government is just letting the board do whatever it wants. There is no accountability from the board of directors of Canada Post. The anti-union practices we have seen in the past are still being reflected today, with the complicity of the Liberal government.

• (2210)

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

I was not at Canada Post in 1981, but I worked there for 15 years. I remember some of the workers telling me about why they took to the streets. As a mother, I was able to take maternity leave. Now, there are rural mail carriers who have to use their own personal vehicles and their own gas to deliver the mail in rural areas further away from urban centres. There is an inequity when it comes to salaries, working conditions and, most importantly, safety.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that the back-to-work legislation violates their rights.

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

Our respective ridings are located in rural areas. There are many postal workers with rural routes in my riding.

Earlier, someone talked about a Canada Post employee in the gallery who said that she worked 14 hours but was only paid for six. That is the type of inequity that postal workers are currently facing. That is what the union is trying to remedy through the bargaining process.

Why is Canada Post refusing to recognize that making its workers work eight extra hours without any pay is a problem?

The government wants to force unionized employees to go back to their old collective agreement, which would mean an estimated 250,000 hours of work between now and Christmas, not between now and next year. Those hours will be worked by employees in rural areas, and they will not be paid for them. That is the reality that the Liberals are imposing on us, in collusion with Canada Post. All of this is being done against the wishes of workers.

Government Orders

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said that Canada Post Corporation had no interest in negotiating in good faith, and I have no idea whether it has negotiated in good faith. However, if we look at subparagraph 11(1)(b)(ii), it seems to me that it is now in the best interest of Canada Post management to make a reasonable offer. Otherwise, the arbitrator will choose the best offer, which could be the union's offer.

Does he not think the bill is a good incentive for Canada Post to negotiate as it should?

Mr. Guy Caron: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis, his question is a little ridiculous.

Canada Post managers knew that the government was going to intervene. If they thought they stood a better chance with a mediator, they would have already negotiated, but they refused to do so.

This bill does mention that the mediator could give more to the unions. If Canada Post managers were really worried about that happening, they would have negotiated in good faith before, but they did not.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mirabel.

Obviously strikes and lockouts are always a last resort for both workers and the company. When they happen, they will always affect not only the workers and the company, but customers, suppliers, communities and the economy.

Our government believes in a free and fair collective bargaining process, one that allows the right of employees to strike and employers to lock out. Obviously, strikes and lockouts are not ideal. They are almost always more messy than clean. Sometimes government does have to step in but only as a last resort, not as common practice.

Back-to-work legislation does not represent success, it represents failure. When a federal government uses back-to-work legislation, it must ensure that it is not only fair to the workers and the company, but that it is fair to the citizens of this country.

I want to talk about how this is not only legislation of last resort but that it seeks to legislate a fair process, not an agreement in favour of one party over the other. Throughout these negotiations, the Government of Canada has been proactive and tireless in our good-faith attempts to help the parties reach agreements. As the minister has discussed at length, federal conciliation officers and mediators have been assisting the parties throughout these negotiations.

When bargaining reached an impasse, we appointed a special mediator to bring a fresh set of eyes to the table. Negotiations stalled again, so we offered voluntary arbitration. It was declined by the parties. We also reappointed the special mediator this week in hopes of getting a deal.

We have strongly encouraged the parties to reach a mutually acceptable conclusion. We believe that a negotiated agreement is always the best solution. As the Minister of Labour has said, we have done everything possible to assist the parties to end this

dispute, and despite our efforts, CUPW and Canada Post management have been unable to reach an agreement.

It is with great reluctance that we have been left with no other option but to introduce back-to-work legislation to get our postal service back to functioning at full capacity. We have heard plenty of times today that our government is no better than the previous Conservatives when it comes to respecting labour and enacting back-to-work legislation. There is nothing further from the truth. I have no problem comparing our record on ensuring fair and balanced labour laws to theirs.

I would like to remind people that in the previous government, the Conservatives introduced back-to-work legislation a record four times in the first year in office, and threatened to use it on two other occasions in the middle of a collective bargaining process. Instead of being fair and balanced, the Conservative government was just the opposite, whether it was the threat of back-to-work legislation even before there was a disruption, appointing inappropriate arbitrators or enacting back-to-work legislation that imposed worse conditions than what the parties themselves had agreed upon. I spoke earlier about the fact that the arbitrator gave a smaller increase in pay to the CUPW than Canada Post had agreed to during negotiations. The Conservative government also used the Canada Industrial Relations Board as a pawn to delay the employees' right to strike and the employer's right to lock out.

In three years, our government has done nothing of the like. Liberals have tried to be fair and balanced in our actions towards labour relations, and specifically with how we are dealing with this labour dispute at Canada Post. I would like to remind people of how the previous Conservative government handled the Canada Post dispute. It introduced back-to-work legislation after only two weeks of rotating strikes, legislated a wage rate that was lower than the rate that the union and management had already agreed upon, and forced the arbitrator to only look at the financial considerations of the company, with nothing about the workers. The Conservative government's first arbitrator had no labour experience and was not bilingual.

● (2215)

After being forced by the courts to appoint another arbitrator, the Conservatives picked a three-time failed Conservative candidate who had to be removed after another court challenge. We are doing nothing like this in our legislation. To the contrary, this legislation is about creating a fair process to ensure we get an agreement on key issues not only for the company but the workers as well, by an independent and fair mediator-arbitrator. This legislation does not tilt the scale in favour of one party over another.

Government Orders

The principles that will guide the mediator-arbitrator process include the need to ensure the health and safety of employees, which has been mentioned numerous times today; to ensure that employees receive equal pay for work of equal value, which has been referenced today; to ensure the fair and equal treatment of temporary, part-time and other employees as non-standard employees as compared to full-time permanent employees; to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Canada Post; to create a culture of collaborative labour-management relations; and for high-quality service to be provided by Canada Post at a reasonable price to Canadians. These guiding principles, I believe, are fair and balanced and should be reached in an agreement.

No government wants to legislate workers back to work. However, parties of all stripes have legislated workers back to work. The NDP today has tried to mislead Canadians and unionists in this country about the use of back-to-work legislation by NDP provincial governments. Seven NDP premiers have used back-to-work legislation on at least 15 occasions. There are three members of the NDP in the House today who were members of NDP provincial governments that enacted back-to-work legislation. The members for London—Fanshawe and Hamilton Centre were both members of an NDP Ontario government that legislated teachers back to work three times in three months in the fall of 1993. The member for Vancouver East was also a member of a B.C. NDP government that voted to legislate public education support workers and cleaning staff back to work in the year 2000. That bill was passed in one day.

I know those governments, like ours, did not take these decisions lightly. I know that there comes a point in all labour strife that responsible governments must take action. Canadians need to know that our government does everything within its power to help parties in industrial disputes resolve their differences without a work stoppage. This is no Harper-era legislation. We are legislating a process, not an agreement. It is completely different. We are not forcing specific conditions on the union. We just need to get to an agreement and Canadians expect us to get to an agreement.

If we had any hope at this point that the differences between CUPW and Canada Post were close to resolution, we would not be tabling this legislation. After five weeks of rotating strikes, we are forced to say that enough is enough.

• (2220)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I attended a press conference at noon today with most of my colleagues and about 30 mail carriers. I heard one mail carrier say that Canada Post had received welfare and child benefit cheques on Monday but they sat there, and Canada Post did not ask mail carriers to deliver them until Thursday.

Does the member think that Canada Post is acting in good faith by doing that?

If that is not acting in good faith, why did the government decide to support the employer, Canada Post, which uses tactics like that to influence public opinion, instead of the workers who are being wronged?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, that is what happens when parliamentarians get involved in these types of debates. Those types of stories become reality, and that is not a fact. I know the CUPW members have made it a priority to make sure that people who depend on their cheques get them. That is noble and fair and very much appreciated by those who live from cheque to cheque. I commend CUPW, as do my colleagues, for taking that action.

We are not trying to impart a resolution as far as an agreement goes. We are looking at a fair, honest and open process so that the two groups can come to some kind of agreement that can work for both of them. It is about the process and that is why we brought this legislation forward.

• (2225)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I had a dime for every time I heard someone from the government benches today say that they really do not want to do this, it is a last resort, our hands are tied, if only there was some way that we could have dealt with this, I would have a heck of a lot more money than the people on short-term disability at Canada Post who have not received a dime for the last five weeks because the minister did not have the courage to intervene.

The fact of the matter is that had the minister responsible for Canada Post been doing her job all along, then we would not be in this position. If she had appointed management with a mandate to get to the table and to make real changes in the workplace, either through collective bargaining or not, they could have accepted those ideas as good ideas and implement them in the workplace. There are a lot of ways that this could have been headed off and we would not have gotten here.

I cannot accept that from the member when he says that there was nothing else that could have been done. The only person, as far as I am concerned, who needs to be legislated back to work is the minister responsible for Canada Post, who has not been doing her job. I would like to know when she is going to start.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, this may not come as a surprise that I agree with very little of what the member across has said. I believe that both ministers have been on this file and have been focused on this file. For a year, these negotiations have gone on. Our federally appointed mediators were engaged right from the start. When we saw that the strike had been called and things had been stalled, we went again and appointed another mediator to put a clean set of eyes on this and an impartial set of eyes, and then later appointed a special mediator.

This has been a focus, something that has been top of the heap as far as the focus for both ministers. It just goes to show how entrenched both parties are and how difficult. We could do nothing other than this because both parties have just dug in on those particular issues.

