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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

● (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC'S INTERESTS

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, SNC-Lavalin is jeopardizing thousands of jobs. Trans Mountain is costing taxpayers billions of dollars. The shipbuilding strategy killed 1,000 jobs at the Davie shipyard. That is almost enough to make us forget about the most spectacularly stupid federal fiasco of all: Muskrat Falls.

Ottawa loaned \$8 billion in public money—our money, Quebecers' money—to Newfoundland and Labrador to build a dam to compete with Hydro-Québec. That \$8 billion funded a dam that will produce power at a loss in a bankrupt province that will never pay the money back. That means Quebecers are paying for a project designed to be detrimental to Quebec, a project supported by the Liberals, the Conservatives and the NDP. That is the price we pay for representation by representatives who do not look out for our interests.

Quebeckers want elected representatives who work for Quebec, not against us. That is what Quebec wants, and that is what the Bloc wants too.

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[*English*]

SPRING FESTIVAL

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night marked the official end of the two-week Spring Festival 2019, which was celebrated in Canada and around the world.

Ever since I was a child, the annual Spring Festival has remained one of my favourite holidays. I will always remember the fireworks, food, red packets and family gatherings that accompany the celebrations. For the past two weeks, we have enjoyed spending time with our families and friends while remembering the contributions made by our ancestors.

Canada's strength comes from the richness of our cultures and the diversity of our people. Therefore, as we celebrate the Year of the Pig in 2019, we must all do our part to keep improving this country we love.

* * *

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize two individuals who have been important members of our community for years and who have recently celebrated significant birthdays.

Albert McConnell, of Kilsyth, who just turned 90, moved to Kilsyth in 1942 with his parents and six siblings, when he was just 16 years old. Ab immediately bought his first registered Hereford cows, and a few years later, expanded into sheep farming. Ab continued to farm beef cattle with his three sons for over 70 years, until he retired in 2015.

John Garvey, of Owen Sound, just celebrated his 95th birthday. John refereed hockey and broomball for over 50 years, retiring at age 80, but John continued to umpire baseball for over 70 years, retiring at age 90. He still golfs three to four times a week, recording scores a 40-year-old would be proud to achieve.

Please join me in celebrating Albert and John, two remarkable men from my riding.

* * *

● (1405)

[*Translation*]

VENTS D'ESPOIR

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the courage and contribution of a remarkable woman from Saint-Rémi named Sylvie Boyer.

Statements by Members

Sylvie is a mother, dairy farmer and dedicated volunteer who is slowly but surely being recognized for her commitment to mental and physical health. In 2014, after her two children suffered head traumas, Sylvie made it her mission to improve the well-being of people with brain injuries and people with disabilities by establishing the first multi-purpose complex dedicated to that cause in Montérégie.

This initiative, called Vents d'espoir, or winds of hope, is steadily garnering new funding. The project is off to a good start, with the activity centre already up and running, but Sylvie and her team recently got a little extra help in the form of a \$50,000 prize for winning Pioneer's "Here's to Hometowns" contest.

Congratulations to Vents d'espoir. Let us hope for more good news to come.

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[English]

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Across Canada, first nations, Métis and Inuit people speak their languages with pride and honour. In my riding of Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, many communities speak only in Cree, Dene, Michif or Michif-Cree. Guided by our elders, we are encouraged to speak our languages. With our youth in mind, we work hard to make sure that our languages will be spoken for generations to come.

I am proud of the work being done for our languages to thrive again. Just last night I had the honour to meet elder Marsha Ireland, who taught the heritage committee about indigenous sign languages and how important, but forgotten, they are.

It is clear to me that first nations, Métis and Inuit people are doing the work to have our languages prosper. I call on all members of the House to do their part to help the indigenous people in their communities educate others about their languages.

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[Translation]

SENIORS IN BROME—MISSISQUOI

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, February 1, I participated in the launch of the senior-friendly municipality policy at Centre Georges-Perron in Bedford.

This policy is supported by an action plan that seeks to improve the quality of services offered to seniors in the following eight municipalities in my riding: the Bedford Township, Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge, Pike River, Saint-Armand, Saint-Ignace-de-Stanbridge, Stanbridge East, Stanbridge Station and the Town of Bedford.

The success of a project like this strongly depends on the involvement of community members. At the launch, I had the opportunity to meet Lucie Hébert and Monique Lacroix, who care about our seniors' well-being.

I also had the opportunity to tour my riding and meet the extraordinary leaders of eight organizations who are also committed to improving seniors' quality of life.

I commend them for their involvement and thank them for contributing to the vitality of Brome—Missisquoi.

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[English]

DARREN MORE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sometimes a tragedy can give way to a glimmer of hope. Last July, 43-year-old Darren More was tragically killed by a drug-impaired driver. He left behind his wonderful family: his wife, Pam, and three children, Daphne, Clayton and Jasper. He was dedicated to his family, and this was very clear in his advocacy for rare diseases. His son Jasper is living with MPS 6. This drove Darren to work with The Isaac Foundation, which provides support and hope for families living with this disease.

To honour Darren, the community came together in Palmerston on Monday's Family Day to host Darren's Day. The events included a sno-pitch tournament, games of shinny, a plunger toss, and an intense fire-truck-pulling competition between the Minto Fire Department and the Wellington County OPP. All the funds raised will benefit local community projects, including Minto minor sports and Crime Stoppers Guelph Wellington.

Let Darren's commitment to his family and our community be an example for us all.

* * *

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FEDERAL RETIREES

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome to the Hill today representatives of the National Association of Federal Retirees. They represent more than 176,000 federal public servants, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP, and federally appointed judges.

[Translation]

Members all know that the call of public service is strong. We also understand that there are many ways to serve and we all know the feeling of pride that comes with helping our communities grow and prosper.

Canada's public service is known throughout the world for its expertise, professionalism and excellence.

●(1410)

[English]

As part of their Vibrant Voices campaign, the association is here today to highlight the priorities of seniors. I look forward to hearing from them.

We recognize the work of our public servants and thank them for all they do.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

NOËL AUDET

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Noël Audet's exceptional contribution to the well-being of Canadians.

One of Mr. Audet's favourite things to do is to donate blood. Mr. Audet hails from Bourassa and made his first blood donation at Héma-Québec in 1969. He is now at his 320th donation.

Every blood donation helps save four lives, which means that Mr. Audet has changed the lives of 1,280 people. This contribution is significant when we consider that it takes 1,000 blood donations every day to meet the needs of Quebec's hospitals. The Prime Minister of Canada has extended his heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Audet.

I am very pleased to award the MP's medal for Bourassa to Mr. Noël Audet.

My congratulations to him.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, life is becoming more unaffordable for Canadians under the current Liberal government. In Edmonton Centre, a Liberal-held riding, people are finding it harder to get by. Data released earlier this month by Statistics Canada showed that unemployment is still above pre-recession levels in Edmonton. People in Edmonton and across the country are also finding it harder to buy homes due to higher interest rates and more stringent regulation.

As people in Glenora, Westmount, Inglewood and Laurier Heights see their disposable income drop, the government is adding more taxes and introducing legislation such as Bill C-69. If this bill comes into effect, the unemployment rate in Edmonton Centre will increase.

The Prime Minister and his team will raise taxes and make life more expensive for Canadians. We cannot afford another four years of these disastrous policies. The people of Edmonton Centre have not been heard by their member of Parliament or the government. Under a Conservative government, Edmonton Centre residents will be heard.

* * *

RIYA RAJKUMAR

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of Riya Rajkumar who lost her life in Brampton last week on Valentine's Day in a senseless act of violence. As a mother of three, I cannot imagine the horror of losing a child. My heart goes out to Riya's family and loved ones.

I want to thank the Brampton City Council for organizing a vigil in Brampton South last night. Hundreds of community members attended to pay their respects and remember Riya.

It was because of our very professional Peel Regional Police who broadcasted an Amber Alert that police were able to make a fast

arrest. When it comes to protecting our children, it is never inconvenient.

We thank the neighbourhood watch community program for raising the money needed for Riya's funeral, which happened earlier today. I know that all members of the House are keeping Riya and her family in their thoughts and prayers.

To little Riya Rajkumar, I say rest in peace.

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[Translation]

MEDICAL FOUNDATION IN THE LAURENTIAN AND PAYS-D'EN-HAUT REGIONS

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 30th anniversary of the Fondation médicale des Laurentides et des Pays-d'en-Haut.

The foundation serves 32 municipalities along with several establishments and resources, and has invested more than \$9.5 million in medical equipment and local health care services.

An organization is only as successful as the people behind it. I want to acknowledge the commitment of the founders and the past and current presidents: Christian Gélinas, François Bertrand, Louis Tourangeau, Marc Desforges, Raymond Douillard, Pierre Forget, Marie-Pier Fournier, Peter Hamé, Lise Héту, Laurent Tremblay, Lise Forget-Therrien, the late Marc Desjardins, Michel Frenette, Justin Racette, Nancy Wilson and Michel Rochon.

I also want to acknowledge all those who, over the years, have helped create a big family of full-time employees and volunteers who are dedicated to the community.

We can be proud of these individuals, for they have taught us that, when it comes to taking care of your health, if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister's list of mistakes grows, his 2019 carbon tax is just the beginning of what he wants Canadians to pay. With winter upon us, the Prime Minister's carbon tax means hundreds more for home heating and 11¢ a litre more in every gas tank to drive to work, to take the kids to hockey or to buy groceries. That is no mistake.

The Prime Minister intends to make Canadians pay more. When asked about the soaring costs of gas in Vancouver, the Prime Minister admitted that is what he is trying to achieve. Well, it is only the beginning. For it to do what he wants it do, the Prime Minister's carbon tax will become prohibitively expensive and Canadians, half of whom say they are not getting by each month, will pay at every turn.

Oral Questions

Canadians should not be punished for a warm home in winter or driving to work, nor should they just get by. In October, Canadians can stop paying for Liberal failures and choose Conservative leadership to get ahead.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every February, we celebrate Black History Month by acknowledging the contributions that Canadians of African and Caribbean descent have made to Canada. I recently participated in a Black History Month event at the Meadowvale East Apostolic Church, where Pastor Melvin McGann and his congregation opened their doors to the Scarborough community.

We celebrated individuals like Viola Desmond, a prominent Black woman whose bravery and courage changed the course of Canadian history by refusing to leave a whites-only area of a movie theatre. I am proud that Desmond is featured on the new 10-dollar bill.

One of the speakers was Itah Sadu, owner of the A Different Booklist bookstore. Noting this is Canada's first vertical bill, Sadu said that this was important because "We have to stand up".

Let us all stand up and recognize the contributions of Canadians of African and Caribbean descent this month, and every month.

* * *

[Translation]

LUCIA KOWALUK

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to Lucia Kowaluk, a great Montrealer who passed away on February 1 at the age of 84.

Lucia was a social worker, an engaged citizen of Milton Park, a pacifist, an environmentalist and a feminist. She was a decades-long advocate for social housing and champion of the disenfranchised.

She helped found the Centre d'écologie urbaine de Montréal and a day centre for the homeless, and she fought to have the old Hôtel-Dieu hospital turned into social housing and a community hub. In 2014, she received the Order of Canada and was made a knight of the Ordre national du Québec.

In her memory, let us continue to support the wonderful project led by Communauté Saint-Urbain so that the Hôtel-Dieu site can become a healthy, inclusive and green community space for all Montrealers.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to fail and Canadians are paying for it.

In a recent survey, half of Canadians admit they are having trouble making their household budget stretch to the end of each month. It is no wonder.

Under the Prime Minister, 2018 finished with worker unemployment and participation rates down, wages flat and household debt climbing. Amid talk of a looming recession, and as layoffs and plant closures are announced in our energy and auto sectors, it is clear that the Prime Minister has turned his back on workers.

Worse, the only thing going up for Canadians this year is taxes. The Prime Minister, who does not worry about money, is happy to let Canadians pay for his mistakes. Payroll taxes are up. The Prime Minister's carbon tax is driving up the cost of fuel and home heating, and Liberal taxes will go even higher if given the chance again.

Canadians will have a choice this year. They can stop paying for Liberal mistakes and choose Conservative leadership to get ahead.

* * *

[Translation]

PATRICK CHAN AND CAMILLE BÉRUBÉ

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are fortunate to have two iconic Canadian athletes visiting the Hill. Olympian Patrick Chan and Paralympian Camille Bérubé are here today as ambassadors for Air Canada, an official partner of Canada's Olympic team.

[English]

Patrick Chan is the most decorated male figure skater in Canadian history. A three-time world and 10-time national champion, he won gold in the team event at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics.

● (1420)

[Translation]

Camille Bérubé, from Gatineau, was one of the stars of the 2015 Parapan American Games in Toronto, winning a silver medal and two bronze medals for Canada's para-swimming team. At the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio, she finished in the top 10 in the 100-metre breaststroke.

[English]

My thanks to Patrick and Camille for inspiring Canadians everywhere.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the media reported this morning that the director of public prosecutions informed SNC-Lavalin on September 4, 2018, that the company would not be getting a special deal that would allow it to avoid prosecution. The Prime Minister has denied having met with the former attorney general two weeks later on September 17, 2018, to discuss this matter.

Oral Questions

Who asked for this meeting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure Canadians that we are going to fulfill our responsibilities by standing up for jobs in Canada, creating growth, and continuing to make sure that all Canadians have access to the best possible jobs.

We will do so, however, by always upholding the integrity of our justice system and complying with all the rules and standards in place. We know that we need to meet Canadians' expectations consistently while respecting our institutions, and that is what we have always done.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was not the question. The question was who asked for the meeting between the Prime Minister and the former attorney general. We know that meeting took place on September 17. The director of public prosecutions ruled on September 4 that SNC-Lavalin would not be entitled to a special deal.

Once again, who asked for the meeting? Was it the Prime Minister or the former attorney general?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the work that both the Ethics Commissioner and the justice committee of parliamentarians will be doing on this matter, but I can assure all Canadians that unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we will always stand up for good jobs right across this country, every step of the way, while making sure we respect the independence of our judicial system.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is certainly not acting like someone who is innocent of these serious allegations. Once again, on September 17, he admitted that he had a meeting with the former attorney general. Canada's top prosecutor had already decided, with her independent analysis, that SNC-Lavalin was not entitled to a special deal.

Once again, who asked for the meeting? There are only two options. It was either the Prime Minister or the former attorney general. Which was it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not be apologetic for standing up consistently for good Canadian jobs and for standing up for the independence of our judicial system and the important processes in place. Of course the meetings that I have with any member of cabinet are covered by cabinet confidentiality, but members can be sure that every step of the way we both stand up for Canadians and look to serve them and stand up for our institutions that keep us all safe in this country.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that he cannot answer that simple question.

The decision by the top prosecutor in Canada not to grant SNC-Lavalin a special deal was made on September 4. On September 17, the Prime Minister met with the former attorney general. Was the Prime Minister aware of the director of public prosecution's decision when he had that meeting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we take very seriously the responsibility of defending good jobs right across this country,

while we stand up and protect the institutions that serve us all in this country. Those are the two things that are central tenets for this government and that we will always continue to do.

Of course, there are right now two ongoing court cases on this matter and it would be inappropriate for us to comment too much on that.

• (1425)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to respect the independence of Canada's judicial system is to not interfere with it.

This is a very simple yes or no question. This is not about speculation or about an ongoing investigation. This is a yes or no question. Was the Prime Minister aware of Canada's top prosecutor's decision when he had the meeting with the former attorney general, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a file that touches tens of thousands of Canadians right across the country, including 9,000 direct jobs, and communities right across the country. Of course we are going to be very careful about how we move forward in protecting those jobs, but we are also going to, at the same time, make sure that we are standing up for the independence of our judicial system and all the processes that keep our democratic institutions safe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is what we know. The director of public prosecutions formally rejected a remediation agreement with SNC-Lavalin on September 4. The Prime Minister met with the former justice minister two weeks later on September 17 to discuss the matter. The day after that meeting, SNC-Lavalin lobbyists met with no fewer than four ministers and senior officials. What a coincidence.

With a remediation agreement ruled out, why was that meeting between the Prime Minister and the former justice minister necessary? Can the Prime Minister explain the lobbying blitz that followed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we will consistently stand up for good jobs and find ways to create economic growth and good jobs for Canadians while making sure we respect the independence of our judicial system and the rule of law.

The member opposite seems unwilling to take my word for it, so I would like to share what the director of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada said. Last week, she confirmed that prosecutors, in this and every other case, exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration—

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

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to ascertain is whether there was political interference in a legal matter.

Oral Questions

We have many questions but have been given few answers to date. What we do have are many versions of what happened. The Prime Minister gave not one, two or three versions, but five versions.

The former justice minister has not been able to give us her version because she is bound by client-solicitor privilege, which the Prime Minister refuses to waive. Members could not stop laughing yesterday when he stated with a straight face that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, which is dominated by a Liberal majority, is non-partisan. It is obvious that only an independent inquiry will get to the bottom of this matter. When will they—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to political considerations, I will repeat what the director of the Public Prosecution Service of Canada said last week. She confirmed that, in every case, prosecutors exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration.

Canada has an independent justice system and there will be due process. We will always defend jobs and always respect judicial independence.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what day is this? Oh, it is Wednesday. It is a new day, a new excuse, a new bombshell in the Gerry Butts-SNC scandal, and this one is a doozy.

It turns out that the Prime Minister met with the justice minister after they found out that the independent public prosecution would not give the free get-out-of-jail card to SNC. I wonder what happened in that meeting, because it would represent a major interference in the independence of Canada's justice system.

Therefore, will the Prime Minister give us a full airing, and agree to an independent inquiry where his staff will be forced to testify?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member opposite, we will always stand up for jobs, always stand up for the Canadian economy, but we will do that in ways that respect judicial independence and the rule of law. If the member does not choose to take my word for it, let him to take it directly from the director of the Public Prosecution Service, who confirmed just last week that, in every case, prosecutors “exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration.”

• (1430)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Fair enough; they do stand up for jobs, Mr. Speaker, the jobs of lobbyists. He is led around by the nose by lobbyists. The question is if he is willing to obstruct justice to help his lobbyist friends.

Oh, to live in the tawdry but very elite world of Gerry Butts and the Prime Minister.

Was it Gerry's idea to strong-arm the justice department to help their insider friends? No wonder he does not want Gerry Butts testifying at committee. Will the Prime Minister agree to allow Gerry

Butts and his staff to testify under oath, so we can get to the bottom? By the way, is he willing to testify?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I have tremendous confidence in the members of the justice committee, who will be moving forward on the investigation of all sides; and indeed in the Ethics Commissioner, who has taken this matter under investigation.

At the same time, I want to, once again, thank Gerry Butts for his contributions to Canada. His letter of resignation speaks for itself. He continues to believe deeply in what this government, and this country, is doing to help everyone.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There is far too much noise. I know members, of course, want to hear the questions and the answers, and ought to show respect for this institution.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies should remember that.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the former attorney general and Gerald Butts met at the Chateau Laurier on December 5, 2018, to discuss the SNC-Lavalin case.

When was the Prime Minister informed of that meeting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the responsibility of defending jobs, growing the economy and respecting the independence of our justice system. That is why I can very easily say that, yes, we have had many meetings with all cabinet members on many issues that are important to Canadians.

The work we need to do together is to manage things properly and deliver tangibly for Canadians across the country. That is what we will always do, while also respecting our institutions.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Prime Minister told his caucus that any communication coming from Mr. Butts should be considered as coming from the Prime Minister himself.

Once again, when did the Prime Minister become aware of the December 5 meeting between Gerald Butts and the former attorney general?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize perhaps that it is a legacy of the Harper years. The Conservatives do not seem to understand that a team that works together actually has lots of people having meetings about things that matter all the time. We continue to engage in a broad way that both protects and upholds jobs in this country and respects the independence of our system and its judiciary. That is something we expect from all members of cabinet and all my staff, and we work together to serve Canadians, day in and day out.

Oral Questions

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there we are. First it was the former attorney general's fault, then it was the director of public prosecutions' fault, then it was The Globe and Mail's fault and then it was Scott Brison's fault. Now we know it was Stephen Harper's fault. That is why he did what he did in this scandal.

Nobody is buying what he is trying to sell.

Now, can the Prime Minister tell this House if at any point in time he ever expressed his support for a special deal for SNC-Lavalin to the former attorney general, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we see the Conservatives choosing to play political games with issues of deep importance. We remain focused, yes, on standing up for jobs and standing up for the independence of our judiciary in this country. This is something we are going to consistently do, and we will make no apologies for standing strong in our principles to both protect and promote jobs in this country and uphold the rule of law and the independence of our judicial system.

• (1435)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, that was not the question. This is key to this entire affair of allegations of interference in a criminal proceeding. The Prime Minister, through an omnibus bill, gave the top prosecutor the option of using a deferred prosecution agreement, and she ruled, in her independent manner, that SNC-Lavalin did not qualify.

At any point in time since that decision, has the Prime Minister expressed his support for this kind of deal for SNC-Lavalin, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite seems to be concerned about the independence of the director of the Public Prosecution Service. Let me speak directly to that by quoting her, who just last week confirmed that in every case prosecutors “exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration.” Canadians can know that, in this country, we continue to abide by the rule of law.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody is questioning the director of public prosecutions exercising her authority. What we are questioning is whether the Prime Minister attempted to interfere in an ongoing criminal investigation.

However, that was not the question. The question was very simple. The top prosecutor of Canada ruled on September 4 that SNC-Lavalin did not qualify for this new kind of deal.

At any point in time since that decision was made, has the Prime Minister expressed his support for SNC-Lavalin getting a deal, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been unequivocal over the fall, and I am unequivocal now, that we will always support Canadian jobs and the growth of our economy. We will always stand up to protect workers right across the country.

We will always do that in ways that respect the independence of our judiciary, the rule of law and the institutions that keep Canada one of the greatest democracies in the world.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister cannot have it both ways. He cannot hold up the independence of the office of the director of public prosecutions and, at the same time, interfere and attempt to get a reversal of a decision.

The decision on SNC-Lavalin was made on September 4. The Prime Minister had a meeting with the former attorney general on September 17. Gerald Butts had a meeting with the former attorney general on December 5.

Why would the Prime Minister have so many meetings with the former attorney general if it were not to try to reverse a decision that had already been made?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm right here in this House that we had many meetings between cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Office on a broad range of important issues that matter to Canadians.

It is the work of this government to serve Canadians, to protect jobs and to protect our institutions and the independence of our judiciary at the same time. This is exactly what we do and what we will continue to do, and we will make no apologies to the snide accusations made by the members opposite.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister admitted yesterday that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the justice committee must get on with their work in the matter of interference by his office in the SNC-Lavalin case.

How does he think they can get to the truth if he will not allow anyone from his office to appear before the justice committee? On top of that, he refuses to waive the solicitor-client privilege that is keeping the former justice minister from giving her side of the story. If the Prime Minister really wants the truth to come out, then he needs to let her speak.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that he will allow the former justice minister—

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the respect we have for our justice system is extremely important. That is why we are carefully considering the issue of solicitor-client privilege. That is why I asked our Attorney General for advice on how to proceed in this matter so that we can give people the opportunity to speak. It is important that Canadians hear the truth.

That being said, it is important to understand that there is a real danger of unintended negative consequences on the two cases currently before the courts.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberals on the justice committee refused to ensure that people from the Prime Minister's Office would testify; not Gerry Butts and not the other officials who held dozens of meetings with SNC-Lavalin to discuss criminal charges.

How will Canadians get to the truth, if the Liberals refuse to invite people at the centre of this mess, and if the Prime Minister refuses to waive privilege to let the former attorney general tell her story?

He kept saying sunshine is the best disinfectant, so why is he content keeping Canadians in the dark?

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we look forward to the work that will be done by the justice committee and, indeed, by the Ethics Commissioner on this matter.

It is extremely important that Canadians get to hear all the facts. We will continue to make sure we are standing up for good jobs right across the country and upholding the independence of our judicial system. That is something that Canadians expect; that is something that we expect.

In terms of waiving privilege, that is not a simple matter, and that is why we have asked the Attorney General for advice on this, because we know there is a danger of unintended consequences on the two court cases currently going through on this matter.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to give the Prime Minister another opportunity to answer a very simple question.

He brags about having many meetings and robust discussions. In any of those meetings, from the date that the director of public prosecutions made her decision to the day that he removed the former attorney general from her post, did the Prime Minister at any time express his support for granting SNC-Lavalin a deferred prosecution agreement, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians well know of this government, we will always stand up for good jobs. We will always stand up for economic growth. We will always make sure we are supporting Canadians right across the country.

However, we will also make sure we are doing it in ways that support and defend our institutions, that support and defend the independence of the rule of law, the independence of our judiciary. These are things that matter to Canadians.

We are a government that has been delivering tangibly for them while at the same time defending our democracy and our institutions.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if he did nothing wrong, he should be able to answer yes or no. Did he at any time tell the former attorney general that he favoured giving SNC-Lavalin a special deal, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have been talking an awful lot about solicitor-client privilege. It is also important to understand that

discussions among the federal cabinet are covered by cabinet confidentiality as well.

This is the work that we are doing to make sure we are delivering for Canadians in terms of good jobs, in terms of economic growth, in terms of opportunities for all, while at the same time upholding the independence of our judiciary, the integrity of our democratic institutions, and we will always do that.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, if he has done nothing wrong, he should be able to answer. Meetings at the Chateau Laurier between Gerald Butts and the former attorney general are not covered by cabinet confidentiality. He should be able to tell Canadians, if he has done nothing wrong, if he has not interfered in an ongoing criminal prosecution case. Has he ever told the former attorney general that he favoured a special deal for SNC-Lavalin, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can look at this government's record and know that step-by-step we have always stood up for them. We put more money in the pockets of the middle class by raising taxes on the wealthiest 1% and lowering them for the middle class. We delivered the Canada child benefit, which has made a huge difference in people's lives. We have also made sure that every step of the way we have stood up for good jobs across this country, and we will continue to. We will do so, however, always by respecting the independence of our judiciary and the institutions that protect us all in our democracy.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is so telling that the Prime Minister cannot even answer this kind of simple question. These are not the actions and this is not the behaviour of someone who is innocent of what he is being accused of.

On September 4, the independent director of public prosecutions made a decision. The Prime Minister and his team then went to work and had several meetings with the former attorney general. In any of those meetings, did he ever and will he today indicate whether or not he supports SNC-Lavalin getting a special deal, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, to hear the member opposite, Canadians might be worried about the independence of our judicial system. Allow me to reassure them not only with my words, but by a direct quote from the director of public prosecutions herself, who just last week confirmed for Canadians that in every case prosecutors "exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration."

* * *

• (1445)

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to put an end to fossil fuel subsidies, but they obviously have not.

Oral Questions

To make matters worse, they spent \$4.5 billion on an old pipeline.

The Liberals also promised that a climate impact assessment would be conducted for all energy projects. Now, we have learned that no such assessment will be carried out for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

I have a little tip for voters. Any time the Prime Minister promises to do something, they should expect him to do the opposite.

Do the Liberals realize that they are beginning to look more and more like Pinocchio when it comes to the fight against climate change?

The Speaker: I encourage the hon. member to choose his words carefully.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the NDP insists that we have to choose between what is right for the environment and what is right for the economy.

We know that the only way to create economic prosperity and protect the environment for years to come is to choose what is right for both.

That is why on the Trans Mountain file we are following the path provided for by the courts in the right way.

The courts said we needed to consult indigenous peoples and evaluate the impact on marine shipping, and that is exactly what we are doing to prove that we can develop the economy in the right way.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to breaking promises to Canadians, we have to hand it to the Prime Minister. Right now on the Trans Mountain pipeline fiasco he is doing a two-for-one deal.

First, he promised to end all fossil fuel subsidies, but dumping \$4.5 billion of our money on a 65-year old pipeline was not enough. Now the pipeline-owning Prime Minister wants a further \$2 billion subsidy from Canadians. Then the Liberals promised that all pipelines would receive a climate change review as part of their approval.

However, here is a new guide for Canadians when listening to the Prime Minister. Listen closely and know that the truth is the opposite. When is he going to stop helping out his friends and start working to fight climate change?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, we are following the path provided for by the courts in the right way. The courts said we needed to do better on consulting indigenous peoples and on evaluating the impact on marine shipping. That is exactly what we are doing.

The Conservative approach for 10 years failed to get our exports to new markets. That is why we knew we needed to do it in the right way, which includes an oceans protection plan that means a faster spill response, more towing capacity and a plan to protect marine mammals.

We are continuing to fight climate change with a plan to put a price on pollution. That is what is this government is doing.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for more than a decade, the Harper government cut front-line staff, closed offices and balanced the budget on the backs of veterans. In 2015, it even closed an entire floor at the Camp Hill Veterans Memorial Building in Halifax.

Could the right hon. Prime Minister please describe the steps our government has taken at Camp Hill to respond to the growing needs of veterans of the more recent conflicts and of those who served with our allies?

The Speaker: Order, please. I have had no trouble hearing the questions until now. I encourage members to listen and to wait their turn if they want to speak.

The right hon. Prime Minister

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for his tireless advocacy, his hard work and the ferocity with which he defends our veterans.

We all want the best for veterans and their families. That is why we invested \$10 billion into new benefits and services for them, including reopening the nine offices shuttered by the Conservatives, hiring more than 630 new front-line staff, delivering on our promise to reinstate that pension for life. Last fall, we made 25 more beds available at Camp Hill in Halifax for allied and modern-day veterans. The Conservatives paid lip service. We delivered.

The Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the members for Brantford—Brant and Cariboo—Prince George did not hear me a moment ago. I had asked members to wait until it was their turn to speak, which may come at some point if they co-operate, of course.

The hon. leader of the opposition.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, between September 4, 2018 and the cabinet shuffle on January 14, 2019, did the Prime Minister express his support for a special agreement for SNC-Lavalin?

There are only two answers: yes or no.

● (1450)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite what the Conservatives say and do, we will always stand up for jobs. We will always stand up for good jobs wherever they are in Canada, including the 9,000 jobs directly affected within SNC-Lavalin.

Oral Questions

However, we will always do so in a way that respects the independence of our judicial system and the rule of law. Those are the responsibilities that we take very seriously, and we will always try to stand up for good jobs across Canada in the right way.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the December 5 meeting between Gerald Butts and the former attorney general, it is reported that Mr. Butts told her to go and see the Clerk of the Privy Council, Michael Wernick. Now, if the decision had already been made by the independent top prosecutor in Canada on September 4 and if the Prime Minister had already indicated that it was the attorney general's decision to be made, why would she have to go and visit the Clerk of the Privy Council?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government works in an ongoing fashion to make sure that we are standing up for good jobs right across the country and doing it in respect of the independence of our judicial system and the robustness of the rule of law. That is something all Canadians expect of us, that we fight for their jobs right across the country. We will always do that.

It is telling right now that we see the Conservatives saying that they will not. They do not stand up for good jobs across this country. They do not stand up for good jobs wherever they are. We will continue to do so and we will do so in a way that respects the rule of law, that respects the independence of our judiciary.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can try to hide behind talking points and other members of his Liberal team, but this is about the independence of our judicial system. This is about the rule of law.

The Prime Minister has stated that there were many discussions going on, which was why the former attorney general “asked me if I was directing her, or going to direct her, to take a particular decision and I, of course, said no.”

Therefore, the simple question is this. If a decision had already been made on September 4, why would she have to ask him if he was directing her?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservatives are calling into question the independence of our judicial system and the rule of law in this country.

Allow me to reassure all Canadians watching by quoting directly from the director of the public prosecution service of Canada, who confirmed last week that in every case prosecutors “exercise their discretion independently and free from any political or partisan consideration.”

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, why did the Prime Minister leave the impression with the attorney general that there was something going on? He said that the former attorney general “asked me if I was directing her, or going to direct her, to take a particular decision and I, of course, said no.”

Therefore, the question remains this. Why did the former attorney general think that she needed to ask that? If the decision was already

made, why would she have to go and get clarification if he was not in fact attempting to interfere?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians who have been watching our government over the past three and a half years know full well that we will always stand up for good jobs. We will always stand up for Canadians, and we will always do so in a way that respects and upholds our institutions, including the independence of our judiciary and the rule of law. These are principles that are at the core of what this government does. They were principles at the core of why Canadians elected us in 2015. We have stayed true to those principles of both serving Canadians and defending the independence of our institutions.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of the rule of law, a new report reveals the government has abjectly failed to consult indigenous peoples on recovery strategies for threatened species.

Chief Byron Louis has shared, “The extinction of a species actually has the potential” to extinguish indigenous rights.

Frustrated with government inaction, the Mikisew Cree sought intervention by UNESCO, and has joined the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation court challenge to have their rights upheld.

When will the Prime Minister stop with the platitudes and actually deliver on his legal responsibilities to first nations?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are always ensuring that we protect and recover our species that are at risk. Robust recovery strategies and action plans are there to grow and sustain populations. The work that we do is always based on science and this work is always done in consultation and partnership with indigenous groups as well as all stakeholders. This is something that if we are going to do, we need to do it together. That is part of reconciliation.

●(1455)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Nelson White from Akwesasne First Nation has invested a lot of his own money to fund the White Pine Healing lodge to support those in his community who suffer from addiction. The project was created as a response to the state of emergency due to the alarming rate of suicide and substance abuse. He has the support of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne.

The government keeps saying that it is a good project, but without funding in the coming weeks, there will be no healing lodge. Will the government deliver the money or will it let down the people of Akwesasne?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the work done on this important issue by the community of Akwesasne, and recognize that the minister is fully aware of this request, understands how important it is and we will have more to say in the coming weeks.

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, On December 5, when Gerald Butts met with the attorney general at a hotel in downtown Ottawa, it is clear that the SNC-Lavalin case was discussed. Who asked for that meeting?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way, we will stand up for good jobs for Canadians. We will stand up for the independence of our judiciary and the rule of law.

The trust Canadians have in their institutions is extremely important to us. That is why we look forward to the processes under way, both at the justice committee and indeed at the Ethics Commissioner investigation, so Canadians can continue to have full confidence in our democracy and the institutions that serve them.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people who are innocent usually do not have trouble answering simple questions, especially when they are yes or no answers.

Gerald Butts claims to be innocent, but innocent people do not tend to resign from their jobs. Did the Prime Minister ask Mr. Butts to resign, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Gerald Butts' statement speaks for itself. He made this decision because he felt it was important for the government to move forward. His dedication to this country, to this government, and to the work we are doing to give a real and fair chance to everyone to succeed continues. I thank him deeply for his service to Canada.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to move forward from what?

The Prime Minister is saying nothing happened. All along he has been saying nothing improper was done. All along he has been saying he did not do anything wrong and people in his office did not do anything wrong, yet we have the facts that the former attorney general was removed from her post and then resigned from cabinet, and the principal secretary has now resigned.

What exactly was Mr. Butts moving on from if nothing improper happened?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government continues to focus on the things that matter to Canadians, like delivering a Canada child benefit that helps nine out of 10 Canadian families, and moving forward by lowering taxes on the middle class and raising them on the wealthiest 1%.

We continue to focus on the upcoming budget, which is going to continue to deliver for Canadians in real ways as we grow the economy in ways that work for the middle class.

Unfortunately, under 10 years of Stephen Harper, the benefits to the wealthiest and the well connected did not grow the economy. That is why we have focused on the middle class and will continue to focus on delivering tangibly for Canadians.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton West will come to order. I have already asked my hon. friend from Cariboo—Prince George to come to order.

Order, please.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, innovation is transforming the automotive industry, which is one of our largest sources of exports. With technologies like automatic parking, automatic braking and self-driving abilities, the cars of tomorrow will be not only autonomous, but also connected with one another.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House what the government is doing to make sure that the cars of the future will be built here in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Louis for his hard work, for his leadership in the caucus and for his question.

If we want Canada to be a world leader in the new economy, we must support Canadian workers. We announced a \$40-million investment to help BlackBerry QNX design and build a new platform for the cars of today and tomorrow. This investment will create 800 jobs for the middle class, will make our cars safer and will help Canada remain an international hub for innovation.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon the Prime Minister to provide some transparency in this very serious scandal. These are major allegations of interference in an independent prosecution.

Outside of an investigation by the RCMP, the only way for the Prime Minister to clear the air is by having a public inquiry. Canadians are tired of taking his word for his version of events. They are tired of Liberals getting together with other Liberals to come up with a storyline they will then try to hide behind.

Yes or no, will the Prime Minister agree to holding a public inquiry so Canadians can get answers to these questions right—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have tremendous confidence in the processes that are in place to move forward, including an investigation by the justice committee in which committee members are independent in their decisions on how to proceed.

We also have tremendous confidence in the officers of Parliament, in this case the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who will be pursuing an investigation on this matter.

These are things we take seriously. Canadians need to know there are processes in place to move forward on this issue.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was Manitoba's turn to suffer a massive derailment involving flammable substances. With trains getting longer and running more frequently, and with deregulation on the rise, another tragedy like that of Lac-Mégantic could still happen. That much is clear. Residents are worried. They do not want to experience another tragedy like that.

The Minister of Transport is all talk and no action.

Could the Prime Minister direct his minister to get to work on rail safety in order to protect Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to commend our Minister of Transport once again for doing such a great job. He takes the protection of our rail lines and the safety of Canadians very seriously. That is his priority.

I can assure my colleague that we know pipelines are one of the safest ways to transport our oil resources. That is why we are moving forward with Trans Mountain in the right way, as the court requested. This is a good project, and we need to make sure it is done right so that we can keep Canadians safe and export our resources.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the hard work of Canadians, Canada's economy is strong and growing, creating well-paying jobs for the middle class and people working hard to join it.

[Translation]

More Canadians are working, and families have more money to spend on what matters to them.

[English]

Could the Minister of Finance please update the House on the next steps in our proven plan to strengthen and grow the middle class?

[Translation]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has made smart and responsible investments in the middle class, and Canadians are seeing concrete results.

[English]

It has had a significant impact. A typical middle-class family is \$2,000 better off this year than in 2015. However, we know there is more to do.

That is why I am so pleased to announce that on March 19, we will be introducing budget 2019, the next steps in our plan to ensure middle-class optimism and an economy that works for all Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has just expressed his confidence in the

justice committee's work to get to the bottom of this very serious scandal. Last week the government instructed Liberal members of that committee to block Conservative and NDP attempts to get a full witness list in front of the committee. The members of the committee admitted that they received that list from government offices.

Therefore, if the Prime Minister has so much confidence in the justice committee's work, will he allow Gerald Butts to testify under oath at that very committee?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike what we saw under 10 years of Stephen Harper's government, we respect the independence of parliamentary committees. Parliamentarians on those committees get to make determinations on how they choose to move forward in their own way. On this side of the House, we will always respect the independence of committees.