Government Orders

We are doing what is responsible. We are doing what Canadians expect us to do as a responsible government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon Marcell (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I reluctantly rise today, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, to speak to a bill that takes away one of the most basic rights of honest workers. I would like to begin by stating that I stand with the workers who are facing strong-arm tactics and who are being denied freedom of expression and the power to negotiate. The government is treating them like cattle, but Quebeckers see them as people. We recognize their work, we appreciate the service they provide and we are with them.

Taking away workers' right to strike makes government less democratic and more authoritarian every time it happens. In 2015, the Supreme Court was clear about that in its decision.

The ability to engage in the collective withdrawal of services in the process of the negotiation of a collective agreement is, and has historically been, the irreducible minimum of the freedom to associate in Canadian labour relations....the right to strike is an essential part of a meaningful collective bargaining process...

I am not the only one to have said it today. It is a quote from the Supreme Court.

This is a ruling from 2015, not 1822. Many things have happened since 2015, starting with a federal election that put the Liberals in power. Unfortunately, there is the same corporate culture as there was under Paul Martin. When a party moves to the other side of the House of Commons, it leaves a lot behind on the opposition benches, starting with its honour.

Let us begin by making one thing clear. "A rotating strike is not a strike, it is a pressure tactic used to force a negotiated settlement." It was a fine, loyal Liberal who said that. The former mayor of Montreal, Denis Coderre, who lost the election, said that on June 23, 2011, when the Conservatives wanted to ram special legislation down postal workers' throats.

I want to clarify something else. Special legislation is the kind of last-resort measure a government uses to end a strike that has been dragging on and on and is affecting essential public services. It is not a measure to be taken lightly before strike action even begins in earnest. The government is not taking a last-resort measure today; it is literally depriving postal workers of their right to strike. Special legislation makes no sense when there is not even a strike on. Others have said so before me. The current Minister of Transport, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, said exactly that on June 16, 2011, when the Conservatives were trampling on postal workers' rights with their own special legislation.

Does it come as any surprise to anyone that the Liberals would say one thing while in opposition and do exactly the opposite when in power? No.

Here in the House and elsewhere, people are used to Liberal ways. The Liberals are always like that. It is really something to see the government spend its time boasting about what a tough negotiator it is with respect to protecting the right to strike around the world in talks with its trading partners, when it is now suspending that right here at home. That comes as no surprise to anyone. Everyone knows that when it comes to workers' rights, the Liberals and the

Conservatives are cut from the same cloth. The two parties are one and the same.

By imposing special legislation, they both infringe on workers' rights. It is shameful. By imposing special legislation, they both fail to show a modicum of respect for workers. That too is shameful. By imposing special legislation, they both conduct negotiations in bad faith, and that too is shameful.

Liberal or Conservative, the federal government is and has always been the government that treats its employees the worst. No one in the two major government parties cares about job security. That is what the little people care about. They are elitists. Workplace health is important to people who do physical labour, who work outside. Very little thought is given to that in ministers' wood-panelled offices. The only workplace injury they might get is a paper cut.

It is no coincidence that postal workers have been treated to special legislation in 1987, 1991, 1997, 2011 and today. That is how it works in Ottawa. It is 30 years behind Quebec when it comes to labour law. It is no coincidence that it is only at the federal level that employers still have the right to hire scabs when workers are on strike. It is no coincidence that it is only at the federal level that the right of Quebeckers to work in French is violated.

• (2230)

It is no coincidence that the federal government is the only one that could not care less about the safety of pregnant women and their unborn babies, since it will not let them apply for preventive withdrawal without penalty when the job becomes dangerous.

This is what happens when a government is so high and mighty and so far removed from the real world that it knows nothing about how things work in real life for ordinary people.

I introduced a bill to fix all of this, but even before it was debated, I could already tell what the two federal champions of management were thinking. They always side with the employer, never with honest citizens who simply want to earn a living with dignity.

In the face of so much bad faith in a case like this one, we have every right to wonder why the government will not back down. There are a number of possibilities. The first is that the Liberals are once again beholden to the web giants, and their campaign coffers are filled to the brim with donations from these giants, much like the Prime Minister's bank account was filled with money from Chinese bankers in July 2017.

The second possibility is that the government does not understand the issue, which is improbable, but would not be surprising.

The third possibility is that the Liberal members are, as usual, weak, spineless and gutless in the face of cabinet, which is helping itself to billions of dollars in public money to enrich its buddies, as we saw with the cannabis industry. What a bunch of cowards.

Government Orders

If I were a Liberal member of Parliament, I would be embarrassed to walk down the street and meet my constituents. If this were the wild west, the Liberals would be tarred and feathered. They would be paraded around town so they could feel the weight of the shame and contempt they inspire. A good Liberal MP is an obedient sheep who licks the master's boots. They should be ashamed of what they are doing.

It should come as no surprise that the Bloc Québécois sides with the workers and strikers and will vote against this bill.

• (2235)

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague on the other side of the House. I do not really agree with him, but I do have a question for him.

He and I come from the same area, the Lower Laurentians, where there are many small and medium-sized businesses. With e-commerce, more and more parcels are being sent by mail. With the holiday season approaching, how will we make sure that middle-class Canadians get their parcels? Small and medium-sized businesses cannot use courier services like FedEx and UPS because they are too expensive.

What does my colleague have to say about that?

Mr. Simon Marcil: Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but find it surprising that my colleague wants small and medium-sized companies to have their parcels delivered by Canada Post. I can understand why, but I am somewhat surprised because buying local is also important. It is important to shop at local stores.

I am also surprised that my colleague is giving us lessons in economics, given that her government posted another \$16-billion deficit in the last budget.

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. The government keeps repeating that it is imposing special back-to-work legislation because postal workers are holding a rotating strike.

In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, there has been just one day of strikes since the start of the job action. That is like one statutory holiday. The same goes for Sherbrooke and Abitibi-Témiscamingue, where postal workers were only on strike for one day.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the fact that the government is exaggerating the crisis fabricated by Canada Post. It has blown the situation out of proportion. What workers really want is to deliver the mail and, of course, to negotiate a collective agreement and settle the safety issue once and for all.

Mr. Simon Marcil: Mr. Speaker, it is actually quite simple. The government decided to use a bazooka to kill a fly. As usual, it is trampling on workers' rights using special legislation when they are not even really on strike.

The real problem is that it is using economic principles as an excuse, while its \$16-billion deficit proves that it is definitely not the best money manager. We will take no lessons from the Liberals on the economy. They think they know how it works, but I seriously doubt that special legislation will work to solve such an issue.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

One of the real questions here is whether this situation could have been avoided. A strike could have been avoided if the government had taken its responsibilities seriously and if it had appointed managers to Canada Post who would have taken the rate of illness and injuries seriously.

Does my colleague think the government did everything in its power to avoid the situation we are discussing here tonight?

Mr. Simon Marcil: Mr. Speaker, clearly, the government did not do everything in its power.

Instead of really working hard and settling the dispute, the Liberals imposed special legislation. They wanted to settle a dispute, but they did not have the guts to really get to work. They decided to pass special legislation instead. It is as simple as that. It was less complicated for them.

They are acting in bad faith.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Before we go to the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, I will let him know there are only 12 minutes remaining in the time provided for debate at second reading of the motion that is before the House. We will get him started, just the same, and I will interrupt him at that 12-minute mark.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

• (2240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity, like many members, to listen to the debate over the last 24 hours. At times it can be a very emotional debate and I recognize that. I come at it from a different perspective in that in 2011 when I was on the other side of the House, the Liberal Party had third party status.

What we saw under Stephen Harper was a different approach to Canada Post. It was an approach that my caucus colleagues and I believe did not recognize the true value and contributions made by Canada Post workers for generations in Canada. Whether it is door-to-door delivery or sorting the mail, Canada Post workers' sense of commitment to providing quality service has been there virtually from day one.

We were quite taken aback and disappointed with Stephen Harper when he initiated a number of changes. His back-to-work legislation was profoundly different and cannot be compared with what we are introducing today, or just his government's general lack of respect for the Crown corporation. Many individuals honestly believed that the Conservatives had a hidden agenda, one that wanted to see the demise or the privatization of Canada Post. There were many individuals who were of that opinion.

Government Orders

My colleagues and I were quite upset with the government of the day. We did make some commitments in the last election. I am happy to say that on virtually all fronts, we have acted on those commitments, even the ones related to Canada Post. When I look at what I have witnessed over the last 24 hours, I am somewhat discouraged by how some in the chamber have turned this into a political manipulation of our union movement.

I will compare my 30 years as a parliamentarian, having worked with New Democrat governments in the province of Manitoba, with that of any New Democrat. I do not need to be told about the importance of collective agreements, because I was there during minority governments. My colleague remembers quite well the issue of final offer selection and how the provincial Liberals tried to save that and the NDP in opposition sabotaged it. That is true. I was there when I witnessed other New Democrat regimes bring in back-to-work legislation.

However, if we listened to the debate over the last 24 hours, we would think that there is not a New Democrat member of the House who would ever support back-to-work legislation. That is just not true. That is the impression members are trying to give to those who provide our fantastic postal services. We need to reinforce how much we appreciate the day-in and day-out service that our letter carriers and mail sorters put in. On this side of the House we appreciate and value that work.