● (1505)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, PPC): Mr. Speaker, after being lobbied by SNC-Lavalin, the government changed the Criminal Code and tried to cut a deal to avoid a trial. Two former SNC-Lavalin executives just had their corruption cases thrown out of court because of unrealistic delays, and we learned that SNC has received more than \$2 billion in government aid since 2002.

Will the Prime Minister recognize that crony capitalism is an unjust system that must be eradicated?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always stand up for good jobs right across the country, including in companies like SNC-Lavalin. This is something Canadians expect of us and something we will continue to do. We will continue to recognize that government has an important role to play in making sure Canadians can find good jobs right across the country and in creating the conditions for success. We will continue to do that in a way that respects both our institutions and the rule of law.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The House resumed from February 19 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:06 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 19, 2019, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion by the member for Timmins—James Bay relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Business of Supply

[English]

The Speaker: The question is on the amendment. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of amendment to House]

• (1515)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 991)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Allison	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brosseau
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Eglinski	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Johns	Jolibois
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kniec
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Liepert
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Marcil	Martel
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McColeman	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nantel
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Plamondon
Poilievre	Quach
Raitt	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Ste-Marie
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NAYS

Members

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Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Finnigan	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Hébert	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Longfield	Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Morneau	
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan

Business of Supply

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 Sohi
 Spengemann
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 Trudeau
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Members

LeBlanc
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Moore
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The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The member for Vancouver Granville is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the record show that I abstained from voting on that matter. The reason for my abstention is that the matter, in part, has to do with me personally, and I do not think it is appropriate for me to vote on a matter that has to do with me personally.

I have said that I am seeking counsel on this matter of what I can and cannot say. I understand fully that Canadians want to know the truth and want transparency. Privilege and confidentiality are not mine to waive, and I hope that I have the opportunity to speak my truth.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I thank the hon. member for Vancouver Granville. Normally, of course, there is no counting of abstentions, but her comments are on the record.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, certainly I have enormous respect for the member for Vancouver Granville, who understands that the issues of conflict of interest in voting are fundamental in this House. Since she is not allowed to vote, I would ask that the Prime Minister abstain as well, because he is in a conflict of interest under this matter and he should similarly respect the rules of the House that the member—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I think we are getting into debate.

I trust that the hon. member for Carleton will have something that is a point of order.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, on the same point, the hon. member highlights the fact that the Prime Minister is involved directly in this matter as well. The member points out that the matter of privilege is something that she cannot waive. The one person who can waive it, of course, is the Prime Minister, and thus he—

The Speaker: Order. That is very clearly debate.

[*Translation*]

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 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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1525)

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

(*Division No. 992*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Allison	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Egliniski	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Johns	Jolibois
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Liepert
Long	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Marcil
Martel	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Quach	Raitt
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Sansoucy	Saroya
Scheer	Schimale

Shields
Sopuck
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Sweet
Tootoo
Trudel
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

Shiple
Sorenson
Stetski
Stubbs
Tilson
Trost
Van Kesteren
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Zimmer — 134

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Finnigan
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Hajdu
Hébert
Hogg
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lighthbound
Longfield
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Morneau
Morrissey
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Sahota

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fergus
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hardie
Hehr
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lockhart
Ludwig
Maloney
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Saini

Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Young
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
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Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Yip
Zahid — 160

Points of Order

PAIRED

Members

LeBlanc
Murray
Moore
Thériault — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

VOTE ON OPPOSITION MOTION

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the former attorney general indicated that she abstained from this vote because she believes she has a personal interest in the result of this vote, I would look to you for guidance. I think both the Prime Minister and the current Attorney General, who is making decisions regarding client-solicitor privilege and whether it should be waived—

An hon. member: Debate.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Could the member please not yell? Could I please have some respect? I know the Liberals do not like it when strong women speak.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to get some guidance from you as to whether the Prime Minister's vote and the vote of the current Attorney General should be waived, because they really should have abstained from this. If they do not, there are other measures we can take, which include going to the Ethics Commissioner. However, I think it would be cleaner, and probably a little wiser, if they would just abstain from this vote.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. opposition House leader. I am not aware of precedents on this, but I will look into the matter and return to the House.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the record to reflect that I abstained from the vote on the motion, which has, in part, to do with me personally. I do not think it is appropriate for me to vote, as such.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Vancouver Granville for her clarification.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you made a ruling on the amendment, but I am asking you to go back and examine precedents on this matter, because the question of whether the client in an investigation is allowed to vote on a motion that would open that investigation or shut it down is a clear conflict of interest. If the solicitor is bound not to vote, then the client breached his obligations as a member of this House.

I am asking you, given the seriousness of this matter, to take it back and reflect. We have great respect for the work the Speaker's office does now and has done in the past, and this will certainly be setting a precedent. Therefore, I am asking you to look into whether this client was in a conflict of interest.

• (1530)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay for adding to the point of order from the hon. opposition House leader. As I indicated, I will come back to the House.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, now that you have consented to look into the matter, with some trepidation I weigh in to say that the client is not the Prime Minister; the client is the Government of Canada. We in this place need to understand Westminster parliamentary democracy. We are not run by one person on either side of the House. Therefore, I do not think the Prime Minister, individually, is the government, nor is the Prime Minister, individually, the client, and I did not find it improper for him to vote.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, my former law school classmate, for her views on this matter. Again, I will come back to the House in due course on this.

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 response to four petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, a report from the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its participation in the mission to Romania, the next country to hold the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It has been pointed out to me that the hon. member is not in what we consider to be business attire, which requires a tie. It is being remedied as we speak.

The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, the discipline in this House is absolutely fierce, but I thank members for pointing that out to me.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union respecting its mission to Romania, the next country to hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, and its participation at the fourth part of the 2018 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held at Bucharest, Romania, and at Strasbourg, France, from October 8 to 18, 2018.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, which is a wonderful committee that gets a lot of work done. This is entitled “Section 232 of the United States Trade Expansion Act: Implications of Tariffs for Canada”.

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

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2018-19: Vote 5b under Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Vote 1b under Canadian Tourism Commission, Votes 1b and 10b under Department of Industry, Vote 10b under National Research Council of Canada, Vote 5b under Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Vote 5b under Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and Vote 1b under Statistics Canada”.

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a report from the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities with respect to the national transportation strategy. We expect that this report will be presented to the minister and will be reported back to the committee.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 84th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding its study of Supplementary Estimates (B), 2018-19.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 85th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding its study of Interim Estimates 2019-20.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

The Speaker: I apologize to the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, to whom I should have gone after the previous tabling by the member for Niagara Centre, regarding the 27th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities support the committee's report, which was just tabled. Transportation corridors are integral to the safe and efficient flow of goods in and out of Canada. However, we have supplied a supplementary report, as we felt that the main report did not adequately address a number of important issues that were raised, which I will briefly outline.

Over the course of the many meetings held during this study, we heard from numerous stakeholders regarding the detrimental impact certain government actions and policies are having and will continue to have on Canada's transportation system, and more specifically, on our transportation corridors.

Specifically, the government policies we must highlight are Bill C-48, the Liberals' oil tanker moratorium act; Bill C-69, the Liberals' attempt to rewrite the law and regulations to make it even harder for pipelines to get built; and the Liberal government's carbon tax. From being unnecessarily restrictive, to creating investment uncertainty, to increasing costs for transportation companies and shippers alike, the actions of the Liberal government need to be reversed.

To that end, we have included three simple recommendations in our supplementary report: to withdraw Bill C-48, to withdraw Bill C-69 and to eliminate the carbon tax.

I encourage the government members to read our supplementary report, but if they do not have time for that, I hope they will simply adopt our recommendations. We believe that doing this would greatly support Canada's transportation systems and our vitally important trade corridors.

* * *

ZERO WASTE PACKAGING ACT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-429, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (packaging).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce another winner of our Create Your Canada competition, for which people from across the northwest of British Columbia enter ideas that they think would make Canada a better place. An independent committee picks the winner, and this year, it is Ben Korving, from Terrace, B.C., who is here in Ottawa today with his son, Aidan.

Ben's idea was to have a zero-waste packaging act that would prescribe that all consumer packaging in Canada either be recyclable or compostable, by law, because as we know, right now, when we put things in the blue box, only about 11%, on average, actually is recycled. The rest ends up in landfills and in our oceans.

This is building on the work by my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni and his Motion No. 151. More than 170,000 Canadians signed the petition asking us to do something about ocean plastics. This bill would move this to enforcement. This takes the promise into action.

Ben's idea, and it is a great one, is to make good on the promise Canada has made to the world that we will now recycle or compost all consumer packaging. I thank Ben and his son Aidan for coming all this way from the northwest of British Columbia, and especially for his idea to make Canada a better place.

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

* * *

● (1540)

PETITIONS

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from the ridings of Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, Saanich—Gulf Islands and Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to respect the rights of law-abiding citizens and firearm owners, and reject the Prime Minister's plan to waste taxpayers' dollars studying a ban on guns that are already banned.

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in just a few days or weeks, I will probably have tabled as many pages of a petition calling for a high-frequency train to Trois-Rivières as the minister has studies on his desk. Unfortunately, inaction is still his trademark.

I would like to remind members of the main reasons why we would even agree to see this project included in the Liberal platform, if the Liberals are unwilling to take immediate action. Specifically, we think that a high-frequency train would be a good way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, developing regional economies and facilitating inter-municipal mobility.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure of presenting two petitions.

The first is calling on the Government of Canada to provide sustainable funding for grassroots organizations through predictable funding, and to increase the international assistance from 0.26% to 0.7%.

Routine Proceedings

The second petition is on the root cause of forced migration. The petitioners request the government support grassroots organizations working for peace, democracy and human rights, and invest more in diplomatic and peaceful solutions to armed conflicts.

HONDURAS

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly my honour today to present a petition on behalf of the residents in Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, specifically Elmvale, regarding the status of human rights in Honduras, as well as the treatment of Edwin Espinal, spouse of Karen Spring, of Elmvale, Ontario.

The petitioners call on the government to act immediately.

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to table two petitions that are in keeping with the bill introduced by my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley on extended producer responsibility.

The first petition calls for the protection of the St. Lawrence River and its ecosystems.

The Canadians who signed this petition are calling on the Government of Canada to commit to protecting at least 10% of marine environments by 2020.

Given that the habitat of the beluga whale and other marine mammals in the St. Lawrence River must be protected from many other threats, the petitioners are also calling for the creation of a large marine protected area in the St. Lawrence Estuary.

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is along the same lines as the first, and it was signed by Canadians who disagree with the purchase of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline.

Since Canada has committed to reducing greenhouse gases and since the renewable energy sector is creating many more jobs than the oil sector, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to cancel the purchase of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline.

[*English*]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to present two petitions signed by hundreds of Canadians from my province of Saskatchewan who call upon the House of Commons to support Bill S-214 and ban the sale and/or manufacture of animal-tested cosmetics and their ingredients in Canada.

RURAL CRIME

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition signed by my constituents who are gravely concerned with the alarming rate at which rural crime is increasing in our communities.

These petitioners are concerned about their safety and the safety of their families, friends and neighbours. They are calling on the government to ensure that law enforcement agencies not only prioritize crime prevention and investigation, but that they also have the resources that they need to do it, so that the petitioners can feel safer in their own communities.

CONSUMER SAFETY

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition that was promoted by Patients for Patient Safety Canada with the goal to increase consumer safety by calling on the government to require manufacturers of non-prescription drugs and natural health products to include a Canadian drug facts table or product facts table on the outer label and ensure that the information is presented in a standardized, readable format in plain language.

I want to give a special thanks to Elmwood—Transcona constituent, Linda Hughes, for her work on this petition.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition in support of women of courage. The petitioners remind us that women's organizations play a key role in conflict prevention, that peace agreements have a 35% greater chance of lasting at least 15 years when women help draft them, and that we—officially, at least—have a so-called feminist foreign policy.

[*English*]

The petitioners also remind us that only 5% of funds dedicated to peace and security go to gender equality or women's empowerment and that we are very far from our international commitment of 0.7% in international assistance. Therefore, the petitioners ask that the government actually fund its feminist international policy, focus on support for grassroots organizations that is flexible and respects their needs, and increase its international assistance to reach its 0.7% commitment over the next 10 years.

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC CITY CITADEL

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table e-petition 1879, initiated on October 11, 2018, by Michel Masse, the president of the Comité des citoyens du Vieux-Québec. The petition calls on the Government of Canada to end the attack on the heritage integrity of Quebec City and use the original stone to restore the Quebec City Citadel.

This petition was signed by many people in Quebec, but also from across the country, from British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador. This applies to preserving heritage buildings across the country. These petitioners are concerned about this Liberal government's complacency on this issue.

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of constituents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford to table a petition where they recognize that before the 2015 federal election, Canadians were clearly promised in writing that defined benefit plans, which have already been paid for by employees and pensioners, should not be retroactively changed to target benefit plans. Bill C-27, which was tabled by the Minister of Finance, precisely permits this change. Therefore, the petitioners are clearly calling on the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-27, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the petition, which I am honoured to table this afternoon, is from residents in Saanich—Gulf Islands but primarily from Salt Spring Island. The petitioners call on the House to consider the urgency of the climate crisis and to ensure that the carbon price is a full price on carbon that elevates incrementally to at least \$150 by 2030. They call on protection for low- and middle-income Canadians by ensuring that the money recirculates to those of lower income, to ensure that equity is built into more aggressive action to address the climate emergency.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table a petition signed by a number of residents of Ontario, calling on the government for the speedy passage of Bill S-240, which is now here in the House of Commons. It deals with the very serious issue of the trafficking of human organs and would make it a criminal offence to go abroad to obtain an organ that has not been legally acquired.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to rise to present this petition to the House of Commons. It states that the undersigned residents of Canada draw to the attention of the House of Commons increasing concerns about international trafficking in human organs. It refers to Bill C-350 in the House of Commons and Bill S-240 in the Senate. There are hundreds of signatures on this petition, and I am pleased to present it.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today with petitions signed by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The petitioners note that increasing concerns about international trafficking in human organs removed from victims without consent have not yet led to legal prohibitions on Canadians travelling abroad to acquire or receive such organs, and that there are currently two bills before Parliament proposing to impede the trafficking of human organs obtained without consent or as a result of financial transactions: Bill C-350 in the House of Commons and Bill S-240 in the Senate. Therefore, the undersigned wish to urge the Parliament of Canada to quickly move these pieces of legislation.

• (1550)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put forward this important petition with respect to the international trafficking of human organs

Routine Proceedings

that have been removed from victims without consent. The petitioners are concerned that there is no legal prohibition on Canadians travelling abroad to acquire or receive them. Currently, there are two bills before Parliament that propose to impede the trafficking of human organs obtained without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, Bill C-350 in the House of Commons and Bill S-240 in the Senate. The petitioners ask that this be addressed immediately.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the tabling of a petition pertaining to the trafficking of human organs removed without the donor's consent, which has not resulted in a legal prohibition on Canadians travelling to obtain these organs.

As there are currently two bills before Parliament that seek to prevent the trafficking of human organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, namely Bill C-350 and Senate Bill S-240, the undersigned are calling on the Parliament of Canada to move quickly on the proposed bills to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire organs removed without the donor's consent or as a result of a financial transaction and to render inadmissible to Canada a permanent resident or foreign national who has participated in this abhorrent trafficking of human organs.

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition today that urges the Parliament of Canada to move quickly on the proposed legislation to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

Again, the practice is abhorrent and petitioners would like to see it eliminated throughout the world.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Is the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis seeking unanimous consent of the house to present a second petition?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to present a second petition?

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 20 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ACT

BILL C-91—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-91, an act respecting indigenous languages, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successfully, without further debate or amendment.

● (1555)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply disappointed to hear that the government will not be giving all members a chance to speak on this important bill. We agree with the principle of the bill, and we support that part. There are over 100 members who represent indigenous communities, and we all have something to say on behalf of our constituents.

For the past three years, I have been proud to represent the community of Wendake here in the House of Commons. I also represented it for seven years in Quebec's National Assembly. The residents of this community are proud people who are reviving their language, which sadly died out during the last century.

Debates give each of us a chance to share our experiences. The member for Yellowhead told us that during his days as an RCMP officer, he came into contact with indigenous communities. Once contact was made, he would start learning their heritage and their

language. The member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, our indigenous affairs critic, told us how much she learned from first nations when she worked with them as a young nurse.

There have been some amazing moments here in the House. The member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou spoke in his language, and a government member from the Montreal area spoke in Cree.

This bill enables MPs to showcase the wealth of indigenous languages. Unfortunately, the government wants to cut short a debate that everyone is happy to engage in and that enriches the House of Commons.

Why is the government doing that?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

To our understanding, all parties support this important bill. This bill was drafted together with key first nations, Métis, and Inuit stakeholders. We held consultations across the country. The government has been working with and consulting indigenous communities on this for nearly two years.

Indigenous groups were consulted not only on the bill, but also on what the joint drafting and consultation processes should look like. We went much further than simply discussing the provisions of the bill. We asked them how these discussions should unfold so we could work on co-developing a bill.

We met with indigenous communities in every province and territory because this is a priority to me, to the Prime Minister, to the government and to all indigenous peoples across Canada.

Some indigenous languages have disappeared and others continue to disappear at an alarming rate. We must act swiftly.

[English]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to echo the comments of my colleague on this side of the House about the irony, in some ways, of time allocation being put on a bill about language, a bill about speaking.

I understand what the minister is saying. The government has consulted with Canadians and indigenous groups, but debate in the House is about parliamentarians being able to talk about what is important to their constituents.

Although we have signalled our support for the bill, we have also outlined a number of areas in which the bill needs to be amended. We need to get the bill right. The government needs to hear us. The other side needs to hear what those things are. We need to hear from the government if it is sincerely open to amendments to the bill. To understand how to make the bill better, we need to have the debate here in the House. I am very disappointed.

Government Orders

I have to reiterate the irony of closing down debate on a bill that talks about giving people back the right to speak their language. I want to reiterate how disappointed I am that the government has moved time allocation on such an important bill. We really need to get it right. Parliamentarians need to have the ability to help the government get the bill to where it needs to be.

• (1600)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, we said from day one that we are open to discussions with different parties. We are open to considering amendments. Those amendments happen at committee, so if they have suggestions they can bring them to the committee.

I had the opportunity yesterday to appear in front of the committee. We had very frank and open discussions with members from all parties. However, this bill is absolutely fundamental. It is important for all indigenous people across the country, for the Métis, first nations and Inuit, because so many languages have already been lost and are being lost at an alarming rate.

We have been consulting for almost two years with different groups: with indigenous leaders, with elders, with people from across the country. Everyone around the table was very sincere, open and frank in all discussions, because we share the same objective, which is to make a difference, to make sure that it stops. Enough languages have been lost.

We have to act now, but in order to act we need a bill. The bill in front of us responds to three calls to action: numbers 13, 14 and 15. It advances the objectives of UNDRIP. It states that there will be stable and long-term funding. This is absolutely key for all first nations, Inuit and Métis across the country. We hope everyone will support it and make sure it goes quickly to committee, so we can continue debating it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to point out that there are quite a few people wanting to ask questions, so if we could make the questions concise and, hopefully, have a concise answer as well, we will try to get everyone in.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two very important things to ask of the minister in this scenario. First, he has reiterated repeatedly that this is a very important bill, so if this is an important bill then why does it not justify the full debate and conversation that the House is meant to deliver?

Second, this also represents a pattern of behaviour, because we are finding that on many very important bills we are seeing time allocation. Therefore, either there is a structural flaw in the way we have structured our process around debating bills in the House, or the government is fundamentally undermining the democracy by circumventing the very structural processes that we have put in place to ensure we have the opportunity to discuss these very important bills.

My question for the minister is this. If this is in fact an important bill, and he has already commented on that, then how does he argue that we do not rate the time to have the debate, and how is cutting the debate not undermining the very structure of our democracy?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, when the bill was introduced, the first debate on second reading, a lot of colleagues asked questions about anything but the bill. It was their opportunity to ask important questions about the bill.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I had an opportunity to appear at the committee. I still have some questions. I am seeking clarification. Yes, I am very supportive of the bill because of indigenous languages for first nations, Métis and Inuit across Canada coast to coast to coast. I still have questions regarding access for all first nations, Métis and Inuit people who live not only on reserves but across in urban centres and other places. I will continue to seek clarification on who will qualify for language funding when it is made available. I want to make sure that school divisions, municipalities and other organizations can access the funding to teach youth their cultural language, while also including elders.

That is where my questions are coming from. It is not that I do not support the bill.

Minister, are you still open to making some revisions?

• (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind the hon. members to place their questions through the chair and not directly.

The hon. Minister for Canadian Heritage.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very important, sincere work on this topic. We also had good conversations yesterday at committee.

As I mentioned earlier, this bill is for all indigenous people across the country: on reserves, in cities, everywhere. This is why we are open to discussion with everybody, and we keep discussing with different groups.

Also, the bill, in clause 9, provides the opportunity further down the road to negotiate agreements with different groups, provincial governments, indigenous governments, community groups and cities, so we can agree and sign those agreements so that these services are provided everywhere. Languages have to be saved everywhere, wherever the people are.

As I said, this has been going on for too long. Successive governments throughout history made sure that indigenous people would stop speaking their language and lose their culture, and that is a shame. It is unacceptable. Now we have to make sure that we reverse that and give a chance to all indigenous people in this country.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the minister. Why this attempt to muzzle parliamentarians? As my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent mentioned, why limit constructive discussion?

Government Orders

Need I remind the minister, who was at committee yesterday, that the committee's pre-study has already begun? As the minister said, it is an important project that began with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was initiated by the Conservative government in 2007 and reported its findings in 2015. We are now 2019.

Why did the government wait so long? Why is it cutting off debate on such an important bill? Why is it preventing parliamentarians from expressing themselves when this in no way would interfere with the progress of this bill, which is going to be studied anyway? As the minister knows, there will even be special meetings.

The opposition parties have agreed, given the importance of this bill, to extend the hours of debate at committee to ensure that we can hear from all the witnesses. Why is the minister muzzling parliamentarians? Why is the government showing such contempt for the elected representatives of the people?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, despite my colleague's somewhat harsh words, I would like to thank him for his collaboration during yesterday's committee meeting. It is my understanding that his party, and all other parties in the House, will also collaborate to ensure that this bill, which will go to committee shortly, gets passed.

All parties will have a chance to make suggestions and propose amendments, and of course we will be open to that. This bill is not for me or for anyone else in the House. It is for indigenous peoples, be they Métis, Inuit or first nations, across the country.

This bill is designed to achieve the key goals we all agreed to during the co-development process. My colleague asked why it took so long, and the short answer is that it is because drafting the bill was a collaborative process.

My predecessor or I could have worked with a small team and drafted the bill ourselves, but we did not. We consulted indigenous peoples across the country to come up with the best possible bill, and that is what we have before us today.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to pursue something that another hon. colleague raised.

I gave my word some time ago to one of those leaders within the indigenous communities who has worked hard on this bill and who has been consulted. I recognize that what the minister said is the case, and there has been a lot of consultation. I gave my word to Kukpi7 Ron Ignace, chief of the Skeetchestn Band within the Shuswap Nation, to support the bill, but I am very concerned, because I hear the Inuit voices saying that they have not been properly consulted and that the bill does not reflect their concerns.

I would vote for time allocation to get the bill passed before an election if I had the minister's word that amendments would be forthcoming to address the concerns of those Inuit, other indigenous first nations and Métis peoples who are not yet satisfied. If I had that word of commitment from the minister, I would vote for time allocation.

•(1610)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, the codevelopment process from day one has involved everybody, meaning the Inuit, the Métis

and the first nations. The four groups, including the government, all agreed that 12 principles are the basis of this project. We agreed that we have to respond to calls to action 13, 14 and 15, which this bill does. We all agreed that we need stable and long-term funding, which this bill provides, and this bill has the support of the Assembly of First Nations and of the Métis.

With regard to our Inuit friends, they would like this bill to contain other segments. We have discussing this with them and are continuing this discussion. As I mentioned to them in one discussion when we were sitting together in New York a couple of weeks ago, my door is always open. They know that.

We will keep discussing. If there are things we can agree on, we will definitely be able to integrate them into the bill. However, to be able to modify something, we have to have something on the table. This bill is that something. It is something that is extremely important, something that responds to many of the concerns and the priorities of indigenous peoples across the country, and I am very proud of the work that we have done together.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring us all back in time. I feel that we have to do this before we move any further. I want to bring us back to, I think, day 10 of the previous election in 2015, when the Prime Minister, then the member for Papineau, said in his campaign promise to Canadians that he was going to do things differently. He said he represented real change. One of the things that he was going to do was to let debate reign, and he was not going to use parliamentary tricks such as time allocation to pass legislation. However, I would hazard a guess that this is about the fiftieth time that the government has actually used time allocation to pass legislation.

I will also offer this. This is an important piece of legislation. The Liberals have the support from our caucus on this side of the House, the opposition, but I will offer this because I feel it is necessary to say this at all times when they do these types of tricks: This House does not belong to them. It does not belong to you, Mr. Speaker. It does not belong to me. It belongs to the electors, those electors who elected the 338 members of Parliament to be their voice here in this House.

For those who are listening in, what is happened with this piece of legislation is that the government has basically said, "We have had enough debate. This is going to committee."

At committees we do good work, but for the most part it is essentially like speed dating. Consultation happens when witnesses from all over Canada come to speak to legislation. I do not know how many meetings there will be, but I can speak to my experience at the fisheries committee. Sometimes we will have three or four guests over maybe three or four days. Each witness gets seven to 10 minutes to give their thoughts and their views on such legislation. It is only through full debate that we can move legislation as important as this.

Now I am going to bring this to the personal side. I have mentioned in this House a number of times that my wife and children are first nations people. They do not know their language. They are not familiar with their culture. This is an important piece of legislation, and any member of Parliament who may not be able to have a constituent or a person from a first nation come here deserves to be able to come before the committee to bring their stories and their voices here to this floor.

It is shameful that on this bill we are again seeing time allocation.

The beautiful thing about this House is that sounds travel. On one of the earlier questions, one of the members across the way had shouted out, perhaps thinking that it would not be heard on this side, that the reason this is being pushed through so quickly, as it was mentioned on the other side, is that an election is coming this way.

We have to do whatever we can to make sure that the voices of Canadians and of indigenous peoples are heard about the meaning and importance of indigenous languages. Bill C-91 is another one of those bills that the Liberals place such great importance on that they place their hands on their chests, and yet they ram them through with little to no consultation.

The hon. minister likes to say that the government has done a year and a half of consultation. I can tell my hon. colleagues that in my neck of the woods, in Cariboo—Prince George, not many of our first nations have been consulted on this bill, and they would like to have their say.

I would urge our hon. colleague, the minister, to rethink this. Why does he feel the need to once again break a campaign promise and force time allocation on this legislation?

• (1615)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague started his comments by saying that the Prime Minister, in his campaign promise, said that we would do things differently. That is exactly what we did.

We have been consulting for almost two years with the Inuit, with the Métis, with first nations, with modern treaty bands, with self-governing nations. We have been consulting across the country, and we are discussing this here. We will be going to committee, where we can discuss and evaluate the possibility of amendments, but as we speak, languages are being lost across the country.

My colleague said very eloquently that we have to do something, and he is right. What we are doing here is extremely important. If my colleague does not believe me, maybe he will believe National Chief Perry Bellegarde, who said that this bill “is landmark legislation.” He said, “Today, there is hope” and “This work is good for all Canadians.”

Clément Chartier, president of the Métis National Council, who is a well known and respected leader, said “...this is reconciliation in action.” He salutes the Prime Minister for acting on this priority.

Clara Morin Dal Col, president of Métis Nation British Columbia, said “The bill marks a giant first step” and “It’s a historic moment for our people and for our nation.” These comments come from very respected people. They are the ones saying this, not me, and of course I agree with them.

Government Orders

The fundamental thing about this is that we are starting with something strong, something extremely strong. We are advancing the objective of UNDRIP, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We are responding to three calls to action: number 13, number 14 and number 15. We will provide stable and long-term funding. We are recognizing for the first time that language rights are based on section 35 of our own Constitution. This is huge.

Is it an answer to everything? No. Can we do more? Of course, and we will always try to do more. However, this is fundamental. We are starting on a very solid basis, and we will do it for all indigenous people in the country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I feel the minister is being sincere about this bill, and I am happy to see that.

Indeed, the work has begun, and a significant effort is required from all committee members. There are several relevant topics that could be raised at committee.

I heard the question asked by my colleague from the Green Party, and I want to make sure my friend properly understood her request. She is calling on the government to listen to amendments that may be forthcoming—not just those brought forward by the three main parties, with whom the Liberals have negotiated carefully and well, believe me, and explored the possibilities.

I say this honestly and without cynicism: reach out to experts in this Parliament from the other parties. To be frank, I must say that, in the scandal involving SNC-Lavalin, you wanted to deal with it very quickly and, in the end, that has put a lot of jobs at risk when those in jeopardy should be the white-collar criminals. Of course, it was not you, but everyone knows that your government moved very quickly to add a provision in an omnibus bill, and now we are in this mess.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind the member that the Speaker does not have a position and is very independent. I imagine when he said “you”, he was referring to the Liberal government.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his thoroughness on this file. We had the opportunity to discuss it yesterday. I could tell how important this is to him.

I want to come back to the question raised by his colleague.

As I already said, we have been in discussions with all the national groups, including the Métis, Inuit, and first nations peoples from the start. We consulted various band councils, other organizations, organizations that represent indigenous women and elders. The door remains open to further discussions, including with the Inuit.

As I said earlier, we have to start somewhere. The bill will allow us to accomplish a great deal from the get-go. We are responding to the calls to action 13, 14 and 15, we are building on the objectives of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Those objectives are applied here in Canada. For the first time, we are acknowledging that indigenous languages are a fundamental right under section 35 of the Constitution.

Government Orders

While we debate this bill in the House or in committee, my door remains open to those who want to contribute to the discussion. I am thinking in particular about the Inuit, but also anyone else who might want to participate in the discussion.

I also want to mention that clause 9 of the bill allows for further negotiation and agreement with various groups on different themes.

To answer my colleague's question, I would say that it is clear that the things we will end up agreeing on by the end of the process, or later, could absolutely be incorporated in the bill.

● (1620)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulu, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out how disappointed I am. I could hardly wait to speak about this bill today, mainly for personal reasons. I have an Inuit first name, Alupa, which means “strong man”. My entire family is very aware of and attuned to indigenous matters. My wife is an anthropologist who has worked with the Inuit for many years, and my father is a forensic historian, who has defended indigenous people in many cases by locating treaties or doing research for them.

The minister said that this is an extremely important bill that will protect and promote indigenous languages, some of which are dying out. That much is true. The Liberals have also said that no relationship is more important than the relationship with indigenous peoples. They have said it over and over, but this bill was introduced only a few months before the election, at the end of their mandate and four years after they were elected. Yes, it is urgent that we take action, but it is not true that we will all be able to state our position and discuss it in committee. As there are only three spots for opposition members, I do not think I will have the opportunity to debate the bill or to suggest amendments in committee.

Although we support this bill on the face of it, it deals with some very serious issues. There is a very clear reason why we support this bill, and that appears in the last paragraph of the preamble to the Official Languages Act, which states that the government recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the use of languages other than English and French while strengthening the status and use of the official languages.

This bill is therefore perfectly aligned with Canada's political doctrine. However, there are some very important issues that need clarification, and I will talk about them now. Why is the Official Languages Act quasi-constitutional? That is because it is linked to sections 16 to 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The minister told us that Bill C-91, an act respecting indigenous languages, is linked to section 35 of the Constitution. Does that mean that this bill will become quasi-constitutional legislation like the Official Languages Act? If so, we will have to discuss this for weeks because it will have a major impact on our society. It will be a very positive impact, to be sure, but when we say that the bill could be quasi-constitutional we need to know where that takes us.

The bill also states that there would be a commissioner of indigenous languages. Will this commissioner have duties similar to those of the Commissioner of Official Languages? Will they have a joint office?

The bill also talks about funding to protect, preserve and promote indigenous languages. Will that involve developing action plans as

we do for official languages? Will this cost billions of dollars over five years every five years, as is the case with the action plan for official languages? Will the department also receive \$1 billion in recurring funding every five years?

There are all kinds of questions to which we have no answers today. Could we maybe get an inkling of an answer right now?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, it is rather amusing to hear my colleague ask questions and then answer them himself.

I said this is an important bill because we have been working on it for a year and a half. We introduced it now because we have taken a year and a half to draft this bill with various national groups and indigenous representatives from across the country.

As I said in the beginning, my predecessor and I could have drafted this bill with a few friends or colleagues, but we did not. We got out there, held 50 collaborative engagement sessions and even held online consultations. More than 1,200 members of indigenous communities were consulted and shared their views on this bill, while hundreds more did so online. As a result, this bill has the support of indigenous peoples across Canada. This is a fundamental starting point.

In conclusion, I encourage my colleagues from all parties to work together to help make this bill a reality.

● (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion 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 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:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

● (1705)

[English]

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

*Government Orders**(Division No. 993)*

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fuhr
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Harvey
Hehr
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Morrissey
Nault
O'Connell
Oliver
Oueltette
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Chen
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Finnigan
Fortier
Fraser (West Nova)
Gerretsen
Goodale
Hardie
Hébert
Hogg
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jowhari
Khalid
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matapédia)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Nassif
Ng
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson

Wilson-Raybould
YoungYip
Zahid— 158

NAYS

Members

Aboutaif
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Allison
Angus
Aubin
Barrett
Beaulieu
Benzen
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Cannings
Chong
Clarke
Cooper
Diotte
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Finley
Gallant
Gladu
Gourde
Harder
Hughes
Jolibois
Kent
Kmiec
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)
Liepert
MacGregor
Maguire
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Motz
Nater
Nuttall
Pauzé
Quach
Ramsey
Rayes
Rempel
Saroya
Shields
Sopuck
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Sweet
Tootoo
Van Kesteren
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

Albas
Alleslev
Anderson
Arnold
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Choquette
Clement
Deltell
Doherty
Dubé
Dusseault
Eglinski
Fast
Fortin
Gill
Godin
Hardcastle
Hoback
Johns
Kelly
Kitchen
Kusie
Lake
Laverdière
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Martel
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nantel
Nicholson
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Raitt
Rankin
Reid
Richards
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Stetski
Stubbs
Tilson
Trost
Vecchio
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Zimmer— 120

PAIRED

Members

LeBlanc
MurrayMoore
Thériault— 4**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be extended by another 30 minutes, for a total of 50 minutes.

Government Orders

[Translation]

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Canada Post; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, The Environment; the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Carbon Pricing.

● (1710)

[English]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from February 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-91, An Act respecting Indigenous languages, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to participate in such an important debate, a debate that in my opinion has been a long time coming. It is great to see this legislation being put forward, and it is great to have an opportunity to contribute to this.

It is safe to say that this legislation is coming as a direct result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, a report that highlighted and underscored the need for the Canadian government to take action with respect to truthfully and in an honest and sincere way moving toward reconciliation as it relates to the indigenous communities throughout Canada.

I would like to start by acknowledging that we are on the ancestral lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill C-91, an act respecting indigenous languages.

Over the past two years, Canadians have increasingly learned about the ill-conceived government-led policies, such as the Indian residential schools policy, day schools and child welfare, all of which contributed to the erosion of indigenous languages. We know this through the testimonies given by indigenous peoples, from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures and, most recently, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

We know that the survivors of residential schools were abused and shamed for speaking their languages, and many did not pass their languages on to their children for fear they would be discriminated against. It is in this context that I acknowledge the dedication and hard work of first nation, Inuit and Métis language speakers and indigenous knowledge keepers who are working to keep their languages and cultures vibrant and have been advocating for support for their languages for over a century.

Many Canadians may not have a deep understanding of why it is so important to indigenous peoples to see their languages reclaimed, revitalized, maintained and strengthened. Through various testimonies from indigenous peoples, we have heard how indigenous languages are core to the indigenous identity: the relationship to self, to family, in some cases to clans, to community, to governance and to land. As reported by elders to the 2005 Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, language, culture, spiritual values and the sense of identity are inseparable concepts.

That is one of the reasons great efforts are being made in communities to keep their languages alive. The fortitude and

dedication of those who work to keep languages spoken in their homes and communities comes from the heart. It comes from who they are. Indigenous languages hold world views that guide behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that reinforce responsibilities to the land and to each other.

Past governments tried to coerce indigenous peoples to assimilate and abandon their cultural practices, including their languages. The results of this have had a detrimental impact on multiple generations where indigenous peoples were made to feel ashamed for speaking their languages. The intergenerational transmission of oral history, storytelling and culture was profoundly interrupted through the imposed prohibitions on languages and on ceremonial and cultural practices.

Language specialist Mary Siemens once conveyed the link between indigenous languages and cultural identity, stating:

Our culture depends on our language, because it contains the unique words that describe our way of life. It describes name-places for every part of our land that our ancestors travelled on. We have specific words to describe the seasonal activities, the social gatherings, and kin relations.

In the words of indigenous knowledge keepers, ancestral languages are the key to identities and cultures. Each of these languages tells us who we are and where we came from.

● (1715)

The 2005 task force on aboriginal peoples and culture re-emphasized that when it said that language is embedded in indigenous peoples' relationship to the land. The languages arose here and are profoundly different from languages spoken and developed elsewhere in the world. The structures of indigenous languages reflect the distinctive philosophies based on relationship to the land. Thus, first nations, Inuit and Métis languages have more words to describe nature through their many references to geography, weather, wildlife and so forth.

Consider the diversity of indigenous peoples in Canada and the various states of language vitality. Compare that to the reports and studies that support the notion that being immersed in language and culture lead to better health and well-being. Fostering indigenous identity through languages is healing indigenous families and communities from the detrimental impacts of colonialization, and gives children and youth pride in who they are.

Whether indigenous languages are supported at home, through adult immersion, on the land, in language camps, in language nests or through master-apprentice programs, more awareness of the richness of indigenous languages is permeated in the young minds who will grow up knowing who they are, who their ancestors were, and where they come from.

It is supporting the reclamation of the languages that we tried so hard to take away. There are times when we hear stories of indigenous youth and young adults who are experiencing the challenges of intergenerational trauma and navigating the transition from youth to young adulthood. We hear how becoming more involved with their language and culture is positively contributing to their self-esteem, self-worth and pride in who they are.