The amount of hypocrisy that I have witnessed from the New Democrat caucus is overwhelming. We have had many NDP premiers, and over a dozen times they have brought in back-to-work legislation. By the way, the New Democrats are the same party provincially and federally. It is only the NDP in opposition who try to give a false impression that they are the only party that cares about unions.

● (2245)

I can tell the House that this government understands and appreciates the importance of harmony within the workplace. That means we are behind our workers in Canada. If members look at the government initiatives we have implemented since virtually day one under this Prime Minister, they will see that these aimed at getting rid of the legislation the Conservatives brought in through the back door to harm our union movement. Some of the very first legislation that we saw introduced in the House was brought forward to deal with that.

When we talk about the working person here in Canada, it was this government that understood the importance of pensions. We negotiated agreements with all of the provinces and territories on the CPP, realizing how important retirement income is.

When we talk about this particular legislation, and I say this to all of our Canada Post workers, it is profoundly different from all of the Conservatives' legislation, and there is still the opportunity to see a sense of fairness at the table. I would tell the Canada Post workers whom I represent in Winnipeg North not to believe the New Democrats, who are trying to hoodwink members, because at the end of the day we believe in protecting our workers' rights. This legislation was designed to ensure a sense of equality and opportunity not only for Canada Post, but also for its workers in

particular. We do not need to take a lesson from my New Democrat friend across the way.

I was here when the New Democrats played that little game of trickery during the vote. The member for Hamilton was in cabinet in an NDP government that not once, not twice, but three times voted to bring in legislation forcing teachers back to work. That was back-to-work legislation. He stood in his place and voted for it. He was not the only New Democrat currently on the benches here who did that. The member who sits right beside him also did so. However, in some sort of a principled stand, they then get up and say they are defending the unions. Excuse me for being somewhat skeptical of the actions I have witnessed over the last 24 hours by the party I had always thought was a bit more straightforward.

Maybe it is because I am from the province of Manitoba, but in Manitoba we recognize the important role that our unions have played in society. In 2019, we will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1919 union strike. The organizing committees and much of the organizing took place in my home constituency of Winnipeg North. I am very proud of that. For 30 years I have talked about the importance of the union movement. If we look at many of the positive social programs that we have today, they are in good part because of union activists. It was people within the union movement who said that it was not about political parties, but about the betterment of society.

I have had the opportunity to talk with letter carriers and mail sorters. I can say that no one wants to see a strike. We did not want to see this take place. The NDP are trying to give the false impression that we are biased toward Canada Post. Nothing could be further from the truth. Every member on this side of the House wanted to see a negotiated agreement between Canada Post and the union management representatives. It does not make me happy that we had to resort to bringing in this legislation.

● (2250)

I do not like the fact that my New Democrat friends tried to give the false impression that I am glad this legislation is being tabled. I am not glad, but I do recognize its importance.

The economy has changed, absolutely. Some people across the way might not recognize that. Thirty years ago e-commerce on the Internet was nowhere like it is today. Today, e-commerce generates hundreds if not thousands of jobs here in Canada, good, solid, middle-class jobs. Those are important jobs, as are the jobs in all the different industries in our country.

Think in terms of those seniors or individuals with disabilities who are very dependent on the mail. Imagine how important the Christmas season is for many companies to realize the profits that are so important to carry them over January and February.

To give the impression that our economy is not hurting at all, even from a rotating strike, is somewhat of an exaggeration. The government has to do its job and protect the economy and protect the interests of Canadians so they can receive valuable parcels, whether of contact lenses, Christmas presents, or cheques from insurance companies. All of these things are absolutely critical at this time of the year.

Sometimes governments have to make tough decisions, and that is really what this has been about. This was a tough, regrettable decision that had to be made to ensure that Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, as well as those in need, are served by what has been an incredible workforce in Canada, our letter carriers and postal workers.

I will conclude my remarks by paying tribute to what is a first-class Canada Post and those who work for it.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 10:52 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (2310)

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

(Division No. 948)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barlow
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Carr
Chagger	Champagne
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCourcey
Dhaliwal	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Freeland
Gerretsen	Gould
Hajdu	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hutchings	Iacono

Joly
Jordan
Khalid
Lake
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lockhart
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Morrissey
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Petitpas Taylor
Poissant
Reid
Robillard
Rogers
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Spengemann
Tan
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Vaughan
Webber
Yip
Young

Government Orders

Jones
Jowhari
Khera
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lightbound
Longfield
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Monsef
Murray
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Shields
Sohi
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Webber
Yip
Zahid— 140

NAYS

Members

Blaikie	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Caron
Fortin	Fuhr
Graham	Long
Marcil	Mathysen
Mihychuk	Pauzé
Ste-Marie	Thériault
Trudel	Virani
Weir— 17	

PAIRED

Members

Beaulieu	Boudrias
Cormier	Fry
Gill	Plamondon
Sikand	Whalen— 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole. I do now leave the chair of the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: I would like to open the session of the committee of the whole on Bill C-89 by making a short statement regarding the proceedings.

Government Orders

Pursuant to an order made earlier this evening, not more than one hour shall be allotted to the consideration of the committee of the whole stage. Any division requested in the committee shall be deferred until the end of the committee's consideration of the bill. At the expiry of this period, any proceedings before the committee of the whole shall be interrupted and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the stage under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

• (2315)

[Translation]

During the consideration of the bill during committee of the whole the general rules of debate are as follows. Members shall speak for not more than 20 minutes at a time and are not permitted to split their time without unanimous consent. While there is no formal period for questions and comments, members may use their time to either speak or ask questions and the responses will be counted in the time allotted to that member.

[English]

Finally, members may speak more than once and need not be in their seats to be recognized.

The committee will now proceed with the clause-by-clause study of the bill pursuant to Standing Order 75(1). The study of clause 1 is postponed. I therefore will proceed with debate on Clause 2.

(On Clause 2)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is a secret to no one that Canada's postal service is a key element of our business and charitable sectors and indeed of our economy. When we have a major disruption in service, the impact on businesses and charities is direct and it is immediate.

I am going to go through the stories of some of the groups that have been affected.

As some members may know, charities count on the last months of the year for crucial fundraising drives, and December is the most important. As the former executive director of a homeless shelter, December was when we reached peak donation season. We counted on those donations to help us get through the end of that year.

Canada Post is essential to many other not-for-profit organizations that are doing essential fundraising work to provide the critical services to members in our communities all across the country.

As Scott Decksheimer, Canada Board chair of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, says:

Direct mail continues to be the leading way that most donors give to charity. We are concerned that donors who typically give in the fall might receive their donation requests too late – or their donations will be received too late by the charity to help people this year.

Organizations like the Salvation Army are feeling the hit as well. It has said that its direct mail donations are down by 40%. The Salvation Army's national director of marketing, John McAlister, outlined exactly what that meant. He said:

Many of our supporters choose to give each year between November and December and even those who give throughout the year boost their support during this time. We rely heavily on our mail program.

For an organization like the Salvation Army, the strain is especially difficult at this time of year. He said:

As we move into extreme cold weather across the country, we start to boost the number of services. We offer more out-of-the-cold beds, warm meals and supports for vulnerable people, including giving out free clothing.

Similarly, the Mustard Seed in Victoria has said that it normally receives 70% of its annual fundraising at this time of year. Its donations are down by 23% this month over this time last year. Janiene Boice, its director of development, says, "Our biggest concern is not getting the donations in time. It is nerve-wracking."

Similar charitable initiatives, like citizen groups or not-for-profits, are feeling it.

Beverley Mitchell from Toronto wrote in to the Toronto Star, saying that her organization was having a hard time getting supplies to remote fly-in communities in northern Canada. She said:

I am personally involved in sending much-needed food to shelters and soup kitchens; warm clothing to the homeless, poor and elderly; school supplies and food to daycares and schools in both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

Besides the time delays and uncertainty of delivery, there is an added expense of about \$1,000 to upgrade our service level to Express Post in the hopes these parcels will receive faster service when the strike action rotates.

Weather is always a concern in the winter in getting parcels to the North in a timely manner but the strikes have made it an incredibly difficult and expensive challenge.

We need to comprehend the full extent of the disruption that the postal strike is causing to charities, not only in the short term but over the months and years to come.

As the former executive director for Shelter House in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Christmas was our busiest time. In fact, we saw donations skyrocket at Christmas. We relied on direct mail to communicate with donors to ask them to boost their donations. Many donations arrived every day that allowed us to continue to stock the shelves, feed the people who were relying on our services and ensure that we had the dollars necessary to operate in a safe and efficient way.

Let me also tell the House about a business that I feel illustrates the dire situation faced by thousands of enterprises in all sectors of our economy.

In Hamilton, Jaime Drayer handcrafts mugs, cards, prints and apparel. She says that the holidays are typically her busiest time, but her sales are down 43% this year. She is having to warn customers that she can no longer guarantee delivery by her holiday cutoff dates.

Government Orders

Ms. Drayer left her job in January because she was looking forward to this being her first holiday season in which she could dedicate herself to her craft and to her business full time. “It’s extra-disappointing on a personal level,” she said. This is a typical family business that is struggling to make ends meet. This is a matter that is pressing and we need to solve it urgently.

● (2320)

In 2016, Canada Post and CUPW negotiated a two-year agreement without a labour disruption, and this agreement expired on January 31, 2018. Starting October 22, 2018, Canada Post workers had organized rotating strikes nationwide.