Government Orders

There is so much to be said about the healing aspects of learning the languages and ways of one's ancestors. Language is so important to our identity and culture. In the Anishinabe context, for example, there are ceremonies to mark each stage of life, from birth to end of life on this earth. Their importance is to help young people find their purpose in life and learn their responsibilities as daughters or sons, parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles.

To add to this complexity and to highlight an example, there is a different terminology used for aunt and uncle that links one as a sister or brother of one's mother or father, thus defining the kinship role and responsibility to the family.

These languages are both profound and complex. There are differences from the English and French languages that simply get lost in translation. There are concepts that do not exist in other cultures or, by extension, in their languages.

On a more spiritual level, a late elder underscored the relationship between language and the ability to understand and take part in ceremonies, by saying that if one is going to do something about languages, indigenous people should be able to do their ceremonies. If they cannot do the ceremonies of their people, there cannot be a spiritual basis for their language.

Indigenous children and youth have a rich cultural and linguistic heritage to be proud of. This means that supporting the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of indigenous languages contributes to preserving indigenous cultural identity and enhancing well-being.

It is also important to note that the preamble of this legislation acknowledges indigenous languages as fundamental to the identities, cultures, spiritual beliefs, relationships to the land, world view and self-determination of indigenous peoples. The fundamental concepts to seriously consider and appreciate are the nuances expressed in indigenous languages that tie so closely in relation to the land, family, community and nation that is often lost in translation.

This is why elders and fluent speakers of indigenous languages are crucial in helping those wanting to learn their languages. Their wisdom is especially needed in decoding terms and phrases to the root words to reveal the true meaning and cultural relevance that lend themselves to the importance of indigenous identity.

• (1720)

Teaching the languages must be done with awareness of the important values these languages carry. That is why the provisions of this legislation intend to do that, through providing support for establishing culturally appropriate methods of teaching and learning the language.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak about indigenous languages as the core to indigenous identity, and about the importance of supporting this bill.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think all of us in the House will support the legislation. However, we have concerns with the fact that time allocation was called yet again today on what the Liberals have said is a critical piece of legislation going through the House.

Last week I had the opportunity to share this document with the chiefs and councils of the first nations in my riding. None of those first nations have had an opportunity to get back to me with their response to the bill. That just goes to show that although the government keeps talking about there being no relationship more important to it than the relationship with Canadian first nations, it is not giving them an opportunity to have any timely input on the legislation.

I know they are going to say they consulted for over a year, but the first nations in my constituency certainly did not have an opportunity to provide feedback on the bill. I would like to ask my colleague why the government is rushing, and why it did not give first nations across the country opportunities to speak to the legislation.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, this is a great opportunity, in a non-partisan way, to show support for a particular piece of legislation that goes a long way in terms of being a very tiny attempt to start to correct many of the wrongs that have been done to indigenous people throughout Canada over the past century and beyond. This is an opportunity to start a healing process, and an opportunity for all sides of the House to come together.

To the member's point about timing, all governments have been dragging their feet for the last several decades as to how we are going to properly look at reconciling with indigenous communities throughout Canada. I do not think that a time allocation motion is something that stands in the way of advancing that, as this is a discussion that has been going on for decades and generations.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is absolutely right when he talks about the government dragging its feet. The Liberals have waited until there are 12 weeks left in this session of Parliament to table this legislation. We have clearly heard through the Inuit and other nations that they have not done the proper consultation.

They have had three years to get this bill in the House of Commons. We heard in 2015 that they were going to bring forward legislation and funding to support indigenous languages. Here we are with 12 weeks to go, and in my riding in the Nuu-chah-nulth territory we are losing native speakers every year. Month by month we are losing speakers. In the Barkley dialect of the Nuu-chah-nulth, we have gone from 15 speakers in 2015 to nine today.

The Liberals are dragging their feet. We are losing native speakers, and there is no base funding in this. That is the bare minimum. I was talking to Victoria Wells, who is a Nuu-chah-nulth language teacher. She said it is absolutely essential that there be base funding in this legislation. She said it is like a tax on a tax.

Perhaps the member could speak about why the Liberals have been dragging their feet so long, and where the base funding is. Where is the consultation they promised?

• (1725)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, we know that three-quarters of approximately 90 indigenous languages are in serious threat of disappearing completely.

Government Orders

I understand that we have an innate sense of wanting to be hyper-partisan in this room. I get it. I am one of those people. I do that. However, this is an opportunity to genuinely come together and not try to suggest that all of a sudden we need more time, which is what I am hearing from both opposition parties.

The reality of the situation is that they are trying, through the legislative process, to slow this down. This is a great opportunity to actually come together in a non-partisan way to support an issue that does not deserve the partisan politics that we so often get into in this room. I put myself in that category as being someone who does that, but this is an opportunity to get behind something. It is possible for all parties, all members in the room to actually believe in something together without trying to score political points on its back.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for his intervention and his passionate speech.

The government has undertaken extensive consultations with respect to the proposed legislation. Over 1,200 individuals and groups were consulted across the country. As well, there was a process of co-development, which really brought in the three national indigenous organizations.

This bill is unprecedented in the sense of its being a co-developed piece of legislation. Could the member give us a sense of how important that is in terms of advancing reconciliation, and how that has informed our government's decision relating to the bill?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I think the member's question highlights the importance of this particular piece as it relates to reconciliation.

As we have heard, and as I have mentioned in my speech, languages of indigenous people are the core basis to much of what they do and their cultural identity. This is the starting point. This is what everything else can build on.

I am absolutely proud to stand in support of the bill. I know that all members in the House will be supportive of it. I truly hope that this will be looked at in the future, not as a Liberal win or a Liberal day, but as a day for Canada, a day that we did something right and started on a path of true reconciliation.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I first want to reiterate how significant this step is for all indigenous people, all first nations, Métis and Inuit people, from coast to coast to coast.

However, I do have concerns. Both the first nations and Métis people in my constituency are asking a valid question about funding, which is very significant. They want to make sure that not only first nations but municipalities and Métis communities have access to sufficient funding where there are Métis students, non-status students and first nations students.

Is the government willing to give us some idea as to how much funding it is looking at?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the sincerity of my colleague's question.

This is a fundamental first step to establishing the framework. Once we have the framework in place, we can then start to look at what the funding is going to be to ensure that the positions and the various structures that are established within the framework have what they need in order to be viable moving into the future.

• (1730)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, my concern with the government's comments and supposed plan for supporting indigenous languages is that it is not walking the walk and definitely not talking the talk. I will give an example.

Wawatay Radio, which serves communities across the far north in Cree, Oji-Cree and Ojibwa, is a vital service. This is a service that keeps language alive in communities like Pikangikum and Kashechewan. However, under the current government, the funding has steadily been cut to Wawatay Radio.

How is it possible for the government to make all of these wonderful promises when the one radio station that guarantees that people can talk in their own language is being undermined by this very government? If the government is willing to fund the stations that exist properly, we might believe it. However, as it stands now, it is undermining the languages of the north.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it is very difficult to think that I have come to a place where we can genuinely collaborate on this together when the member opposite starts off by saying it is a "supposed" attempt. I would argue that this is a real attempt, which a lot of people have supported, that has come forward to the House.

As it relates to his specific concern, this is the exact framework that the legislation proposes to set up so that we can determine where the funds are going to go in order to support the various programs that we have throughout the country to support indigenous languages.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to rise to speak to this important piece of legislation. I have been able to rise a couple of times throughout the debate and my feelings towards the importance of the legislation are widely known. The importance of this piece of legislation cannot be understated, but as I said in my earlier question, it is incredible that once again we are seeing time allocation put on a piece of legislation that is so important.

It is interesting to note that we get the same talking points from those on the government side about how the government needs to rush this through, but I want to offer a valuable piece of insight into why it is important that we have a fulsome debate here in the House.

The member of Parliament for Nunavut said that he wished he had a chance to speak to the importance of the legislation to his area but he was not given the opportunity to do so because of time allocation. Regardless of how much the Liberals say this is an important piece of legislation, which we all agree, they are forcing time allocation on it and shutting down debate, which is another failed campaign promise of the Prime Minister.

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Our language is a window into our past. It is a window into who we are here today. It is a window into who we may be moving forward.

I will bring members back to the comments made about residential schools and the estimated 150,000 first nations children that were ripped from their families, their clans and their communities and sent to these schools with the full intent of driving the Indian out of them.

Talking about residential schools, and I have shared this in the House at various times, just down the road from where my mom was living was St. Joseph's Mission in Williams Lake. St. Joseph's Mission is the birthplace of Orange Shirt Day. Phyllis Webstad, on her very first day of school, wore a brand new orange shirt that her grandmother had bought for her. When she stepped off the bus at St. Joseph's Mission that shirt and any semblance of her first nations background was ripped from her. First nations children were forced to wear the uniform of that school and were not allowed to speak their traditional language. They were punished if they did.

We are really only now beginning to understand what horrors took place in some of those institutions. I have also said that I was ashamed that I lived in the same community as did friends of mine. We lived just down the road from this school but we had no idea of the horrors that were taking place in our own community.

In 1966, Mary Carpenter, a 23-year-old Inuk from Sachs Harbour, Northwest Territories, started to shine the light on the atrocities that took place in our residential schools. She did so before a television audience as a guest on The Pierre Berton Show. She wept as she spoke of the physical and mental abuse she suffered. It was a shock for the thousands of viewers who had for generations been fed the lie that forced assimilation was the answer to our "Indian question".

There are 634 first nations across our beautiful country. There are 50 distinct first nations languages and many different dialects. In British Columbia, we have 34 unique first nations languages and over 93 dialects.

• (1735)

Two weeks ago, I talked about elder Mary Gouchie, who was at every event in my community of Prince George. She did whatever she could as a keeper of the dialect and language. Earlier I said she was one of four. However, she was one of three. She passed away three weeks ago, taking with her the knowledge and background of that culture and language. That is a huge cultural loss to our community.

Prior to being elected, I was fortunate enough to be part of the 2015 Canada Winter Games. I raised the money for those games. The Canada Games are taking place in Red Deer as we speak. Because they are about legacy, as an executive host society, we not only chose to leave a legacy of sport but also one of culture in our community. Therefore, we were the first host society to adopt a host first nation, which was Lheidli T'enneh.

I forgot to start by saying *hadih*. That is how we say hello in Lheidli.

As a host society, we endeavoured not to make our games bilingual but to make them trilingual. However, the major challenge with that was trying to find elders or those in the community who

could help us translate simple wayfinding signs, or getting people around the table to figure out how to welcome the nation to our community. I am happy to say that we have an amazing relationship with Lheidli T'enneh all across our community now, which is our host first nation. Chief Domo is a great leader in our community. That host first nation flag still flies at city hall, as well as at many of our major government buildings.

In 2007, National Geographic said that B.C. was a hotbed for losing first nations languages at a staggering rate. It said we were at risk of language extinction, with many aboriginal dialects classed as endangered or moribund, meaning that most fluent speakers were over 60. Indeed, we now know that over 52% of the fluent speakers of our British Columbia first nations languages and dialects are over 60, which means we are losing that knowledge.

I have also talked about the importance of the first nations languages to my family, as my son, daughter and wife are first nations and they are not connected to their community. They do not know the language. They do not know the culture. Although we have tried to be a part of the community, the languages are difficult to learn, as members can imagine.

Bill C-91 is an important piece of legislation. In the minute I have left, I want to say that I wish all of our colleagues had the opportunity to speak on this important piece of legislation. It is important because our language is a window into our past, it is a window into who we are today and it is a window into our future. There is a lost generation out there because its language and culture were driven from it. Therefore, we need to get such an important piece of legislation right.

With that, I humbly cede the floor. To my colleagues across the way I say this. This is not a piece of legislation we should be rushing. Rather, we should be spending the time and making sure that first nations communities from coast to coast to coast are represented in this study.

• (1740)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Northumberland—Peterborough South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague reiterated a number of things my hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands said, including the importance of this bill. It sounds to me as though we all agree on that.

One thing my colleague from Kingston and the Islands said was that for decades and decades, successive governments have not moved this forward. If we all agree on the importance of this, if this bill has the flexibility to deal with the uniqueness of indigenous languages, if it includes an office of a commissioner of indigenous languages, and if B.C., in 2007, as you mentioned, was in jeopardy of losing its indigenous languages, I would ask my colleague across the aisle, with due respect, if not now, when?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address her question to the Chair. She said "you mentioned", and I did not mention.

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The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, Prime Minister Harper, in his historic apology on June 11, 2008, recognized that our first nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. He acknowledged the wrongs that were done in the past. He even said the following in his statement:

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian residential schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on aboriginal culture, heritage and language.

To our hon. colleagues across the way who had an opportunity to speak, I offer this. There are 338 members of Parliament in this House. Madam Speaker, this House does not belong to you, and it does not belong to me. There are members of Parliament on this side of the House, such as the former fisheries minister, the member for Nunavut, who wish to speak to this. There are colleagues on the New Democrat benches as well who wish to speak to this. However, shamefully, the government has forced time allocation.

I will offer this as well. It was the Prime Minister, then the member for Papineau, who, on day 10 of the 2015 election campaign, said that he would not resort to parliamentary tricks such as time allocation to force legislation through. That is just another broken campaign promise.

• (1745)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (Multiculturalism), Lib.): Madam Speaker, through you, I want to thank my friend from Cariboo—Prince George for his passionate speech on this issue. I do not doubt his sincerity with respect to supporting this legislation and the preservation of indigenous languages.

I was in his riding last month and heard quite a bit about Elder Gouchie, who was one of the last five speakers of the Lheidli T'enneh dialect. It could be three, but certainly it is a number that puts a language group in very real danger of extinction. We know the urgency. The urgency has existed for decades. This government has worked for the last two years consistently, through collaboration with indigenous organizations and through over 1,200 consultations, to come up with this bill.

My advice is that we get on with it and get this bill passed. A lot of work can be done in committee. I would invite the member to committee to advance the issues he has on this issue.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the government likes to talk about its consultations, yet we still have first nations saying that they have not had the opportunity to be consulted. We know that committees do great work. However, these first nation communities have to try to convey that in 10 minutes. Only through full debate can we bring their voices to Parliament, and that is what we are here to do. Some things just should not be rushed. We need to get it right. It is so important.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all my colleagues who are here, and in particular, I want to thank my colleague who just spoke, the member for Cariboo—Prince George. I also want to thank my colleague from Nunavut for being here. Some of the comments I will be making today relate to the Inuktitut language and may be of interest to him. If he gets the chance to ask a question or raise a comment, it would be

nice if all of us would extend him a little extra time, given the importance of the language and that he personally represents the majority of its speakers in this country.

The goal of a language law, or any law, ought to be twofold. It is always to remediate a wrong. It ought to be open-hearted in its approach, and we ought to go in with open eyes as to a clear setting of achievable, realistic goals. To fail to be open-hearted is to, quite frankly, be self-serving, even sinister. To fail to go in with open eyes as to the practicalities one is dealing with ensures one's own defeat.

This legislation, on the whole, is good, but it is imperfect on both those measures. I want to talk a little about this, with particular reference to the problem of the Inuktitut language and the fact that there is not complete support in the Inuktitut-speaking community for this legislation. This indicates that while good in many respects, the legislation is imperfect. It is imperfect because it targets one problem, where speakers of Inuktitut have a separate problem that is not being addressed in the legislation. I turn now to that discussion.

The problem of the decline of indigenous languages in Canada is not a new problem. It was identified a very long time ago and has been addressed by StatsCan in a number of interesting surveys over the years. I am looking at a document from 2007 that points out that the number of people speaking an indigenous language as their first language was in decline. It was quite a rapid decline. Between 1996 and 2001, the percentage of the indigenous population able to conduct a conversation in an indigenous language went from 29% to 24%. The number of people having an indigenous language as their mother tongue among people who were of indigenous ancestry dropped from 26% to 21%.

However, StatsCan noticed one encouraging trend, and it is the trend I think this legislation is designed to further, and that is the acquisition of an indigenous language as a second language or as a language spoken in parallel with one of the official languages, or for those who are fortunate enough, perhaps as one of their mother tongues.

The StatsCan report states:

Learning an Aboriginal language as a second language cannot be considered a substitute for learning it as a first language. Nevertheless, increasing the number of second language speakers is part of the process of language revitalization, and may go some way towards preventing, or at least slowing, the rapid erosion and possible extinction of endangered languages.

That is a salutary goal, as expressed by the author of this report for Statistics Canada 12 years ago, and it is a salutary goal as expressed in the preamble to this piece of legislation. However, it addresses the issue of languages that are in decline. It is a reasonable goal, but it is not necessarily going to succeed in all cases.

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By way of example, I cite what happened in Ireland, where there was a widespread consensus when Ireland achieved independence, just under 100 years ago, that Irish Gaelic ought to be saved, ought to be preserved and ought to become a language of daily use. A nationwide consensus on this point, and a number of quite heroic measures, in some cases, caused the Irish language to become the only official language of the country. Money and postage stamps were printed in Irish alone. It was necessary to speak Irish to get a job in the public service, and so on. Areas called Gaeltacht, which were areas of Irish language use, were set up and made official language areas. Nonetheless, use of the Irish language, as both a percentage of language spoken in Ireland and in absolute numbers, continued to decline.

• (1750)

This is a very tough battle to fight. It is worth fighting, but I think we have to recognize that experience suggests that it is a very difficult battle indeed.

This is also a battle that is largely irrelevant to the speakers of a small number of very robust indigenous languages. This includes, in particular, Inuktitut. It is on this basis that the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami put forward a position paper on language legislation and also critiqued this bill. What it said in its critique, which came out on February 5, is quite interesting:

Our efforts to revitalize, maintain, and promote Inuktitut are often blunted by inequitable federal funding policies that task us with doing much more with far fewer resources than what French and English speakers receive. At the same time, our people do not have the right to access federal services in Inuktitut, relegating it to a status beneath English and French.

That is important for a very significant reason, a reason that would not be true for people who were picking up an indigenous language as a second language, for example, or who were fluent speakers of an indigenous language as well as one of the official languages. That is because there are many people who are unilingual speakers of the Inuktitut language or who struggle in one of the other official languages, usually English, but not always.

To give an idea of just how robust the language is, I want to cite the number of Inuit speakers in different areas of northern Canada. In Nunavut, there are 26,800 speakers. That is 89% of the residents of the Nunavut region, including people of all backgrounds. In Nunavik, which is the northern part of Quebec, 99% of the population is capable of speaking Inuktitut. In Nunatsiavut, an area in northern Labrador, it is a much smaller percentage, 21%, and in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, which is in part of the Northwest Territories, it is 22%.

To get numbers of 89% and 99%, one is talking about a base in which many of those people speak only that language. Making sure that they can receive all government services and have access to everything, such as health care, education, tax forms and anything else the government offers, so they can operate as unilingual speakers of their language is absolutely critical. That is, frankly, absent from this legislation, because this legislation is addressing another problem, the problem of languages that do not have that many unilingual speakers, or perhaps no unilingual speakers. They are languages that are being forgotten. I cannot say enough how important that issue is. It is, however, a distinct problem.

To give colleagues an idea of just how distinct the situation of the Inuktitut language is from other languages, I am turning now to some 2011 census data. We see that 95.3% of Innu, or Montagnais, speakers have a very robust language. They use their language at home, which is the best way of determining whether it is the language in which they are most comfortable. That is very impressive, but it is based on 10,100 people. Among Atikamekw, 97% use their language at home. Again, that is out of a base of fewer than 6,000 people. By contrast, 95% of Inuktitut speakers use their language at home, out of 36,000 people. That is a very large number, and many of those people do not speak a language competently other than Inuktitut. Those people need to have their ability to function as full members of Canadian society taken into account.

I encourage the government to think about that very carefully, either with this legislation, as it says it is open to amendment, or else in a parallel piece of legislation.

I have to stop now due to considerations of time, but I would love to answer any questions anyone has.

• (1755)

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I thank everyone who spoke to this and I want to make it very clear that I support the concept and the idea behind the legislation. However, in its current form, I do not believe I can support it. I know the president of ITK, Natan Obed, said that the office of the commissioner of indigenous languages outlined under the legislation was little more than a new title for an existing aboriginal languages initiative program, a federal office that had largely failed so far to halt the decline of indigenous languages despite having a mission to improve it.

He said that unlike provincial and territorial languages commissioners, this national indigenous language commissioner would basically be a powerless advocacy group controlled by the federal government and that there was no obligation under the legislation on the part of the federal government to fund indigenous languages. He also said that in no way was the bill co-developed with Inuit.

I am an Inuk and I have lost my language. I have lost what I am very proud to see in Nunavut right now. People are showing an interest in learning and regaining their languages. In fact, in 2008, we passed our own Nunavut indigenous languages protection act and pieces of the education act that would force the government to offer bilingual education in Inuktitut. Sadly—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the member has already taken two minutes out of the five minutes. Unfortunately, because another question can be asked, I will ask the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston to respond. I do apologize, but there are only five minutes for questions and comments.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, very briefly, the member reflects some real concerns. I will be voting in favour of the legislation. The things that it does, it does well. However, if I found myself in a situation where I were representing a constituency where Inuktitut was the predominant language, I would be voting against it. This has simply failed to take into account the needs of that language group completely.

Government Orders

● (1800)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I would be honoured to turn my question over to the member for Nunavut so he can finish his statement.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Nunavut.

Hon. Hunter Tootoo: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I will continue with what I was saying. Unfortunately during this current sitting of the Nunavut legislature, it is looking at repealing pieces of that legislation because it does not have the resources to provide bilingual education.

Legislation like this should look at providing the territorial government, which has the responsibility for delivering education, with resources and funding so it can develop and deliver a bilingual education. This could be looked at with this legislation.

As I said, I was very proud to pass those pieces of legislation in 2008. I have heard a number of times, and even the minister has said earlier, that the government is open to amendments. I look forward to working with him and with ITK to bring amendments forward. Hopefully in a different version at third reading, after committee, I will be able to support it.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, the road map outlined by my colleague from Nunavut is a sensible one, and I hope the government is listening.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak to this historic legislation for the country. It is great to have this coming forward quickly.

[Member spoke in Gwich'in as follows:]

dunich'uu? drin gwiinzii shilak kat

[Gwich'in text translated as follows:]

How are you? Good day, friends and relatives.

[English]

I hope the member for Nunavut goes to committee so he can elaborate more. I know he has a lot to contribute.

I appreciated being involved in the consultations in my riding in Yukon. Money for aboriginal languages goes to the individual self-governing first nations in Yukon. The chiefs have made it clear to me that they want to continue with that model and that the individual governments in the government-to-government relationships can best decide where that money should go. I am very excited and would encourage everyone involved in this, as well as the commissioner who might make those decisions, to ensure this format continues. One size does not fit all. Particular first nations know the best way to help preserve and promote their language.

I was hoping to ask the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, who I know is an expert in the field, for some examples of successes. There have been great successes. Statistics show that people who have learned their aboriginal language, who know their aboriginal language and who are connected to their culture are more successful in life and in education, because they have the grounding.

An aboriginal youth said to me that the language and culture came first, not last, when youth had problems or difficulties, because the language grounded them and gave them that pride and strength to carry on and become successful in life. I know every member of this Parliament would want indigenous people to have that success in life, to be able to move forward and to close the unacceptable socio-economic gaps in our country. This language law is a big step in the right direction.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately the member's time is up. It being 6:05 p.m., pursuant to 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 Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

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.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

● (1845)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 994)

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif
Albrecht
Alghabra
Allison
Anandasangaree
Angus
Arseneault
Aubin
Badawey
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu

Albas
Aldag
Alleslev
Amos
Anderson
Arnold
Arya
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barrett
Baylis
Beech

Bennett
Benzen
Berthold
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Breton
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chong
Clarke
Cooper
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Deltell
Dhillon
Doherty
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fergus
Finnigan
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Harder
Harvey
Hehr
Hogg
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Johns
Joly
Jowhari
Kent
Khera
Kmiec
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière
Lefebvre
Levitt
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Soeurs)
Morrissey
Nantel
Nater
Ng

Benson
Bergen
Bezan
Bittle
Blair
Block
Bossio
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Bratina
Brosseau
Caron
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Chen
Choquette
Clement
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhaliwal
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fast
Finley
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Gallant
Gill
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Harceastle
Hardie
Hébert
Hoback
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Jones
Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Kusie
Lake
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leslie
Liepert
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukowski
MacKenzie
Maguire
Martel
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Motz
Nassif
Nault
Nicholson

Nuttall
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rayes
Rempel
Rioux
Rodriguez
Romanado
Rudd
Sahota
Sajjan
Sansoucy
Saroya
Scheer
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Shiple
Sikand
Sohi
Sorenson
Ste-Marie
Strahl
Sweet
Tan
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Yip
Yurdiga
Zimmer — 279

O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Paul-Hus
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Poilievre
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Reid
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Ruimy
Saini
Sangha
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Spengemann
Stetski
Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Trost
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Zahid

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Tootoo — 1

PAIRED

Members

LeBlanc
Murray

Moore
Thériault — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[English]

It being 6:45 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

RURAL DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.) moved:

Private Members' Business

That, in the opinion of the House: (a) a reliable and accessible digital infrastructure, from broadband Internet to wireless telecommunications and beyond, is essential and enables Canadians to seize new business opportunities, create jobs and connect with the global economy; (b) a reliable and accessible digital infrastructure, particularly wireless telecommunications infrastructure, plays a critical role in securing the health and safety of Canadians, notably during emergency situations caused by extreme weather events; (c) innovation occurs everywhere, in rural and remote regions just as much as in urban centres, and all Canadians deserve an equal opportunity to succeed in the digital economy as a matter of fundamental fairness; (d) the government should (i) continue in its efforts to support Canadians, especially those in rural regions, in accessing the digital infrastructure they need to innovate, create economic opportunity and maintain public safety, (ii) examine the possibility of enabling further investments in rural digital infrastructure, including by reviewing the terms and conditions of the federal infrastructure program Investing in Canada, to incentivize investments in rural connectivity by the private sector and by leveraging funds from other orders of government, (iii) continue to work with telecommunication companies, provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous communities and relevant emergency response organizations to enhance rural connectivity and ensure maximum preparedness in emergency situations; (e) the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology should be instructed to undertake a comprehensive study on rural wireless infrastructure, focusing particularly on (i) the underlying causes of, and prospective solutions to the gaps in wireless infrastructure deployment in rural Canada, (ii) the regulatory role of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, (iii) the fiscal and regulatory approaches to incentivize more significant investments in rural wireless infrastructure, and report to the House at its earliest convenience; and (f) the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security should be instructed to undertake a comprehensive study on the public safety dimensions of wireless infrastructure deployment in rural Canada, and report to the House at its earliest convenience.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased and proud to rise today to speak to my motion, Motion No. 208. I look forward to hearing my colleagues' constructive comments on the future of digital infrastructure in rural Canada.

Can anyone today, in 2019, imagine living in a Canadian community with no Internet access or cellphone coverage?

In this day and age, Internet access is a necessity. We live in a technology-driven universe. The world around us is a tech world. The world has changed and evolved, but sadly, some Canadians are being left behind because of where they live.

Whether they are close to big cities or in more remote areas, Canadians living in small communities across Canada want reliable high-speed Internet, but all too often, it is unavailable.

What I hear from residents throughout the regional county municipalities of Pontiac, La Vallée-de-la-Gatineau and Collines-de-l'Outaouais chimes with the comments of my parliamentary colleagues in the government and in the opposition, as well as their constituents across Canada.

• (1850)

[English]

What I hear from my Pontiac constituents resonates across political parties and across rural Canada. This is not a partisan issue. Rural Canada wants the same high-speed Internet as the rest of Canada; the same reliable cellphone coverage; the same opportunities to build their economies through small business innovation to create local jobs; to enjoy digital culture, whether that is Facebook, Netflix or online gaming; to attract young families to their communities; to participate in democracy; to do online schoolwork with their children—and as a young father I know exactly how that feels—and to receive government services.

Rural Canada speaks with one voice when it demands that digital infrastructure investments be accelerated right now. From high-speed Internet fibre to cellphone towers, the needs are great, and patience is wearing thin. These have become essential services that we all rely on.

[Translation]

To give an example, thousands of my constituents living in the municipalities of Cantley, La Pêche and Val-des-Monts, just 25 minutes away from the national capital of a G7 country, are unable to make their small businesses as successful as they should be or even telework for the federal public service.

Here is another example. The day after the 2018 tornado, I met up with Joanne Labadie, the mayor of the municipality of Pontiac, a suburb of Breckenridge. Seeing the damaged homes, I wondered how it was possible that there was no cellphone signal. At a time of crisis, I could not get a signal on my cellphone. That is not normal.

[English]

I stand before this House on behalf of the constituents of Pontiac, but I am also here on behalf of all rural Canadians, who agree that we need more parliamentary debate on this issue. I am here to argue in favour of passing Motion No. 208 and to bring rural Internet and cellphone issues onto the national stage.

Motion No. 208 invites Parliament to confront Canada's rural-urban digital divide and to dive deeper into those nitty-gritty regulatory, economic and public safety dimensions of the issue. It focuses on how we can do more to ensure a reliable, accessible and affordable digital infrastructure for rural communities all across Canada, from broadband Internet to wireless telecom and beyond.

In tabling Motion No. 208, I stand for the idea that Canadians everywhere should be able to access digital networks that play a critical role in securing the health and safety of Canadians, especially during emergency circumstances caused by extreme weather events, for example.

I stand for the idea that rural Canadians must have an equal opportunity to seize new business opportunities in the digital world, to create jobs for their small towns and to connect with the local economy as well as the global economy.

[Translation]

Motion No. 208 constructively expresses broader rural frustrations surrounding the digital divide in Canada and proposes two separate studies to be conducted by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. This will have a significant positive impact on the process that is already under way to reform the Telecommunications Act.

Our government has already indicated how this reform of the Telecommunications Act will focus on universal access:

Universal access to high-quality and affordable telecommunications services has never been more important. This importance is currently reflected in legislative provisions and the CRTC's basic service regulatory framework, which was recently updated to include modern broadband and mobile services.

I would like us to focus specifically on the reform of that act and on how we can achieve better results on the ground in rural Canada. Improving access to these services for Canadians in remote areas, including indigenous communities, is a national priority.

● (1855)

[*English*]

Put simply, as we look at amending the Telecommunications Act, are the right legislative tools in place to further the objectives of affordable, high-quality access for all Canadians, including those in rural, remote and indigenous communities? This is just such an important question.

We all know this is not a new issue. Since the advent of the Internet, rural Canadians have had less Internet access than urban areas. High-speed fibre connections are less common, and wireless cellphone signals are weaker than in cities or oftentimes absent altogether.

[*Translation*]

Telecommunications companies invest less in digital infrastructure in rural Canada for reasons related to geography, cost and population density.

Although Internet service speeds and cellular services have improved in rural Canada, the problem remains: digital services and infrastructure in urban Canada have improved at a faster pace, which again puts rural communities at a relative disadvantage.

This has serious negative repercussions, which tend to snowball at all economic, social, democratic, public safety and demographic levels.

[*English*]

The digital divide is real. Rural Canadians have fewer choices of Internet service providers and wireless service providers, and they often pay higher prices for lower-quality services, despite lower per capita incomes. Closing the gap in broadband Internet and wireless service availability in Canada presents an enormous set of financial challenges requiring billions of dollars in funding and investments, challenges that can only be overcome through shared responsibility.

[*Translation*]

Federal programs such as connect to innovate and connecting families are helping to provide affordable broadband access to some Canadians in rural regions, but to date, there is nothing to address the issue of wireless access.

[*English*]

We have already made major investments, and I credit the Government of Canada for these major investments. Significant progress has been made. For example, in Pontiac, in 2018 I announced \$13.4 million in investments in backbone fibre in the MRCs of Pontiac, La Vallée-de-la-Gatineau and des Collines-de-l'Outaouais, and just a couple of weeks ago, another \$7 million in the municipality of Cantley. That is a total of over \$20 million. These are

Private Members' Business

unheard-of, historic investments, and I am very thankful that both the federal government and the Province of Quebec stepped up.

By comparison, between 2006 and 2016, barely over \$1 million was invested by the previous administration in Pontiac's Internet infrastructure. It is no wonder that we are playing catch-up here.

I could go through a list of towns and small communities that are going to be better served by high-speed Internet. I will name a few of them, because it is important that they be recognized for the challenges that they face right now, and they are waiting:

Here are some: Montcerf-Lytton, Bois-Franc, Aumond, Egan-Sud, Grand-Remous, Cayamant, Gracefield, Kazabazua, Denholm, Low. In the MRC Pontiac, there are Chapeau, Danford Lake, Portage-du-Fort, Ladysmith, Alleyn-et-Cawood, Thorne, Bristol, Rapides-des-Joachims, Sheenboro, Norway Bay, Sand Bay, Waltham, Chichester and Plage-Baie-Noire.

These are just some of the communities that are going to have far better Internet access as the investments are brought to bear.

[*Translation*]

These investments mean that over 4,000 households will be able to connect to the Internet.

● (1900)

[*English*]

I agree with my constituents and I agree with our mayors and our municipal councillors: We need to act fast. We need these projects implemented.

That is one of the reasons I recently organized meetings between the telecommunications company responsible for a large portion of the projects in our riding and the mayors. It was so we could encourage them to get these projects in the ground, on the poles, as fast as possible. We know that the projects are going to be implemented, starting this year and through 2021.

As we debate Motion No. 208, let us recognize the great investments that are already happening in Canada, not just in Pontiac but across the country, and let us see what we can do to go much, much further.

[*Translation*]

The pace and scope of these investments, made possible through tax measures or CRTC regulatory requirements, must be significantly accelerated to address the impact of inequalities in digital infrastructure and distribution of services on areas such as health and public safety.

[*English*]

This is what Motion No. 208 is all about.

[*Translation*]

I am proud to announce here in the House of Commons that this motion has the support of key municipal organizations: the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the rural caucus of the Union des municipalités du Québec.

Private Members' Business

Vicki-May Hamm, mayor of the City of Magog and president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, sent me a letter of support in which she wrote:

In Canada today, fast, reliable Internet access is an essential service that should be available to all, no matter where they live.

She goes on to say this:

That is why I am writing to you today in support of your motion on rural digital infrastructure. The FCM recognizes that reliable, accessible digital infrastructure is essential to Canada's rural communities and would enable people across the country to benefit from new business opportunities and participate in the digital economy.

I am extremely pleased to have the FCM's support.

The same goes for the rural caucus of the Union des municipalités du Québec.

In a letter signed by the mayor of Chelsea, my mayor, it says:

Like you, the Union des municipalités du Québec or UMQ recognizes the strategic importance of digital infrastructure networks to community development. The deployment of digital infrastructure networks is a matter of principle and of equal opportunities for Canadians. It is essential to Quebec's economic development.

The UMQ's local municipalities caucus hereby officially offers its support for Motion No. 208 on rural digital infrastructure. Rest assured that you can always count on the support of local governments when it comes to giving everyone access to quality digital infrastructure.

[English]

I know I need to conclude now. I will very quickly thank all the municipalities across the Pontiac for stepping up and passing resolutions in support of Motion No. 208: Fort-Coulonge, Kazabazua, Sainte-Thérèse-de-la-Gatineau, Campbell's Bay, Gracefield, Chelsea, Low and the MRC of Pontiac.

In conclusion, I just want to make clear that this is a national priority. Although our government has done so much, we have to do more and that is what Motion No. 208 is all about.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, there are two things I listened to with keen interest.

At one point in the member's speech, he raised the Telecommunications Act and said there needed to be some amendments to the act. In the motion, the member has not actually listed the Telecommunications Act as to what component of it needs to be amended. Could he enlighten the House? If there is an area specifically that he is referencing, I would like to know.

Second to that is item (c), and I am only going to read the last half, which states that "all Canadians deserve an equal opportunity to succeed in the digital economy as a matter of fundamental fairness". Conservatives absolutely agree. ISED has put forward a proposal that would actually claw back the 3,500 megahertz spectrum from many rural areas. This would cause complete hardship in those rural areas.

Does the member agree with his government's approach right now that proposes clawing it back to be given to telecommunications companies that would redeploy it in more urban settings for 5G rollout? Is that about fundamental fairness? If so, why is his government proceeding? Does the member support that path?

• (1905)

Mr. William Amos: Madam Speaker, the Telecommunications Act reform question is a really important one, and since I have a very short period of time to respond I will go directly to that.

The motion is not specifically about the Telecommunications Act reform. It is specifically to help build our parliamentary debate around the topic and to help inform that law reform process. I do think that there are aspects of the Telecommunications Act that need to be examined and, in particular, how it is implemented, because it is not just what is written in the black and white letter of the law. It is how it is interpreted, including by the regulatory body, the CRTC.

One aspect that needs to be examined is section 7, particularly how the aspects of access are balanced with issues of affordability. There are questions around how directives have been provided, in particular by the previous government around competition, that merit serious consideration.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the CRTC decision is quite clear in terms of creating two sets of standards for Canadians: one for rural Canadians and one for urban Canadians. Rural Canadians are now to get, under the CRTC decision, basically second-class citizenship for the actual rollout, not only of 5G but also in terms of general standards. I would like to know how the member feels about that and whether he is going to challenge his minister and the government because they have been silent on that and that sets the footprint for expectations for companies in terms of what they are doing.

In fact, the CRTC today ruled in favour of a number of consumers and organizations in a CBC report that exposed practices that have a lot of malfeasance with regard to their approach to Canadians, including ripping them off in terms of pricing, intimidating them on the phone and so forth.

I would like to know from the member if he is going to challenge his own government because it is clear from the CRTC decision that it is going to make rural Canadians second-class citizens. His government has yet to answer as to why it is not speaking out on this.

Mr. William Amos: Madam Speaker, the CRTC absolutely needs to be a contributing player as we look at how rural Canada can be better served. It was a very positive development when, in 2016, it completed its review of Internet in rural Canada. "Let's Talk Broadband Internet!" was how it was named. It said it would come forward with a fund, paid for by telecommunications companies, and that fund amounts to \$750 million over five years. I think that is an interesting step forward. Is it enough, though? That is a big question because we are going to need more than \$750 million to cover off some of the needs of rural Canada.

There is also the question around how to finance not just the Internet side of things but the cellular side of things. There are some major questions to be asked, and this is not just a legislative question, as I said before. This is a regulatory question and we need to have Parliament debating this, not simply leave it to the regulator or leave it to the government. All Canadians want to be heard.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak to Motion No. 208, put forward by the member for Pontiac. I certainly am pleased to stand up not just for my constituents of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola but to talk about an issue that is very near and dear to many people in rural and remote areas throughout this great country. I will go through it and address some of the points that have been raised.