I cannot overemphasize that the Government of Canada is committed to and believes in free and collective bargaining, which is why, since the start of collective bargaining negotiations between Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, we have been doing everything possible to help the parties come to an agreement.

Federal mediators have been assisting the parties throughout their negotiations, which began almost a year ago. When bargaining reached an impasse, we appointed a special mediator to help the process along and to iron out new differences with a new perspective. We also offered voluntary arbitration. Additionally, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement have reached out to the parties directly on numerous occasions. In fact, the parties have spoken to me frequently throughout the weeks passing, and a special mediator was brought in two more times to attempt to help the parties resolve their differences and reach an agreement that works for everyone.

These efforts demonstrate our firm belief that a negotiated agreement is always preferable. It is always the best solution. It is not to mention the number of other disputes that have been resolved in the last three years since we formed government without resorting to back-to-work legislation. However, despite these efforts, rotating strikes by CUPW have been disrupting Canada Post operations in more than 200 communities across the country for over a month now.

This legislation has a number of functions. First, it would restore postal services to Canadians and Canadian businesses. It would do so by ordering an immediate end to the work stoppages on the day following royal assent. Second, it would provide for the extension of collective agreements of CUPW urban post operations and CUPW rural and suburban mail carriers until new collective agreements are established. The period of the work stoppages are excluded from an extension of the collective agreement. Third, it would provide that I appoint a mediator-arbitrator proposed by the parties, or if the parties fail to propose the same person, I will seek the advice of the chairperson of the Canada Industrial Relations Board before appointing a mediator-arbitrator. Fourth, it would provide for the mediator-arbitrator to resolve all outstanding issues through mediation, or if mediation fails on particular issues, arbitrate them through an arbitration model of his or her choice based on guiding principles that have been set out fairly.

I still encourage the parties to get a deal. At any point before the arbitration period concludes and the recommendations are made, the parties can enter into a voluntary agreement. Time is an important

factor here. The longer this strike goes on, the more significant the damage it causes. The negative impacts of the strike continue to escalate and compound, particularly with the holiday season which increases volume significantly. We cannot afford to let this continue unaddressed.

Given the serious negative effects this strike is having on Canadians and Canadian businesses across the country, we need to resolve this situation now. That is why the government is taking this action.

I deeply regret that the parties in this strike have not been able to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion through the normal negotiation process. This is not a measure that we introduce light-heartedly. Let us keep in mind in this House that back-to-work legislation is introduced as a last resort, after we have exhausted all possibilities respecting collective bargaining. I should add that the government will continue to support the parties and strongly encourage them to resume discussions in order to reach agreements as soon as possible.

Our preference clearly would have been a negotiated settlement. As a principle, once a strike or a lockout has begun, the Government of Canada usually stands aside. However, there are some exceptional situations where standing aside would be highly irresponsible. Work stoppages like this one are very costly to both sides, and the real losses incurred by the parties cannot offset any eventual gains.

● (2325)

As long as the two parties are the only ones to suffer, the Government of Canada has no justification for intervening, but when a strike is affecting hundreds of thousands or even millions of people, the government must intervene. When a strike is substantially damaging our economy, putting communities at risk, we have the duty to step in.

The Canada Labour Code gives the parties in a dispute the right to a strike or a lockout. This disruption is bringing unnecessary hardship to Canadians, so we cannot remain on the sidelines and let the situation deteriorate even more. We are taking the action that is required.

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Chair, now that I find myself seated on this side of the House, I feel a sudden compulsion to speak about the middle class and those working hard to join it. I would like to make the point that one of the building blocks for our middle class has been free collective bargaining. Things such as better wages, safer working conditions and paid time off have all come through free collective bargaining. Sometimes arbitration is used as a substitute, but when we talk about the new pioneering gains for middle-class people, they really can only come from free collective bargaining.

Government Orders

This is a goal that we should share on all sides of this House, and we should be very concerned when the government steps in to take away the ability for free collective bargaining, for a few reasons. One is that it sets a very negative precedent for other areas of the economy. Another is that it sets a negative precedent for Canada Post itself because if the employees and the management know that they should expect that the federal government is going to step in with back-to-work legislation, it really takes away any incentive or any impetus they have to try to negotiate an actual settlement. It actually gives them a bit of an incentive to wait around for the government to bring in this legislation.

The Minister of Labour actually recognizes that it is not desirable to have back-to-work legislation. She has described it as a last resort and has suggested that all available options were exhausted before bringing in back-to-work legislation. This seems a bit doubtful to me, given the fact that we do not even have a full-scale strike at Canada Post; we just have rotating strikes.

I would actually like to use some of my time to ask the Minister of Labour whether she attempted to negotiate an essential service protocol with the employees of Canada Post to ensure that they would continue to deliver the cheques to low-income people and to charities that she has spoken about and deems to be such an important service. Perhaps I could turn it over to the Minister of Labour to answer that question.

• (2330)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I am glad the member opposite realizes that we have a high degree of respect for organized labour and, in fact, such a degree of respect that the first piece of legislation we introduced and passed was Bill C-4, which restored the rights of organized labour to collectively bargain and organize. It repealed Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, two very harmful pieces of legislation that the Conservatives had rammed through the House in an effort to diminish the ability of organized labour to grow its movement, to work, as the member pointed out, on ensuring that there is decent work for people all across the country.

We also ratified ILO Convention 98, which guarantees the right to organize and collectively bargain. We have introduced legislation that we worked on with unions which unions have been calling for, for decades. These are things like pay equity, federally regulated proactive pay equity, something that unions have been calling for, including the union involved in this dispute, flexible work arrangements, and protection of federally regulated workers from violence or harassment in the workplace. In this respect, I would refer to Bill C-65, which recently passed. We have introduced updates to the Canada Labour Code to modernize it and protect the most vulnerable in the workplace, again in partnership with organized labour. The list goes on in terms of the work we have done in partnership with unions, because we recognize the important role they play in establishing a standard that often protects the most vulnerable and people who are not unionized in this country.

I will also speak to the second part of the member's question. The member asked what we have done to ensure we could work with the parties to help them arrive at a collective agreement. From my perspective, we have done everything we can to support the parties to get there themselves. For example, over a year ago, both parties agreed to work with a mediator, so we appointed the federal

mediation service early on in their talks to help them have productive talks and work through some of the substantial issues that both the union and the corporation were facing. The mediators worked with the parties for well over a year. When those talks broke down, they asked—

The Chair: Order. The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Chair, the minister indicated to the House earlier today the criteria that would be presented to the arbitrator. One of the criteria the arbitrator is supposed to consider is the financial sustainability of Canada Post. The financial sustainability of Canada Post has often been questioned because the government has insisted that as a Crown corporation, it account for its pension plan on a solvency basis. This is a very unrealistic assumption that posits that Canada Post be wound up and have to pay out all of its pension benefits at once. Of course, this formula necessarily shows an unfunded liability and a problem with financial sustainability.

Some have proposed that it would make much more sense to treat Canada Post like the rest of the federal public service and account for its pension plan on a going concern basis. I would ask the labour minister whether she will be instructing the arbitrator to evaluate Canada Post's financial sustainability with a solvency valuation approach or with a going concern approach.

The Chair: Before we go to the minister, I will reiterate the format that we are following. We are in committee of the whole, where members have up to 20 minutes to speak. In the course of that 20 minutes, they are able to pose questions to a minister, but the time is their own. It is not like a question and comment period. The minister gave her opening remarks, after which we went to the next speaker, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan. It is his time now for up to 20 minutes. He can use his time as he wishes to pose questions to the minister. The same format will follow with the next speaker.

The hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

• (2335)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, the member has asked me to talk about the guiding principles we are asking the arbitrator-mediator to consider as he or she works to help the parties, should we reach the point where the parties need that assistance.

The guiding principles the mediator-arbitrator needs to consider are, first, to ensure that the health and safety of employees is protected. That is something I am sure the member opposite would agree is a critical consideration. Second is to ensure that employees receive equal pay for work of equal value. I do not want to assume this, but I think the member opposite would not have a challenge with that guiding principle. Third is to ensure the fair treatment of temporary or part-time employees and other employees in non-standard employment as compared to full-time and permanent employees. Fourth is to ensure the financial sustainability of the employer, and fifth is to create a culture of collaborative labour-management relations. Sixth is to have the employer provide high-quality service at a reasonable price to Canadians.

Government Orders

The member is asking about the financial sustainability of the employer. I do not think this is an unreasonable principle to consider, because in fact, the employment of the worker depends on the financial sustainability of the employer. The employer has constraints, just like any other employer. It has an operation to deliver, with a specific budget. It has limited resources to raise additional revenue, and it has to be prudent with its resources. The financial sustainability of the corporation, of course, has to be a consideration, because ultimately, this is about protecting those good-quality jobs.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Chair, in this debate, the minister has spoken a great deal about the needs of lower-income people and smaller businesses that might depend on service from Canada Post. Something that would help those lower-income individuals and smaller businesses, but would also contribute to Canada Post's financial sustainability, would be for it to move into the area of postal banking. This would provide much-needed financial services to communities and smaller enterprises, which are often underserved by the big banks, while at the same time providing a new source of revenue for Canada Post and a new way of using its offices all across the country in so many communities.

I would like to give the minister a chance to explain whether in this search for financial sustainability, she or the arbitrator will give serious consideration to implementing postal banking.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, it is not the arbitrator's place to design the corporate model or the services the corporation will deliver. It is the arbitrator's place, though, to consider the financial sustainability of the employer. The corporation really is the appropriate place to have those conversations. From my perspective, the corporation has to be financially prudent. It has a large operation, and it has financial constraints.

Having said that, we also know that they have to take very seriously the other principles we have laid out for the arbitrator, including things like the health and safety of workers and the fair treatment of temporary and part-time employees. It is really the corporation's responsibility to chart its path in terms of the suite of services it offers and how it offers those services to Canadians.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Chair, something the government promised during the past election campaign was to restore door-to-door mail delivery. Of course, keeping that promise would make a huge, positive difference for Canada Post and its employees. I would like to give the minister a chance to inform the House when the government is going to restore door-to-door mail delivery.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, our government committed to placing a moratorium on ending door-to-door delivery, and that is, in fact, what we did. Having said that, we are here to discuss the back-to-work legislation, the action we are taking to restore postal service to Canadians during this very difficult time.

From my perspective, it was referenced in my previous answer. It is at the discretion of the corporation at this point how it delivers its services and what its particular model of service is. Of course, we have given guidelines. The member knows that we have done a lot to actually transform Canada Post. We have given it quite a bit of latitude. Having said that, we believe that these principles are very balanced. We know that the arbitrator will use these principles and consider them carefully to make sure that we get to an agreement,

should that be necessary should the parties not be able to come to that agreement on their own, in a balanced, fair way that considers the concerns of the union but also the constraints of the corporation.

• (2340)

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Chair, so far in this portion of the committee of the whole, I have asked the minister whether, in viewing back-to-work legislation as a last resort, she made an effort to negotiate an essential service protocol with the employees of Canada Post to ensure the delivery of cheques and other services that she does not want to see disrupted. We really have not heard a clear answer to that question, and I think we need one to be able to evaluate whether this actually is the last resort.

I also asked the minister, in terms of financial sustainability, how the Canada Post pension plan is going to be evaluated. That is a critically important question in terms of whether we believe management's storyline that there is a crisis and a need for concessions or whether we recognize that if Canada Post employees were treated the same as other federal public servants, there really would not be such a problem, and we could negotiate with them on a much more positive basis.

I asked the minister whether there would be consideration of postal banking as a way of improving the financial sustainability of Canada Post and of providing a needed service to Canadian communities, some of the same communities the government has tried to invoke in justifying this legislation. All we have really heard is that the arbitrator cannot determine Canada Post's corporate model. Fair enough, but surely the government can, and it would be nice to have an answer to that question as well.

Finally, the last thing I asked was when the government would keep its promise to restore door-to-door mail delivery. The minister mentioned the fact that the government has put a moratorium on the further removal of door-to-door mail delivery, which is a welcome development. However, it is not enough, and it is certainly not what was talked about during the election campaign.

It seems to me that a number of questions have come before the House this evening, and we have not really received complete answers to them. I think that really underscores why we should be having a great deal more time to debate and have deliberations on this type of legislation. The government has certainly made the case that its back-to-work legislation will not violate constitutional rights to free association and collective bargaining. However, one of the best ways to make sure that the legislation complies with the Constitution and other requirements is to actually have a full, proper amount of debate in this House.

I really appreciate the opportunity to participate in such a significant way in the committee of the whole, and I am glad we are having this deliberation. However, I feel that the deliberation we have had so far has really only underscored and exposed the need for a much more fulsome debate on this proposed legislation before we have to have a vote at third reading.

Government Orders

I appeal to other members of this House to reconsider the rushed timeline that has been adopted and to consider the possibility of having a few days, at least, of debate on something that might impinge on the fundamental workplace rights of tens of thousands of Canadians and that might do serious damage to a movement that is so important to the development of the middle class and those working hard to join it.

• (2345)

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Chair, I have a few remarks, and then I have some questions for the minister.

There have been many references to 2011, when the Conservatives ended rotating CUPW strikes. However, this Liberal motion and the legislation that follows it, believe it or not, is even more restrictive than Stephen Harper's was, because the motion that preceded this bill limits debate to the shortest possible timeframe. We are expected to wrap up this farce before the end of this sitting day tonight. It is an outright affront to democracy, and the Prime Minister and his caucus do not even have the decency to be ashamed.

It is just another broken promise thrown on a heap of abandoned election promises from 2015. We heard about electoral reform, treating veterans and their families with dignity and fairness, promises to never take veterans back to court, balanced budgets and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and effectively addressing climate change—

The Chair: Order. I realize that committee of the whole is a less formal proceeding. However, there is a little too much chaos in the chamber, with people standing and having side conversations. I would ask hon. members to keep conversations at a low level. We know it works not too badly to a point. If you really want to engage in that kind of conversation, perhaps do it in your respective lobbies.

We will go back to the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, there have been all kinds of promises to effectively address climate change, but sadly, the fact is that our greenhouse gas emissions increased significantly in 2015. Let us not forget the promise to restore home mail delivery. All this brings us back to Canada Post and its refusal to bargain a fair and equitable collective agreement with its CUPW members.

Let us examine the facts. There are many facts to look at in this conflict. Workplace injuries at Canada Post have increased by 43% over the last two years, largely as a result of Canada Post's transformation, which requires workers to walk longer routes carrying heavier loads. It is not just letters. It is letters and parcels. Some parcels can be quite large and quite heavy.

Today the disabling injury rate for a letter carrier is five times the rate of the rest of the federal public sector. Just imagine if our workplace were such that it jeopardized our physical and emotional well-being. When CUPW president Mike Palecek asked his members about injuries, in a couple of hours he received more than 450 responses. The stories are quite heartbreaking. I would like to give members a sense of the kinds of things CUPW members are facing.

One young woman writes that she tripped and fell on an icy sidewalk. She was seriously injured, and it took several months for her to get back to work after having received physiotherapy. When she went back, she was supposed to be on light duty. Despite that, she was harassed by her manager to do more and more heavier work. As a result, she was re-injured, and she has not been able to get back to work. She has small children who are depending on her ability to earn a living.

Another individual reported that he fell and landed on his right knee. He twisted his left knee in the process, and now he has severe arthritis in both. He was accommodated at the plant, but that accommodation has not worked out, and as a result, he cannot work. He cannot work the way he had intended, and he has many years ahead of him in terms of his working life.

This means that not only are these people injured but they cannot provide for their families in the way they had expected, and quite simply, families are suffering. I cannot begin to explain how important it is for the government to understand that this strike is about not just money but about the well-being of families and CUPW members. It is about their health and safety, and that should matter.

We hear other stories about workers being sent out on nights, not unlike tonight, to wear headlamps to find their way over dark, slippery snowbanks and snow covered sidewalks. If a worker cannot finish a route in eight hours, that worker is sent back out to finish delivering the mail. The fact is that people cannot work 10, 12 or 14 hours a day, as we heard from people in the gallery.

The government has chosen to come to the aid of Canada Post instead of the aid of CUPW workers. Before I ask my questions, I would like to quote once again from Dru Oja Jay and his observations about this strike. He said, "Every successful strike has to pass through a storm of negative media coverage and worse. It's no different for Canada Post employees. They're striking for their own health and safety. They're endlessly overworked, and they're frequently injured. They have a plan for transforming Canada Post into an engine for economic and environmental transition. They're also bargaining for equal pay for rural mail carriers, who are not paid the same rate as their urban counterparts."

• (2350)

In some cases, they receive no money at all for work done, simply because it does not fit into the four or six hours that Canada Post has determined for a mail route.

I do indeed have some questions for the minister. I would like to know if the minister is aware that the injury rate for postal workers is more than five times that of other federal workers. Does the minister condone the perpetuation of this unsafe reality in the workplace at Canada Post?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her obvious compassion for the workers of Canada Post. We share that compassion.

Government Orders

I share a profound conviction that people should be safe at work. As Minister of Labour, one of the most devastating parts of my job is that I receive notices, from across the country in federally regulated workplaces, of significant injury and death that occur in workplaces. It is a profoundly sobering part of my job to see how many injuries and deaths arise in federally regulated workplaces to this day, most of which, if not all, are preventable.

I stand with the member opposite to say that we all deserve to come home safe and sound at the end of a day. It is my commitment as the Minister of Labour to continue to work on making sure that workplaces are safe and healthy.

That is why the first guiding principle in the legislation is to ensure that the health and safety of employees are protected. We have heard from union members about their concerns regarding their health and safety in the workplace, and that is why that principle is incorporated into the principles that the arbitrator must consider when making decisions, if the parties cannot make those decisions on their own.

I will also say—

The Chair: Order. We will go back to the hon. member for London—Fanshawe. Normally, in this format the length of the response is as close as possible to the time that was taken to pose the question.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, I appreciate your clarifying that for the minister.

The minister has talked a great deal about the cost of the rotating strikes to the economy. Is she aware that one of the key issues of this strike is indeed the injuries suffered by CUPW workers? Given that injuries cost the economy in Canada about \$26 billion a year, is the minister at all concerned about the cost to the economy of this reality of injury at Canada Post?

• (2355)

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I will complete my response to the member about the very compelling story she told about a particular worker who had been injured, had returned to work and who felt harassed to do more than her return-to-work plan indicated she was capable of doing.

I will point out that Bill C-65 was passed thanks to all, very supportive, members of the House, who agreed that workplaces should be free of harassment and violence. All workers will now be protected by the new legislation this government has introduced. In fact, now when people are harassed, regardless of the workplace in which they find themselves, if they are in a federally regulated workplace, they will have measures to protect them and support them as they move through processes for which they may not have had support previously.