I think it is important to spotlight that this motion highlights the Liberal government's failure to ensure that rural and remote Canadians have access to high-speed Internet. As confirmed last year by the Auditor General, the current Liberal government has no plan to meet the connectivity needs of Canadians living in rural and remote communities. In fact, the report found that the government's current programs do not ensure maximum expansion for public money spent. This is well documented in the report by the Auditor General. One of the most fundamental issues is that it has not addressed getting full value for money that has been spent.

Canadians deserve better than just vague promises and commitments to get a plan to have a plan. That was the government's response to the Auditor General.

The Liberals have added a new minister for rural economic development. However, having a minister address an issue that she has no formal authority over, with a mandate letter stating that she needs to coordinate with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, among two other ministers, to see any progress on this file, to me points to the fact that this is an eleventh-hour effort.

Going to the actual text of the motion, it states:

(a) a reliable and accessible digital infrastructure, from broadband Internet to wireless telecommunications and beyond, is essential and enables Canadians to seize new business opportunities, create jobs and connect with the global economy;

The Conservatives absolutely agree with that.

It continues:

(b) a reliable and accessible digital infrastructure, particularly wireless telecommunications infrastructure, plays a critical role in securing the health and safety of Canadians, notably during emergency situations caused by extreme weather events;

When we had the tornado last year in the Ottawa-Gatineau area, there was a lot of public outcry, because in many cases, people were not able to communicate via their cellphones. Because the Conservative members of the industry committee and I had concerns, we put forward a motion to study this area. Unfortunately, the Liberals did not find it noteworthy. I will give the member for Pontiac a tip of the hat for taking on a serious issue, because I know there was quite a lot of concern. Canadians deserve to know a bit more about this area, so I hope the Liberal members will allow for a thorough study of this.

I had mentioned this in my question to the member opposite. The motion states:

(c) innovation occurs everywhere, in rural and remote regions just as much as in urban centres, and all Canadians deserve an equal opportunity to succeed in the digital economy as a matter of fundamental fairness;

We heard about the clawback from the deputy minister when I asked at committee about the 3,500 megahertz. I asked if he would make a commitment to the Canadian people, particularly those who would be affected by such a clawback, that he would not jeopardize their connectivity and claw it back and give to someone else in a way that would put rural and remote people in a tenuous situation. He said he would do his darnedest.

The current government has a tendency to over-promise and under-deliver. I have to say that while it is really good to hear members talk about rural Canadians and remote areas, it is not so much a matter of what we say in this place but what the government does. Therefore, it is incredibly important that the government start listening to members of Parliament on this issue.

Obviously, I will not be able to go through the whole motion. However, I want to also talk a bit about (e), which states:

the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology should be instructed to undertake a comprehensive study on rural wireless infrastructure, focusing...on (i) the underlying causes of, and prospective solutions to the gaps in wireless infrastructure deployment in rural Canada,

● (1910)

This is a noteworthy item for us to study, but, again, I would go back to what a member from the NDP raised earlier. When the CRTC put forward its own standard of a download speed of 50 megabits throughout Canada, curiously enough the \$750-million fund being paid for by telecommunication companies changed when they looked at starting to roll it out. By the way, the companies take that money from consumers, which is an important point. In fact, the standard will not be at 50 megabits for rural areas. In some cases, the CRTC said that 25 megabits was acceptable. This is an area we need to really look into. Also, the Auditor General's report requires us to look into these things more.

I have talked a little about the late hour of this. I am sure both committees will do a study on this as it is a complex issue. We have good people who we can call upon to present possible solutions. However, by the time we table these reports, if they are successfully done, summer already will be starting. Obviously, this is an election year. The study will probably end up on a shelf and it will be up to the next government to deal with it. Of course, I believe it will be a government led by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

To me, it seems the Liberals are simply going to use this as a bit of a staging process for electoral promises. We know about the government's inability to keep most of its promises from the last election. To make this an electoral issue would be unsatisfying for everyone here. If we are taking the time and energy to work on a complex issue, we hope to see some action.

All aspects of our modern interconnected economy require stable Internet access. As I have said, the government has failed in its responsibility to support rural and remote Canadians. It has left people in rural and remote communities to fend for themselves when it comes to connectivity. I think all of us believe that needs to change.

Private Members' Business

The Conservative Party will support the motion because it is essential to find solutions to address Liberal failures on rural and remote Internet access. Canadians cannot continue to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, I look forward to this study. I hope the public safety committee is also able to look at the issue of emergency preparedness and how it relates.

All of us can imagine the sheer powerlessness we would feel if we gave a phone to our children and we were unable to connect with them during an emergency such as an earthquake or, as we saw in the Ottawa-Gatineau area, a tornado. I hope we are able to look into that issue and bring some strong resolutions forward.

Again, I point out that this seems to be a late in the hour Hail Mary pass by the government. It has stalled on so many of aspects of its promises, and Canadians deserve better. They should not have to be constantly paying for the Prime Minister's mistakes. I look forward to hearing the debate unfold tonight.

• (1915)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to the importance of high-speed Internet to the people living in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, and to all Canadians.

The Internet has become an integral part of modern life and an essential driver of the knowledge economy, yet there is a digital divide preventing Canadians in rural and remote areas from getting the full benefits of new technologies.

The failure of the federal government to make sufficient investments in digital infrastructure impacts Canadians' quality of life, compromises public safety and limits innovation and economic growth. In 2019, reliable high-speed Internet should be an essential service, available to everyone no matter their address.

As a former mayor of Cranbrook, I understand municipal infrastructure needs and the funding models local governments are working with. While infrastructure programs have traditionally focused on sewer, water, roads and storm drains, it was evident even a decade ago that high-speed Internet access needs to be considered as fundamental infrastructure. Unfortunately, in rural and remote areas the private sector business case for investing in digital infrastructure is not the same as it is for higher density urban areas. With market forces failing to connect rural Canada, it falls to government to provide this essential service.

The Canadian Federation of Municipalities represents municipalities making up more than 90% of the population, and almost 80% of its members have fewer than 10,000 residents. It is championing rural connectivity and is calling on the federal government to do its part.

Across Canada, for every dollar collected in taxes roughly 50¢ goes to the federal government, 42¢ to provincial governments and 8¢ to municipalities, yet municipalities are responsible for 70% of all infrastructure. This is not sustainable for meeting traditional infrastructure needs, nor for meeting the digital infrastructure needs of the 21st century.

When municipalities seek infrastructure funding from higher levels of government they are generally required to match funds. The typical breakdown is one-third federal, one-third provincial and one-third municipal funding. This poses a major challenge. For small communities like Cranbrook, which has about 20,000 people, generating \$1 million of new funds for a capital project could mean a 4% increase in property taxes. Even generating the funds to produce shelf-ready plans required for government grants is a barrier.

The burden for getting rural communities connected with high-speed Internet should not fall mostly on these communities. The federal government needs to step up and give this issue the priority it deserves if Canada is to be able to compete in the knowledge economy.

In 2016, the CRTC set a standard for adequate download and upload speeds. While 96% of urban Canadians had access to those speeds, only 39% of those in rural and remote areas did, and 5.4 million Canadians were paying for substandard service. While some progress has been made, there is much work to be done. The Canadian Federation of Municipalities estimates more than two million Canadians cannot access a reliable Internet connection.

However, an Internet connection alone is no longer enough. Many of the technologies moving society forward require high-speed Internet. Traditional sectors like forestry, mining and hydro need to go high tech to stay competitive. Farmers too are looking to new technologies. High-speed Internet is becoming key to maximizing crop production and reducing climate change impacts. Online learning has become increasingly popular for retraining or upgrading credentials. Also, e-health delivery is expected to be utilized more in the coming years and could greatly benefit those who would need to travel long distances to access care and those who cannot find a family doctor.

While house prices have increased in urban centres, the lack of digital infrastructure may present a barrier to young Canadians considering relocating to rural communities. By contrast, adequate digital infrastructure can improve telework opportunities and promote work-life balance for young families.

In 2016-17, I conducted a series of small business forums in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia where owners identified the need for improved broadband connectivity for day-to-day business operations.

● (1920)

Paul, who manages a self-employment program in Nelson, recently explained the challenge of inadequate Internet in the area. The program's federal funding has been substantially reduced, however, video broadcasting and conferencing cannot be delivered in much of its operating area where some clients rely on dial-up or spotty over-air Internet connections.

This is not just a problem for businesses, though. One of my staff, Trina, is a school board trustee. She says that rural Internet is a challenge for many school districts across the province. Inadequate Internet access negatively impacts the technologies teachers can use in the classroom and limits the ability of students to complete homework.

Meanwhile, David from Wardner wrote me simply to say that he wanted the same unlimited data packages available for rural Internet customers that were offered in urban communities.

Lack of cellphone coverage has also been repeatedly raised by local governments and constituents. In rural British Columbia, it represents a public safety issue for those travelling remote, mountainous terrain who may need emergency help.

The St. Mary's Valley Rural Residents Association wrote me to advocate for improved wireless phone service in the area which was used for recreation, small businesses, logging and mining. The need to call for emergency assistance can arise from auto or industrial accidents, avalanches, etc. The ability to promptly report forest fires is also a concern.

While I support the intent of the member for Pontiac's Motion No. 208 and will vote in favour of it, we do not need more studies on rural digital infrastructure.

The chair of the Kootenay Boundary Regional Broadband Committee, Rob Gay, recently told me that around 60% of the region was currently covered by high-speed internet, mostly in the more urban communities. He said that in Kootenay Columbia they did not need another study, that they knew what needed to happen, which was they needed the federal government to continue to provide funding.

In the final year of the government's mandate, directing two standing committees to study this issue only serves to delay the action rural Canadians need now. These Canadians want a strategy, with timelines for getting people connected and the funding to make it happen.

In April 2018, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology presented a report titled, "Broadband Connectivity in Rural Canada: Overcoming the Digital Divide." This report was two years in the making and resulted in 12 recommendations to improve connectivity in rural Canada. There are sensible recommendations in this report, such as simplifying access to federal funding for non-traditional network operators, like local governments.

Last fall, the Auditor General released a report, "Connectivity in Rural and Remote Areas" which found Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada had accurate and detailed information on the current state of connectivity in Canada. The report found

Private Members' Business

that the department did not have a strategy for working towards universal connectivity.

The Auditor General highlighted the need for a national strategy with timelines. The standing committee's report also called for the development of a strategy as well as the need to integrate issues such as affordability and digital literacy. Despite repeated calls for a national strategy, the Auditor General found the department was reluctant to do so without the funding to implement it.

This leads to the other critical piece of the puzzle, which is adequate funding is needed to fill in where market forces will not. The CRTC estimates it will cost about \$7 billion to achieve universal connectivity. The Canadian Federation of Municipalities has called on the federal government to commit \$4 billion over the next 10 years.

The government has so far committed \$500 million through its connect to innovate program, which is appreciated but falls far short of what is needed. Meanwhile, the same government purchased an aging pipeline for \$4.5 billion.

The CRTC recently launched another fund aimed at improving rural connectivity, but set the minimum speeds for eligible projects at half the basic service objectives established in 2016. An overarching goal should be to reduce the disparity between urban and rural Canadians.

The 2018 budget focused on strategic innovation, but did little to promote the growth of broadband in rural communities. The more the digital divide grows due to inaction, the greater the economic and social costs.

While I support the member for Pontiac's efforts to bring attention to this issue, the NDP calls on the government to make the overdue substantial investment in rural connectivity a priority in the 2019 federal budget. Rural Canadians deserve no less.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1983, my parents had an Osborne laptop with a detachable keyboard, a four-inch screen and dual five-and-a-quarter-inch floppy disk drives that could read 90-kilobyte disks.

In 1987, their company, Immeubles Doncaster in Saint-Agathe-des-Monts, got one of the first fax machines in the region. Since Bell Canada did not know quite what to do with this new technology, it gave every company nearly identical fax numbers. One company's fax number was 326-8819, ours was 326-8829, and another company's was 326-8839. I do not know what we would have done if there had been more fax machines.

Private Members' Business

Around 1988, my father had a Cantel car phone installed in his 1985 Chevette. The phone cost almost as much as the car. It had to be installed semi-permanently in the trunk with an antenna attached to the rear window. We always had the latest technology at home. We got email when it was first introduced to the market by CompuServe in the 1990s. We were able to communicate with other users through a dial-up connection. We had to make a long-distance call to Montreal to get it to work, but it worked. I still have our first family email address memorized. It was 76171.1725@compuserve.com.

Analog cell service was good enough to meet our needs. The signal dropped from time to time, but we could make calls. With our antenna, we could listen to CBC and Radio-Canada radio stations fairly well and watch a few television channels. To change the channel, my father would climb the ladder and turn the antenna with pliers, and we would use two-way radios to tell him when the signal came in.

We lived in a rural area, in Sainte-Lucie-des-Laurentides. That is where I grew up and where I still live today. My family was fully connected to the latest technology. Life was good. At the end of 1994, the digital divide had not yet affected the regions entirely.

Fast forward to 2000, the Internet was still on dial-up. The first satellite services had not yet arrived. I moved to Ontario to study computer science at the University of Guelph. I had learned Linux in high school and was involved in the freeware community. I found Rogers cable high-speed Internet readily available. Bell DSL followed a few years later, and at that time I switched over to a small reseller named Magma Communications. In 2004, I was living in a city where high-speed Internet was available, while Xplornet satellite service was starting up in the regions. My parents subscribed to the service after a year of suffering with Internet through ExpressVu, which used dial-up to send and satellite to receive. The digital divide was huge.

In 2001, my family and I visited my grandfather's childhood home in Turkey. When we arrived at Atatürk Airport, I heard cellphones around me going: dot-dot-dot-dash-dash-dot-dot-dot. I knew Morse code, so I wondered what an SMS was and why we did not have them back home. When we returned, my grandfather gave me my first cellphone, a digital analog Qualcomm through Telus.

As I am involved in the world of freeware, as an administrator of IRC networks and a journalist in the sector, I need the power to communicate with colleagues around the world. While everyone was texting internationally, my Telus phone could not send a text outside its own network. When I called customer service, I was told to use the web browser on my phone, which barely worked, and to go the website of the company that provided service to the person to whom I wanted to send a text message, and to use their form.

I did not remain a Telus customer for long. I quickly switched to Microcell, a cell company on the GSM worldwide network, which operated under the name Fido and offered the ability to send and receive texts internationally, except with its competitors in Canada. The problem with Fido was that the service was only available in cities. It was not profitable to install towers in rural areas. When I travelled, I could only communicate in the Toronto and Montreal metropolitan areas.

The digital divide also affected telephone service. In 2003, I purchased a PCMCIA card for my laptop. For \$50 a month, I had unlimited Internet access on something called the GPRS platform. It was not quick, but it worked. That service also worked in the U.S. at no additional cost. With that technology, I wrote a little program connecting the maritime GPS in my server in order to create a web page tracking my movements with just a few seconds' delay.

In November 2004, Rogers bought Fido and, for an additional fee, provided service in the regions served by Rogers. After that, the Rogers-Fido GPRS system began cutting out after being connected for precisely 12 minutes, except in the Ottawa area, where it did not cut out. Was that so that the legislators in the capital would not notice? Thus began my mistrust in large telecommunications companies.

In 2006 I attended my brother Jonah and sister-in-law Tracy's wedding in Nairobi. After the wedding, our whole family went on safari. In the middle of the Maasai Mara, cellphones worked properly. That was an "a-ha" moment for me.

● (1930)

By 2006, after the digital shift, the cellular service we had in the Laurentians in the 1980s had almost completely disappeared. We were regressing as the digital divide grew wider.

Today, in 2019, I have boosters on both of my cars. At home, we have a booster on the roof to help us get by. What is more, our wireless Internet is expensive, slow and unreliable.

Many communities in my riding of Laurentides—Labelle still do not have any cell service. Telecommunications companies plan to do away with long-standing pager services, which will no longer exist in Canada by next summer. Dial-up, satellite and wireless Internet is available in the region, but it is slow and unreliable.

There is no obvious solution. As a result of spectrum auctions and spectrum management, small companies and local co-operatives cannot access the cell market to fill in those gaps. What is more, the large corporations do not want to see new stakeholders enter the market, even though they are not interested in resolving the issue themselves.

That is causing major problems. Our economic growth is suffering, young people are leaving and businesses and self-employed workers are reluctant to set up shop in the region. Emergency services have to find creative ways of communicating with first responders, volunteer firefighters.

The situation is critical. The study we are talking about in Motion No. 208 is so urgent that I would ask the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, of which I am a member, not to wait for this motion moved by my colleague from Pontiac to be adopted before beginning its study.

Private Members' Business

In closing, I would like to read the resolution that I received last week from one of the fire departments in my riding, which urged me to do something about the cell service in the region. They used the example of the Vendée community. Bell Canada is a company that was initially largely funded by the Crown. However, it has completely lost its social conscience. Bell offered to help the community only if the municipality covered 100% of the cost to install a telecommunication tower even though the Bell Canada Act states:

The works of the Company are hereby declared to be works for the general advantage of Canada.

Here is resolution 2019-01-256 in its entirety:

WHEREAS the Northwest Laurentians Fire Department, composed of the territories of the municipalities of the townships of Amherst, Arundel, Huberdeau, La Conception, Lac-Supérieur, La Minerve, Montcalm and Saint-Faustin-Lac-Carré, was created following the signing of an intermunicipal agreement for the organization, operation and administration of a fire service;

WHEREAS the municipality of Amherst, Vendée sector, has been experiencing various problems and deficiencies with cellphone coverage for more than two (2) years;

WHEREAS the pager technology used by firefighters and first responders will no longer be supported as of June;

WHEREAS the only technology that is supported and used by the Fire Department is cellphone technology;

WHEREAS the Vendée sector has close to 1,000 permanent and/or seasonal residents who are being deprived of adequate public safety services;

WHEREAS 80% of the population of Vendée consists of retirees and this demographic is more likely to need emergency services;

WHEREAS the Fire Department has approached Bell Canada and the federal member of Parliament [for Laurentides—Labelle] on this matter;

WHEREAS in 2017 and 2018, the municipality of Amherst approached the federal MP [for Laurentides—Labelle], the then MNA Sylvain Pagé, the department of public safety, the Sûreté du Québec, Bell Canada and the RCM of Laurentides on this matter;

WHEREAS the situation has reached a critical point for public safety for these residents;

THEREFORE it is moved by Steve Perreault, seconded by Richard Pépin, and unanimously resolved by the members present;

THAT the board of directors of the Fire Department support the actions of the municipality of Amherst.

THAT the board of directors call on the federal government, via the member for Laurentides—Labelle...to intercede with the authorities responsible for the public telephone network to require the implementation of cellular service in the Vendée sector by companies operating in this field.

ADOPTED at the meeting of January 17, 2019

We have work to do, and we cannot wait any longer. Companies are putting the lives of my constituents and rural Canadians at risk. That is unacceptable. 5G is not a magic bullet that will fix everything.

We need to take serious action, starting with this study.

• (1935)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Motion No. 208.

I am also very pleased to see that some people on the other side of the House have had easy access to the Internet their whole lives. However, it is another story in rural areas.

It is now 2019, but it is difficult to access the waves, or signals, in rural areas. It all depends on the lay of the land and on whether you

are in a hilly or mountainous area or on flat ground, because that can also affect the signals.

I would like to point out that having wireless Internet infrastructure in rural areas is vital. It is vital to the survival of our communities and of our world and to the economy we want to develop.