In terms of the—

The Chair: Order.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, Canada Post was, in fact, a federally regulated workplace before this legislation, and those issues were never addressed and the harassment continues.

I would like to now ask the minister if she supports management's directive, which we have heard something about, that Canada Post CUPW workers withheld government cheques that included child tax benefits and social assistance cheques. Was she aware of it and does she condone it?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, in fact Canada Post and the union agreed prior to the strike that they would continue to deliver government cheques to Canadians. What we know is that some of those cheques may have arrived slightly late as a result of the rotating strikes, and that has created hardship.

What is even more difficult for Canadians who rely on government cheques, and in fact all kinds of cheques, is the uncertainty. I repeat that I have heard from members of my own community that even the uncertainty of not knowing if a cheque will arrive in time to pay rent can be extremely difficult for people who are often in the most vulnerable situations.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for that answer, but unfortunately it does not bear out in terms of the truth of the matter. Cheques were delivered to Canada Post outlets and there was a message that they were not to be delivered until after November 22. That came from management. That seems to me to be at the crux of it, the manipulation by Canada Post, and the minister does not seem to be able to understand it or control it.

I wonder if the minister believes that it is okay that for the past 10 years the CUPW workers' pay has remained below inflation.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, these are exactly the reasons why collective agreements exist and why bargaining is so important. Bargaining determines wages, increases, in some cases practices and principles, working hours, leave and a number of issues. That is why we have worked so closely with the parties through this process to get them to a place where they could agree on the terms of the next collective agreement. It is not for me to say what the increase should be of any corporation. However, collective bargaining is an opportunity to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. That is what we have been working on so hard with both parties through all of the tools available to us.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, I am afraid that the minister does not seem to understand that back-to-work legislation short-circuits this collective bargaining that the minister said is going to produce fair wages and make sure workers are protected.

I wonder if the minister also believes it is acceptable for Canada Post to be allowed to deny rural and suburban workers' pay for all hours worked.

Government Orders

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, again I will draw the member's attention to the guiding principles in the legislation for the arbitrator, which clearly indicate that, along with the health and safety of the employees to be protected, the arbitrator consider that employees are ensured to receive equal pay for work of equal value and ensure the fair treatment for the more temporary or part-time employees and other employees in non-standard employment as compared to full-time or permanent employees. These principles are exactly there to help guide the arbitrator to address long-standing issues that the union has experienced.

• (2400)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, I would also like to ask the minister this. Is she aware that the employees who work for Purolator, which is a part of Canada Post, make \$5 more per hour than CUPW members for doing essentially the same work? Two months ago they were granted a 3% wage increase, yet Canada Post is waffling and refusing to bargain with respect to the 2.9% requested by CUPW. Does the minister feel that is acceptable?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I was just checking with my officials because I recalled that the Purolator contract was one of the first contracts that, in my term as Minister of Labour, was successfully concluded through a collective bargaining process. That was an agreement that was negotiated by the members of that union with their employer. This is exactly how the collective bargaining process should work.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, I wonder if the minister is aware that under USMCA, Canadians ordering packages shipped from the U.S. and Mexico by private couriers could receive a \$40 discount with respect to duty on the goods. However, that is only if they use private couriers. The same exemption is not available to Canada Post. Does the minister condone this imbalance regarding private couriers and Canada Post? Is she prepared to ask her government to hold up signing the USMCA until this unfair practice is rectified?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I am really pleased to get this question from the member opposite, because one of the things that makes the USMCA so progressive is the fully enforceable chapter on labour. It has been endorsed by Canadian and international labour organizations that say that this is in fact the most progressive labour chapter in the history of trade agreements. I would say that we care so much about the rights of labour that we insisted on a fully enforceable labour chapter as part of the USMCA. That is something that organized labour had been calling for, worked with us so carefully to craft, and stood with us, side by side, as we negotiated that agreement.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, unfortunately this agreement that the minister thinks is so wonderful simply sets up committees. It does not mean that labour relations and labour practices are going to be safe and secure and that Canadian workers are going to be protected.

Finally, section 9 of the back-to-work legislation that we have before us reads that, "the Minister must refer to the mediator-arbitrator all matters relating to the amendment or revision of each collective agreement that are, at the time of the appointment, in dispute between the parties."

The problem is that section 9 provides the minister with unilateral power to determine the matters in dispute and the scope of the mediator-arbitrator's mandate.

Is this not of concern? Is the minister prepared to amend this section to provide for fair and transparent processes to determine the matters in dispute?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I assure the member opposite that I will refer all outstanding issues.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Chair, my last question to the minister is in light of the response of the workers of Canada Post, the human beings who are on the street and deliver the mail and the packages. Is the minister prepared to meet with them and hear out their concerns? It seems to me that Canada Post is not listening very well at all.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, as a matter of fact my constituency office right now is occupied by Canada Post workers. There are about 10 people sitting and working with my staff. My staff has been communicating with me about their concerns. I certainly have met many times with union officials, with the president of the union and with many of the members of the negotiating team.

I will continue to make myself available as a member of Parliament to any constituency member or any individual in this country who wants to speak with me.

• (2405)

The Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Whitby. I will let the hon. member know there are about eight minutes remaining in the time provided.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for her interventions thus far.

Over the past few weeks, many people from Whitby have reached out to me with their concerns about the strike. The Government of Canada is committed to free collective bargaining. Introducing back-to-work legislation is sometimes necessary in order to meet the needs of Canadians. I would like to start off by reiterating that, as the minister has said many times, we are committed to a free collective bargaining process as the basis for a sound industrial relationship.

A lot of work has been done over the last year to ensure that we as a government have been committed and fair in providing resources to both parties. Could the minister clarify to people in Whitby, and other Canadians, the work that has been done so far to ensure that this has come to an agreement that would be amenable to Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, the member is right to point out that we have worked extremely hard to help this collective bargaining process move forward to reach a collective agreement.

First of all, about a year ago we appointed federal mediators through a federal mediation service to work with the two parties to begin early negotiations at my urging. Early and often is what I often tell parties who are entering into that process.

They continued to work with federal mediation services but when it was clear that they had reached an impasse, I appointed a special mediator to work with the parties to see if a new set of eyes, a fresh perspective, could help them reach a collective agreement. Those talks broke down. I reappointed the special mediator not once, but twice.

We have talked to the negotiating teams. I have met with both the union and the employer. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility has also met with the employer and the union.

We are confident that we have done everything in our power to help these parties negotiate. I would still urge the parties to get a deal. It is not too late.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes: Mr. Chair, with regard to the proposed legislation, we have seen demonstrations here in this House. We know the legislation is providing an extension to the collective agreements and the minister is to appoint a mediator. There are postal workers at the 265 Harwood facility in Whitby, and I am wondering if she could talk to them specifically about what the proposed legislation would offer in order for them to continue what they are rightfully able to do in the collective bargaining agreement.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, I am pleased to tell the members in Whitby and in fact across the country that we have their interests at heart, as well as the needs of the corporation. That is why we are working in a balanced way. First of all, with the selection of the mediator-arbitrator, the person will have to be agreed upon by both parties. If there is no agreement, then I will seek the guidance of the Canada Industrial Relations Board to appoint a neutral party. That is to intentionally ensure we do not recreate the mistakes of the Harper government, where political appointments were made, where people were found to have conflicts of interest, where it was clearly biased to the government's perspective. We want both parties to feel certain the person is truly unbiased in any way.

Second, I refer to the guiding principles. I am running out of time, but the health and safety of workers, equal pay for work of equal value and the fair treatment of temporary and part-time employees are all principles which should give the member some comfort that we are acting with their interests at heart, as well as the sustainability of the corporation, which of course also has their interests at heart.

• (2410)

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes: Mr. Chair, I am glad the minister talked about the guiding principles, because we did hear in this House about the injuries suffered by workers. I know the guiding principles within this piece of legislation would guide what the mediator does moving forward in order to ensure employees receive equal pay for work of equal value, and that the health and safety of employees are taken into consideration.

I want to mention the NDP's record on this particular issue. The member for London—Fanshawe and the member for Hamilton Centre have, on three occasions, either voted for or were part of a government which voted for back-to-work legislation. We know it is often uncomfortable but it is a necessary step in order to do the work we are asked to do in this place by Canadians. Back-to-work legislation is necessary in order to ensure we are working for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Government Orders

The member for London—Fanshawe, the member for Hamilton Centre, as well as the member for Vancouver East were part of governments which voted for back-to-work legislation. I am wondering if the minister could speak to the importance of having a responsible government and ensuring we are doing the very important work Canadians have brought us here to do.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Chair, the member is right to point out that even NDP governments, under seven premiers, 15 times used back-to-work legislation to end disputes that could not be agreed upon through a collective bargaining process. It is uncomfortable. I will give the NDP members the benefit of the doubt that it was just as uncomfortable for them as it is for me standing here in this House.

Perhaps the Conservatives do not share this belief, but let us say we all profoundly believe that an agreement arrived upon through a collective bargaining process is the strongest agreement, is the best way to maintain positive labour relations in a corporation. That is why I share the member's perspective that it is parties of all stripes that have had to do this. It is something we do not take lightly. That is why we have crafted the legislation with guiding principles that are fair, balanced, and with an arbitrator selection process that is fair and balanced and will support the parties to reach an agreement that will create positive relationships and help the corporation and the union move forward together in a profitable way.

The Chair: It being 12:14 a.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the committee stage of the bill.

Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 5 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

Government Orders

(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 7 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 8 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 8 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall clause 9 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 9 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 10 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 10 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 11 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 11 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 12 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 12 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall clause 13 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 13 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 14 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 14 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 15 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 15 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 16 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 16 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 1, the short title, carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Short title agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Bill agreed to)

(Bill reported)

• (2415)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Patty Hajdu moved that Bill C-89, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, be read the third time and passed.

Government Orders

She said: Madam Speaker, let me be clear. Our government is using back-to-work legislation as a last resort. I have said many times that the best deals are reached at the table and that I will always have faith in the collective bargaining process. Having said that, it is clear that in this situation the government had to act, which is a decision I do not take lightly.

For a year, the government has been doing everything possible to support and encourage both sides to reach a deal at the table. We provided conciliation officers, appointed mediators and offered voluntary arbitration. We re-appointed the special mediator in a last-ditch effort to reach a deal, and now we have exhausted all of our options.

Over the last five weeks, Canadians in over 200 communities have seen delays. Small businesses are paying more for shipping, consumers are less and less confident that their packages will arrive, and vulnerable Canadians are worried they will not get their cheques on time. This is a very busy time of year. Businesses are relying on Canada Post in order to have a profitable holiday season, and Canadians need to see as quickly as possible that mail and packages are moving and that they can depend on a reliable and predictable service.

These work stoppages are having a serious impact on Canadians businesses as well, especially during the busiest time of year for e-commerce. For many Canadian businesses, their busiest time of year is from now until the end of the holiday season. With a parcel backlog that may well go into 2019, Canadians are losing confidence. They are cancelling orders, or they are not ordering at all. It will not be long before we start hearing of small businesses that cannot survive. We can do something to help and we must.

I will tell members about Maureen Lyons, owner of Mo McQueen and Sons. She said:

If by the end of the week, by some miracle, things could resume or at least the shopping public's faith in the system of delivery could be restored, I think it would help a great deal. We are as grassroots as it gets. I don't make a ton of money as it is. It is so frustrating. We're the little guys. And I'm not just a seller... I'm also trying to find things for my own children for Christmas that I can't get.

How can we expect Canadians to place orders when they cannot be assured they will receive their packages on time? At the same time, Canada Post has asked its international partners to stop shipments to Canada. What kind of message does it send to Canadian businesses? The holiday season starts this week, and package loads are about to double. We are at a critical moment when inaction on our part would be irresponsible.

The Retail Council of Canada, believes this situation can be fixed if the strikes are brought to an end without delay. Karl Littler, spokesman for the Retail Council of Canada, says that "It's a matter of averting the crisis before it becomes full-blown". We need to avert this crisis.

Most of us in the House know someone in our communities who has opened a business selling locally sourced or even handmade products. We do what we can to support these businesses. We want to see them thrive. In fact, I have many such businesses in my riding. Often they are young entrepreneurs with investments from family, and sometimes the only money they have, invested in these

businesses and are trying to grow them to support themselves and the local economy while also hiring people in their new businesses.

Many of these businesses rely on online sales to survive, especially at this time. In fact, the fourth quarter is when many local and family-owned businesses make the majority of their sales. If the strikes are left to continue through the holiday season and sales continue to decline, some of these smaller businesses could close.

Entrepreneurs who sell through the eBay, Etsy and Amazon platforms already have razor-thin margins. With the higher cost of shipping through courier companies, how can they turn a profit? For rural businesses where Canada Post is typically the only parcel delivery service available, there is no alternative. They are in a very tough spot, one that I would say is precarious.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, two-thirds of the small and medium-sized enterprises surveyed have said they are being affected by the rotating strikes at Canada Post. This is costing them on average almost \$3,000 in additional costs. Is it any wonder that the negative effects of these ongoing strikes are also jeopardizing Canada's reputation as a reliable market for commerce and trade?

E-commerce is a significant source of economic growth in Canada. In 2018, Canadians are doing much more of their shopping online compared with the 2011 strike.

• (2420)

According to Statistics Canada, Internet-based sales from all retailers rose 31% to \$15.7 billion in 2017, and up to 40% of these sales took place in the fourth quarter, which the strike is currently impacting. These negative impacts on this business to date will only continue to worsen. We did not want it to come to this, but in light of these consequences, we see no alternative.

While our government is aware of the serious negative impacts these strikes are having across the country for businesses and everyday Canadians, we must take into account as well Canada's vulnerable and remote populations. Older Canadians, persons with disabilities, low-income earners, as well as Canadians living in rural, remote and northern areas, all of these groups rely on physical mail delivery and are disproportionately negatively impacted by extended work stoppages.

Thirty per cent of our population, almost nine million Canadians, live in rural and remote areas, often with unreliable Internet. What does a disruption mean to them? Not only does it mean no parcels, it means no access to bills, statements, government services, personal communications and any other mail they require and depend on. For them, the costs of alternatives to Canada Post are very high and for many, out of reach.

In some remote northern areas, where residents rely on mail and parcel delivery more than anywhere else in Canada, there are simply no alternatives to Canada Post.

Jim Danahy, CEO of CustomerLAB, said:

Government Orders

Canada is the second biggest land mass in the world and while most of our population is in the southern portions of the country, we have people in every corner, in very remote locations.

We have Indigenous population is very small and sometimes isolated communities that you can only reach by water or by air. So, in those cases, the local economies can be hit quite significantly

Beverley Mitchell wrote to the *Toronto Star*. She said:

While mail disruption is an inconvenience to many of us living in Canada, it is an impossible situation for those in remote fly-in communities in Northern Canada.

Unlike other Canadians who have options of private courier services, those living in these regions must rely on Canada Post for all of their deliveries.

Through a newly formed non-profit organization...I am personally involved in sending much-needed food to shelters and soup kitchens; warm clothing to the homeless, poor and elderly; school supplies and food to daycares...

We need to take action now. It is not just our small businesses that are suffering. Our e-commerce business and in fact many community members who rely on Canada Post are suffering as well.

These vulnerable Canadians are not worrying about their online shopping; they are worrying about covering their basics, like food and clothing. We must act on their behalf.

This is absolutely a last resort, but we know we must act in the best interests of Canadians and Canadian businesses. Having exhausted all other possibilities, we believe this is the best and the only course of action.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in supporting Bill C-89.

● (2425)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is with indignation that I rise to speak to Bill C-89 for the resumption and continuation of postal services.

The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour claims that the government exhausted all options, but let us not forget that the government did this knowing full well that special legislation would be ready if postal workers did not bend to their employer's demands. The Minister of Labour presents this dispute as a long list of proposals by Canada Post and its employees. That is inaccurate. The one thing Canada Post did was to allow the negotiations to go on for a long time without proposing any real solutions for its employees. Thanks to the Liberals, Canada Post got what it wanted, namely back-to-work legislation under the same conditions. Incentive for negotiation and the balance of power have evaporated since employees know that they will be forced to go back to work sooner or later.

In 2011, the Harper Conservatives imposed this same measure, which was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. At the time, the Liberals condemned the very same back-to-work legislation they are now about to use. Ultimately, there is very little difference between a Liberal government and a Conservative one. Workers know that the NDP will fight for their rights every time, not just when it suits us.

There is one important point I want to raise: postal workers are not happy about going on strike. For thousands of middle-class families, striking is their only way they can maintain a position of strength vis-à-vis Canada Post. The Liberals and the Conservatives are spreading a false message when they say the strike is completely blocking mail

delivery. The union chose to do rotating strikes specifically because it does not want to block mail delivery and wants to minimize the impact of strike action on small businesses.

A few days ago, Canada Post announced that it was the last chance to process the mail backlog before the avalanche of holiday packages hits. That is not true. Canada Post invented a false crisis over the mail backlog to get the government to intervene, and the government took the bait. Canada Post said that there were hundreds of mail trucks, which has since been proven to be untrue. Canada Post convinced the government that there would be no Christmas without back-to-work legislation.

People are receiving their mail and their online orders, in spite of what the Minister of Labour said. Nancy Beauchamp, a member of the CUPW bargaining committee, confirmed that at the Léo-Blanchette processing centre in Montreal, for example, there are currently no delays and no backlog of mail.

The minister also said that low-income Canadians waiting for their cheques were penalized by postal workers' rotating strikes. This is not true. The mail delivery process will not allow for the cheques to be delayed. The union chose to hold rotating strikes so as not to impact the public.

Now, the Liberals and the Conservatives are walking hand-in-hand toward a law that will undermine the constitutional right to free bargaining. The alarm that Canada Post is sounding is only as legitimate as the Liberals and Conservatives make it. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers has acted in good faith in this dispute. It proposed ideas for improvement, but Canada Post turned a deaf ear. Management refused to implement any lasting solutions to the problems pertaining to pay equity between men and women, the job insecurity of some of its employees, or the health, safety, and unpaid overtime of rural mail carriers. This was an opportunity for the Liberals to clearly show whose side they are really on.

Rather than standing with workers and supporting free and fair bargaining, the Liberal government chose to support Canada Post management to the detriment of employees. Are the Liberals aware that forcing employees to go back to work will cause them to lose all of their leverage? The government knows that Canada Post employees have always been willing to negotiate in good faith and to quickly reach collective agreements. The Liberals could very well have ordered Canada Post to do the same by trying to negotiate in good faith with the union, but instead, the Liberals are hastening to Canada Post's rescue.