Connectivity is an important issue in the riding of Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix. It is just as important in all rural areas. There is an urgent need for access. However, this is not as easy as it seems.

Major companies such as Vidéotron and Bell do not want to go into rural areas because there are not enough potential clients. However, whether there are 10,000 or 50,000, it is now 2019, and everyone relies on high-speed Internet today.

It is clearly an extremely important tool. Everyone is connected to the Internet. That is easy in a place like Ottawa, but in my neck of the woods, in Saint-Urbain, which lies between two mountains, access is not a given.

I was very happy to have my riding host the G7. We got a lovely gift from the party opposite. They government built us some very nice towers. Unfortunately, it does not work in Saint-Urbain because we are between two mountains. Mayors and reeves even contacted the current government to say that their towers are great and everything, but in some parts of Charlevoix there is still no signal. Access is still a challenge.

Infrastructure is clearly of vital importance. I would like to thank the member for moving Motion No. 208, but I just want to point out that a motion was moved at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and the Liberals voted against it. Just now, they were talking about how this motion is important, but when a motion was moved at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, the Liberals voted against it.

I would like someone to explain to my why our colleagues opposite voted against it. It is important. One of their members thinks it is so important he wants to have a debate in the House.

I think we have debated long enough. We need to get on with fixing a problem that has been around for a long time.

• (1940)

Sadly, high-speed Internet moves faster than legislators. We need to catch up to 2018, 2019 and 2020. We need to do better. There are certainly a number of factors to consider, like the CRTC, wireless Internet service providers and governments, which can also implement some things. However, we must move faster than endless debates and committee meetings. We have heard from everyone. We are in rural areas and we hear from businesses and ordinary people. Seniors are less concerned, since they feel they cannot keep pace with the Internet and new technologies. However, members of new generation, the one after ours, need the Internet and new technologies in their everyday lives.

Adjournment Proceedings

Consequently, I support Motion No. 208. I can hardly be against it, because my riding needs these services. However, this should be automatic. Today, we need to move beyond debates and consultations. Most of the time, when a motion is drafted, on either side of the House, it gets sent to committee and then the people on the other side oppose it. It is time to rise above partisanship and work together to secure Internet access for rural communities from coast to coast so we can catch up to 2019. That is the reality. That is what we need.

I have been the rural affairs critic for a year and a half, and I am still happy to have this job. Two or three weeks ago, the Liberals appointed a Minister of Rural Economic Development. Kudos to them for finally noticing we exist. They have been in office for three and a half years now, and in all that time, they have never talked about rural Canada.

Today, a member representing the regions is talking to us about rural life and the need for all rural Canadians to be connected. I commend him, because that is what rural residents need. This issue transcends partisan politics. Our rural regions need to be connected to the Internet immediately so we can finally catch up to 2019.

If this motion is studied by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, I hope that there will be no partisanship and that we will work together to connect our rural areas to the reality of 2019.

• (1945)

The Speaker: The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was clear back in November 2018 that this Liberal government took its marching orders from the Canada Post Corporation management when the government passed its anti-worker back-to-work legislation. Now that the Canadian Union of Postal Workers has been once again stripped of its right to strike, we see that management is retreating from what was previously offered at the bargaining table. Why would they not? Management knows that there is undemocratic legislation passed and backed by the government that hurts the workers' right to take action.

I believe that the people of Canada are seeing that there is a trend here with this Liberal government. When well-connected corporate insiders at SNC-Lavalin need the scales to be tipped in their favour, their friends in the PMO are just one phone call away. When the Canada Post Corporation needs anti-worker legislation passed again, the PMO is just a phone call away. When insiders need someone, they know that this Liberal government, like the previous

Conservative government, is on their side. When workers need a champion, they know that New Democrats are with them.

We know that the legislation imposed by the Harper Conservatives back in 2011 was subsequently deemed in violation of the union's charter rights, yet our sunny ways Prime Minister had no qualms about following in Mr. Harper's footsteps to once again violate the union's charter rights. The members opposite, in debate, said, "No, no, this legislation is different." Well, I believe them on one point. I believe that they spent more time than the previous government did to write legislation that would get around the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and workers' rights to take action. Despite the Prime Minister's continued charade of supporting the collective bargaining process guaranteed under the charter, he has demonstrated no interest in resolving CUPW's concerns around workload, pay equity, health and safety, and harassment.

Let us examine just one of the issues this government has no interest in resolving. 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 carrying heavier loads. Today the disabling injury rate for a letter carrier is eight times the average for the rest of the public sector, a sector that includes longshoring, mining, road transport and railways.

Workplace injuries are avoidable and preventable. It is unconscionable that CUPW members must 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 they are unable to enjoy and in which to find rest, because there are not enough hours in the day to walk the routes Canada Post expects them to walk and maintain family life.

I believe there is a way forward. I challenge members to look into the initiatives around deliveringcommunitypower.ca. There they will find bold ideas to expand our affordable public services and deliver more. Our postal services can deliver medicines to those who cannot travel and help those who stay in their homes by delivering groceries and other necessities. We can expand postal offices to include charging stations for electric vehicles, make post offices community hubs for digital access and social innovation, and connect communities and climate-friendly businesses to customers. We can also expand Canada Post to offer postal banking that invests in our communities and helps to maintain those services people depend on.

• (1950)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the member's speech, and I recognize her advocacy on behalf of Canada Post.

Adjournment Proceedings

The base of the member's advocacy is to ensure that vitality and a great workplace continues to exist at Canada Post. The government is very committed to that. In fact, we are so committed to it that we undertook major consultations. Both an independent task force and extensive parliamentary hearings were undertaken in terms of a vision for Canada Post. That work yielded a lot of thinking and a lot of good results. In fact, we scrapped the plans of the previous government and brought back to Canada Post a very clear vision, a renewed board of directors and new management. That work continues, and we will continue to travel along that path.

We are putting service front and centre for Canadians. Our vision ensures that Canada Post will remain relevant and sustainable over the long term, continuing to provide good, valued services and good middle-class jobs to Canadians from coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

Canada Post will bring this vision to life by investing in innovation, experimentation and pilot projects to establish best practices. The corporation will also have to follow market trends, adopt new technologies and adapt to the needs and expectations of Canadians.

We will also have to be creative and explore the opportunities for various partnerships within the Government of Canada, and in other administrations and communities to benefit from the unique Canada Post retail network, as recommended by the task force and the standing committee.

[*English*]

The question of whether Canadians would benefit from postal banking has already been the subject of both a thorough review by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and an in-depth independent task force. Both the committee and the task force came to virtually the same conclusions: Canadians do not need postal banking and Canada Post should not add it to its business line.

While I do appreciate the member for London—Fanshawe's concerns for those in indigenous and rural communities, the evidence does not back up the claim that these communities lack access to banking services.

First of all, the independent task force surveyed Canadians from coast to coast to coast. The survey found that 60% thought that full-scale postal banking would be a poor fit for Canada Post. Of those who liked the idea of postal banking, only 7% said they would "certainly use" postal banking services. Also, that task force found that approximately 99% of Canadians already have banking accounts and 69% pay their bills online.

[*Translation*]

If that were not enough proof, the standing committee found much the same thing. The committee held public hearings from coast to coast to coast and heard directly from more than 200 witnesses—individuals and representatives of communities, associations, unions and businesses—on a variety of issues, including postal banking.

The committee heard, among other things, that the number of credit union members who use their branches in rural areas has

dropped significantly in recent years as more and more members conduct their financial transactions online or with mobile apps.

● (1955)

[*English*]

Moreover, in its report, that committee recommended, "Canada Post focus on its core competencies to help Canada meet the challenges of the 21st century."

Therefore, the evidence from both the committee and the independent task force have shown that Canadians would not see any benefit from having the option of doing their banking at their post offices.

With respect to collective bargaining, perhaps we will get to that in a moment.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that we have banks closing all over this country but there is no problem. When I travel around my riding, I see more and more payday lenders.

I find constituents who need banking services that are affordable, yet I hear from the Liberals and Conservatives that they do not believe there is a problem. There are reports that were never released. They covered them up. They hid them because they are out of touch with the reality of Canadians. They are out of touch and they have been for decades because they have been so busy pandering to Bay Street millionaires and friends. They have ignored the needs of the people in our communities.

I want bold ideas, like the ones that I have been describing in "Delivering Community Power". I believe that Canadians need a government that is on their side like the New Democrats. I can tell my colleagues that there will be a government on their side, a New Democratic government after the next election.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, let me sum up with respect to Canada Post.

We have established a clear vision. We stopped the Harper cuts. We restored home mail delivery. We changed the board of directors and the CEO of the corporation, with a mandate to restore respect in the workplace and a safe, respectful workplace, indeed, at Canada Post.

Obviously, it goes without saying that with collective bargaining, hitting as it did a roadblock, we had to unglue that with an arbitration process, one that I am sure will yield a fair collective agreement at Canada Post.

Following that, I know the management and the men and women of Canada Post will continue to work together to create a sustainable, long-term productive Canada Post that serves Canadians, wherever they may live, for generations to come.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not very often do late shows but this matter is of such great significance that I decided it was important to raise the matter again in this place.

Adjournment Proceedings

On November 2 of last year, I raised a question with the government about the rapidly escalating costs for the cleanup of abandoned wells and mine sites. As the federal government regulates bankruptcy, I called on the government to act on demands made by the Government of Alberta and others to amend the federal bankruptcy and creditor laws to give higher priority to environmental cleanup and put an end to the downloading of these costs to Canadians.

The Alberta regulator had argued in the case of Redwater that the trustee was obligated to remediate disclaimed wells in Alberta before distributing any funds to creditors. The number of abandoned wells in my province of Alberta alone and the liability for cleanup has escalated to an estimated 80,000 wells and tens of billions in liability. The estimated cost to reclaim oil sands mine tailings is somewhere between \$47 billion and \$100 billion. If an oil sands company went bankrupt, a significant cost of the cleanup would fall to taxpayers.

The then parliamentary secretary for natural resources responded by saying Canadian resources must be developed in a sustainable way so that economic growth and environmental protection go hand in hand. How often we hear that.

He then, as has become the government's common refrain, passed the buck to the provinces, saying they are the ones responsible for managing their own environmental liabilities and the federal role is simply to share best practices. An amazing response considering bankruptcy law is federal. He shared that his government did commit \$30 million in budget 2017, when the cost, according to some people, is \$260 billion, in support of Alberta's efforts to advance the reclamation of orphan wells.

In January of this year, the Supreme Court of Canada issued its decision on the Redwater case. That case involved a dispute over who under bankruptcy law should be given priority of claim for an abandoned oil or gas well. Should priority be given to banks to recover their investment or should a higher priority in claim go to the provinces who have issued orders for cleanup? The Alberta courts sided with the creditors, in other words, the banks.

However, the Supreme Court of Canada overturned this decision and held that Alberta's environmental regulatory regime can coexist alongside the scheme of distribution under bankruptcy law. The court stated that bankruptcy is not a licence to ignore rules and the company has remedial obligations that are not claims provable in bankruptcy. It held that a trustee does not have the power to walk away from environmental liabilities.

Of equal concern is the government's response to questions posed by my colleagues to the effect that the government says it plans to assess potential impacts of the court ruling on Canada's marketplace framework and the Canadian economy. There was no mention of ensuring bankruptcy laws put environmental protection first.

My further questions this evening include the following: What actions has the government taken to assess any potential federal environmental liabilities for the following activities, and as a result of this court ruling, has it initiated any review of the potential issues or any gaps in federal laws regarding abandoned mines, wells or other operations on federal lands or on lands subject to a transfer

agreement, including in the Northwest Territories and Yukon, or on Indian reserves or traditional lands? Is the government reviewing abandoned offshore wells where there is joint federal-provincial regulatory authorities? Finally, has the federal government established orphan well funds similar to the provinces for these facilities?

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for her question and her position on this very important issue.

As a government, we have clearly indicated that we will hold companies responsible for their pollution. That is why I am so pleased to have the opportunity to reiterate our government's position today. That is why we enshrined the polluter pays principle by passing the Pipeline Safety Act. That is why we insisted that companies show that they have the financial capacity to respond in the event of a spill. That is why that act provides for no-fault liability. The Supreme Court of Canada confirmed and clarified this approach.

[*English*]

At the same time, the ruling highlights the complexity of this issue, including the intersection between provincial jurisdiction over natural resources and their federal responsibilities under Canada's bankruptcy laws.

We are mindful that this is not a black and white issue. No company should have a licence to pollute or to walk away from its responsibilities under the cover of bankruptcy. On the other hand, we understand that a requirement to prioritize remediation ahead of repaying secured creditors could affect the willingness of banks and other creditors to lend, thereby making it more difficult to finance projects, create jobs and drive economic growth.

What is more, a requirement to remediate could affect the value of banks and creditor companies in which millions of Canadians have a stake through their mutual funds and various retirement investments.

These challenges were reflected in two lower court rulings that held that secured creditors should be paid before the company foot the bill for cleaning up its orphaned wells.

It took a full year for the Supreme Court to deliver its ruling on the matter and, in the end, it too was divided, by a count of five to two, with Chief Justice Richard Wagner writing the majority's decision to overturn the two lower court rulings.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

Our government is reviewing the decision with the understanding that economic prosperity and environmental protections go hand in hand, and that each makes the other possible. Our government understands how important the energy sector is, which is why we have taken such strong measures to help keep our oil and gas sector competitive, to improve its sustainability and to empower it. This helps create the jobs we need and, at the same time, protect the environment we love so much. We will continue to work with the provinces to ensure that the companies developing Canada's natural resources also have the tools they need to respond in the event of an incident.

● (2005)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, from the response I received, it appears that the government of the day supports the position taken by the courts of Alberta and two of the Supreme Court justices, who seem to continue to decide that the banks should take priority over members of the public who have to take on the cost when facilities are abandoned.

I note that the hon. member speaks of abandoned pipelines. Into the future, that is of course going to be a concern because at some point in time we are going to have a lot of abandoned pipelines. However, that is not the question I raised.

The particular concern I raised is that as a result of this case, talking about the liability for facilities generally regulated at the provincial level, what is the federal government doing to look into facilities that are owned or regulated by the federal government? What is it doing to look into offshore wells? What is it doing to look into activities on federal lands or on Indian lands?

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, our government has made it clear that the environment and the economy must go hand in hand, period. Historically, Canadian insolvency laws have taken that into account by balancing environmental obligations and the ability of Canadian companies to restructure and maintain jobs while ensuring that secured creditors are treated fairly.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruling gave us a new perspective on the issue. Our government is taking the time to review the court's decision and consider its impact on Canada, the Canadian people and our economy.

In closing, we all want the same thing: a country that creates good jobs and healthy, prosperous communities.

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, the question that prompts this evening's adjournment debate was whether the government would enact a carbon tariff. The context for this question is that the federal government has enacted a national price on carbon. One of the main concerns about a national carbon price is that it could prompt carbon-intensive industries to relocate to other countries that do not put a price on emissions. That would increase global emissions while eliminating Canadian jobs. Adjust-

ing our carbon pricing at the border with a carbon tariff on imports and a rebate on exports would safeguard Canadian jobs while ensuring that our carbon pricing actually helps to reduce global emissions. I think this concept of carbon border adjustments can be illustrated with the help of an example.

Producing a tonne of steel in China and shipping it here emits about five times as much carbon as manufacturing it at the EVRAZ mill in Regina. However, if we just put a price on Canadian emissions, that would tend to increase the price of Regina-made steel, creating an incentive for consumers to instead use dirtier steel from China. This would eliminate Canadian jobs and actually increase global emissions.

By comparison, if we had a national carbon price with a corresponding carbon tariff, it would increase the price of steel imports from China by more than it would increase the price of Regina-made steel. This would create an environmentally appropriate incentive for Canadians to buy local. In a nutshell, that is what is being proposed with a carbon tariff.

The government certainly recognizes that there is a challenge with competitiveness, and what the government has proposed instead of adjusting carbon pricing at the border, is to basically rebate between 80% and 90% of carbon tax revenues directly to the large emitters. The government is essentially on board with the idea of some sort of rebate to large emitters and wants to base it on their output rather than on the amount that they export. The government is prepared to undertake this huge cost, which will come at the expense of the consumer rebates that the government has proposed to try to make carbon pricing more palatable.

What I feel the government is missing out on is the potential to collect its carbon price on the carbon content of imports from countries that do not price emissions. This carbon tariff would help to ensure a level playing field, as I have described, but it would also collect revenues to help offset the cost of whatever funds are rebated to industry, either through the government's existing output-based rebates or through an export rebate as I have proposed.

By fully adjusting Canada's carbon price at the border, including a carbon tariff on imports, the government could help to protect Canadian jobs, help to reduce global emissions and also collect more revenue to fund greater rebates to all Canadians.

● (2010)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal carbon pollution pricing system is not about raising revenues. It is about recognizing that pollution has a cost, empowering Canadians and encouraging cleaner growth and a more sustainable future. That is why for provinces that have not committed to pricing carbon pollution, the federal government will return the majority of direct proceeds from the regulatory charge on fuel in the form of climate action incentive payments directly to individuals and families in the province of origin.

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Climate action incentive payments enable the government to encourage lower greenhouse gas emissions without imposing a financial burden on households. In Saskatchewan, these payments are estimated to be worth \$305 for individuals and \$598 for a family of four in 2019, rising to \$731 for individuals and \$1,459 for a family of four by 2022. Additional top-up payments will be available to address the additional burden placed on individuals in small and rural communities.

Additionally, a smaller portion of funds collected through the backstop in these four provinces will be used to fund programming to help small and medium-sized businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities, universities, schools, hospitals and indigenous recipients reduce their energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions, while also saving on energy costs.

Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, the federal carbon pollution pricing system has two parts: a regulatory charge on fuel, and a regulatory trading system for large industry called the federal output-based pricing system. The federal output-based pricing system is designed to ensure there is a price incentive for large industrial emitters to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and spur innovation while maintaining competitiveness and protecting against carbon leakage.

The federal output-based pricing system went into effect on January 1, 2019, in Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and partially in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has proposed a pricing system for some of its industries based on an output-based performance standards approach. The federal OBPS will fill in the gaps in that province by covering the emission sources not covered by Saskatchewan's system, for example, the electricity and natural gas transmission pipeline sectors.

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary sang the praises of the government's climate action rebate and I agree it makes sense to rebate money to households. In fact, I am putting forward a proposal for the government to deliver even bigger rebates.

The fundamental issue that has not been addressed is the question of imports versus Canadian-made products. Yes, the government has implemented this output-based pricing scheme to try to prevent Canadian industry from being displaced out of the country by the national carbon price. However, it has not done anything to ensure a level playing field between Canadian industry and products coming in from abroad, often from countries that do not price emissions.

Does the parliamentary secretary not agree that a carbon tariff would be a way of addressing that problem?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, allow me to highlight other major initiatives undertaken by this government to combat climate change. In June 2017, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change launched the low-carbon economy fund that includes \$1.4 billion to help provinces and territories deliver on commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote clean growth. This funding was available to all provinces and territories that adopted the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. Unfortunately, Saskatchewan chose to forgo this potential funding and not adopt the pan-Canadian framework.

In March 2018, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change launched the low-carbon economy challenge component of the low-carbon economy fund that will provide over \$500 million to provincial and territorial governments as well as municipalities, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and indigenous communities and organizations to fund projects that will reduce emissions, create jobs and fight climate change.

● (2015)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:16 p.m.)

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