● (2430)

Now that Canada Post is concerned about profits and companies like eBay and Amazon are concerned about the delivery of their packages, the Liberals are imposing a return to work that would wipe out the efforts of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. This legislation would reintroduce the same working conditions. We need to reach an agreement, not vote on back-to-work legislation that will scrap all the negotiation efforts.

Government Orders

The government keeps saying it is in favour of negotiations, but it introduces a back-to-work bill. What is the logic behind that?

Yesterday, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour said she was confident “that we have used every tool in our tool box to get a negotiated agreement.” Is she confident? Have they really used every tool in their tool box?

Let them call the employer and tell it to sit down at the negotiating table. If Canada Post management had truly wanted to avoid a strike, then all it had to do was show up on time at the negotiating table and stop asking the government to bail it out of its bad management decisions.

That is what is happening today. What is worse is that the Liberals believe it. Does the government believe postal workers who want better protection and better working conditions? We must let negotiations continue. Rotating strikes will let the mail be delivered, which is what the union always wanted.

Now, the Liberals, including the member for Gatineau, want to convince us that we cannot wait any longer and that arbitration is the route to take. I may be naive, but I still hope that this arbitration will be transparent and fair, and that it will put employer and employees on an equal footing. However, when we take a closer look at how arbitration works, we quickly understand the government's decisions. Under arbitration, the decision-making process and the final decision are completely confidential. The union will not be able to rely on the means currently at its disposal to achieve a balance of power with Canada Post because all employees will be forced to go back to work under the deplorable conditions that I described earlier.

Things were the same for Canada Post in 2011. The union was afraid of being forced to accept a collective agreement despite arbitration and special legislation. That is why it pursued a negotiated settlement. The Harper government's back-to-work legislation imposed regressive collective agreements on postal workers. Today's back-to-work legislation is clearly infringing on workers' rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If the Liberals think that has changed, they have a short memory. Need I remind them that, in 2015, the Prime Minister made it a priority to improve labour relations at Canada Post and uphold the principle of freedom to negotiate?

Let me say that back-to-work legislation for postal workers will be a very tough sell. That is why I move, seconded by the member for London—Fanshawe:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following: “this House decline to give third reading to Bill C-89, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of postal services, because it:

- (a) prevents the use of the constitutional right to strike, an essential part of the collective bargaining process; and
- (b) clearly violates the rights workers have under the Charter.”

● (2435)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques on a point of order.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 62, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé, that the member for Elmwood—Transcona be now heard, since he rose first.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

● (2440)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues in the House for the opportunity to close the debate. I wish we were not closing the debate at this time, but considering that the time was allocated so severely in the motion that set the context for this debate, it is an honour to close it.

I will close it by addressing what I think was one of the principal arguments that we heard from the Liberals throughout the debate today, which is that they really had no choice and this crisis is beyond their control. What we have heard consistently throughout the debate today is that is not the case. Postal workers have been on rotating strikes, but the mail is getting delivered. In fact, in some parts of the country, there has only been a disturbance for one day out of the five weeks that Canada Post has had rotating strikes. I am sorry but that does not a crisis make.

I know there are small businesses and Canadians who want to receive their packages and the fact is that postal workers want to deliver those packages, but they do not want a circumstance where one in four of them can expect to get hurt doing it and not be able to enjoy Christmas with his or her family because he or she was injured working in unreasonable conditions that have persisted at Canada Post for a very long time now. That is what the government is asking those workers to do: to go into a workplace with the highest rate of injuries in the federal sector. We just think that is completely unacceptable and we do not believe we had to be here.

Government Orders

We have heard the labour minister defend this all day, and that is a shame. The person who should have been on her feet all day is the minister responsible for Canada Post, who has failed to put in management that is willing to address the real workplace issues and causing workers to get hurt, who has failed to address the mandatory overtime that is disrupting the family life of workers at Canada Post and contributing to the injury rate, and who has failed to put management in place at Canada Post that would address the real pay equity issues that exist between rural and suburban carriers and urban carriers. If we had real leadership from the minister who is actually responsible for the corporation, we could have avoided this situation.

To hear the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour talk about a crisis as if the government has no control over it is a little rich. Frankly, Liberals are asking too much of postal workers who were legislated back to work under bad terms and conditions in 2011 and have been doing their utmost to make sure that people continue to receive their mail reliably at a great cost to either themselves or their colleagues. This was an opportunity to do something about that.

We have heard a plethora of excuses from the Liberals as to why, even though they are undermining the collective bargaining rights of Canadians with back-to-work legislation, we should accept it because they got rid of Bill C-377, a major objection to which was the fact that it would reveal the contents of union strike funds to employers. The idea of getting rid of that legislation was to support union workers being able to strike and not be undermined by their employers. If the government is going to repeal that legislation with one hand and then legislate them back to work and artificially end the strike on the other hand, it amounts to the same thing: it undermines the right to collective bargaining.

We have heard about hard decisions. The fact of the matter is that governments do have to make hard decisions, but what is not true is that every time a government has to make a hard decision, workers get the short end of the stick.

When Air Canada went to the Liberal government early in its mandate and said it wanted to get rid of the provisions that required it to have its maintenance work done in Canada because it wanted to do the work offshore, the Liberals jumped to the pump and got it done. They made sure the corporate executives at Air Canada got what they wanted.

When big multinational companies went to the Liberals throughout the TPP negotiations—and they had an opportunity to substantially renegotiate the TPP deal—they decided to continue with the temporary worker provisions. Again we heard the Liberals say they were fixing the TFW program and making it better. Then they smuggled the provisions of that program into chapter 12 of the TPP. They could have done something for workers then, but no, they said it was time for hard decisions and sided with the big multinationals.

They did it again with their friends on Bay Street on the CEO stock option loophole. They were lobbied dozens of times to break an election commitment.

● (2445)

When that hard decision came up, what did they do? The Liberals sided with the folks on Bay Street and broke their election commitment. Workers are going to pay the price for that, and are paying the price for that, because then they are told, “I’m sorry, we don’t have the money to do what we want to do.”

When it came to Netflix paying its fair share, Netflix came and lobbied. It was time for a hard decision. What decision did the Liberals make? They again sided with the large multinational so that it would not have to pay its share.

On the carbon tax, when the biggest polluters and the biggest moneymakers came to them and said they wanted a break on the carbon tax, unlike for everyone else, the Liberals granted it to them. That is the theme.

Whenever there is a hard decision, workers lose with the Liberal government. That is the problem.

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Madam Speaker, we have worked hard tonight, but other people have also worked hard, with us and for us. I hope my colleagues will join me in thanking the table officers, the speakership of the House, the security officers, the pages, the people who served us food and the bus drivers. Thank you very much.

Also, I think we can pick up after ourselves and clean up our own glasses and whatnot, here and in the lobbies. It is the least we can do for the people who helped us here tonight.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member for Hochelaga for her comments.

[*English*]

It being 12:46 a.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to the House*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (2455)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 949)

YEAS

Members

Angus	Benson
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Cannings
Caron	Choquette
Christopherson	Cullen
Donnelly	Dubé
Dusseault	Duvall
Fortin	Hardeastle
Jolibois	Julian
Kwan	Laverdière
MacGregor	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
Moore	Nantel
Paupé	Quach
Ramsey	Sansoucy
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Thériault	Trudel
Weir— 37	

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barlow
Baylis	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg

Government Orders

Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Khalid
Khera	Lake
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Liepert	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	Murray
Morrissey	Nault
Nassif	O'Connell
Ng	Oliver
Oliphant	Paradis
O'Regan	Peterson
Peschisolido	Picard
Petitpas Taylor	Qualtrough
Poissant	Rioux
Reid	Rodriguez
Robillard	Rota
Rogers	Rusnak
Rudd	Saini
Sahota	Samson
Sajjan	Sarai
Sangha	Schiefke
Scarpaleggia	Serré
Schulte	Shanahan
Sgro	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Shields	Sohi
Simms	Spengemann
Sorbara	Tabbara
Stanton	Tassi
Tan	Vandal
Trudeau	Vaughan
Vandenbeld	Webber
Waugh	Wrzesnewskyj
Wilson-Raybould	Young
Yip	
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PAIRED

Members

Beaulieu	Boudrias
Cormier	Fry
Gill	Plamondon
Sikand	Whalen— 8

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (2500)

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

(Division No. 950)

YEAS**Members**

Aboultaif	Albas
Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Barlow
Baylis	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Hajdu
Harvey	Hébert
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Khalid	Khera
Lake	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lightbound	Lockhart
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan

Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Reid
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Rota	Rudd
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Spengemann	Stanton
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Waugh
Webber	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Yip
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NAYS**Members**

Angus	Benson
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Cannings
Caron	Choquette
Christopherson	Cullen
Donnelly	Dubé
Dusseau	Duvall
Fortin	Fuhr
Graham	Hardcastle
Jolibois	Julian
Kwan	Laverdière
Long	MacGregor
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	Milhychuk
Moore	Nantel
Ouellette	Paupé
Quach	Ramsey
Sansoucy	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Thériault
Trudel	Virani
Weir— 43	

PAIRED**Members**

Beaulieu	Boudrias
Cormier	Fry
Gill	Plamondon
Sikand	Whalen— 8

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 1:05 a.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:05 a.m.)

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