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(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 10, 2019

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*English*]

ENDING THE CAPTIVITY OF WHALES AND DOLPHINS ACT

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion that Bill S-203, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts (ending the captivity of whales and dolphins), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to speak to this important issue today.

I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for bringing Bill S-203 to the House. The bill looks at the reality of phasing out the captivity of dolphins, whales and porpoises.

The riding that I represent, North Island—Powell River, is along the ocean, and these are beings that we live with. That interaction is very important to us. I think of the times I have spent watching this wildlife engage with us in their free natural state. It is important that we are talking about this issue here today.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my caucus colleague, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, for his dedication to the country's oceans, rivers and streams. His commitment to protecting the wildlife that lives within them has resonated with people across Canada. He will not be sitting in the House with us much longer, so it is important to acknowledge the work he has done on files like this one.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has always had a special place in my heart because he represents the area where I grew up. I really respect his connection with the communities in that largest of ridings in British Columbia.

A couple of weeks ago, the member came to my riding to talk about his private member's bill on zero-waste packaging. That issue is a huge concern in my riding. Packaging made of plastic takes so

long to deteriorate and we know the impact it is having on our oceans.

Without that member's work we would not be standing here today debating Bill S-203. I understand that he is working with the minister right now to push forward his important piece of legislation around zero-waste packaging. It deals with an important issue to make sure we do not fill our landfills with plastics anymore.

If it were not for the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley accepting a letter from me, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, our colleague from Victoria and Laurel Collins asking him to give up his spot on today's private members' hour, we would not be debating this bill today. I want to acknowledge that and thank him for continuing to work so hard on his zero waste packaging legislation. He will not give up, which is something that I appreciate deeply about the member.

Bill S-203 proposes to phase out the captivity of whales, dolphins and porpoises in Canada, except in situations like rehabilitation or rescue.

New Democrats will always support the ethical and useful research of these beings in the water, but the research can take place in the wild. Scientists in the wild environment can get a realistic view of the natural behaviours of these animals without causing a lifetime of pain and suffering, which we know is the reality when they are held in captivity.

What we have heard from scientists is that these beings suffer in confinement. They suffer a sense of isolation, serious health problems, reduced lifespans, high infant mortality rates, sensory deprivation, as well as trauma from the transfer to other parks and calf separation.

This bill speaks to an important issue where we can get it right and do the right thing. Given the evidence, captive facilities cannot provide for these beings' social or biological needs.

Keeping them in captivity is cruel. They are intelligent social animals. They are acoustically sensitive marine beings that spend their time in the vast oceans. They dive deep down to places many of us will never see.

Private Members' Business

When we look at their freedom in the wild, to swim freely, to dive deeply, when we think about their confinement, it is so much less. We have heard it is less than 1% of the range that they are used to. Can members imagine that? None of us in this place can imagine being in our environment, doing the things that we do, and suddenly being put into a small box and told that we have to be successful and perform for other people. We cannot ask these beings to do that.

It reminds me of what Maya Angelou said, "When you know better, do better." This is an opportunity in this House to move forward because we now know better, so it is time for us to do better.

Unlike many issues, this really is not a partisan issue. It is a moral issue. It is a bill that is supported by science. We know that whales, porpoises and dolphins in captivity suffer in a way that cannot be justifiable. We know that this bill, Bill S-203, is a reasonable one. It is a balanced piece of legislation. It grandfathers the process and it gives zoos and aquariums time to phase out this practice. This is the right thing to do and I hope everyone in this House takes the opportunity to support this.

When we think about the grandfathering process out of captivity that Bill S-203 proposes, we know it will do important things. It will ban live captures under the Fisheries Act, except for rescues when some being out there needs help. Currently, captures are legal if they are licensed. We all need to pause and take a moment to think about what that means. We know that the last capture that happened was belugas near Churchill in 1992, so it is a practice that is not being implemented. However, the fact that it is still there is very concerning, and this bill would remove it.

Bill S-203 also bans imports and exports, except if licensed for scientific research. This is a hard one, but we want to see an open water sanctuary. We want to see the process happen in a way that is best for the whale, the dolphin or the porpoise. We want to make sure it is under the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act. These are important factors that this bill can bring forward.

Finally, this bill would ban breeding under the animal cruelty provisions of the Criminal Code. This is also very important.

Right now there is a bill before the Senate, Bill C-68, that would prohibit the captures but it would not restrict imports or exports by law nor would it ban breeding. This is why we need this bill. This is why I will be supporting it. This is the action that needs to be taken to complete what is happening already.

Twenty marine mammal biologists from around the world released a letter supporting Bill S-203. They said, "At a minimum, the maintenance of odontocetes [toothed whales, dolphins and porpoises] in commercial captive display facilities for entertainment purposes is no longer supported or justified by the growing body of science on their biological needs."

We know it is the right thing to do and it is time to make sure that people have the opportunity to see these beautiful animals in the wild, to respect what they need and to create a new relationship. Keeping them enclosed is not the right way to go.

When we look at the wild, we know that dolphins, whales and porpoises travel up to 100 miles daily feeding and socializing with

other members of their pods. The pods can contain hundreds of individuals with complex social bonds and hierarchies. That is their natural state. In captivity they are in small enclosures and unable to swim in a straight line for any distance. They do not have the ability to dive deep. Sometimes they are housed alone or housed with other animals they are not naturally used to being with. When we look at that isolation with this concern in mind, we know this is the right thing to do.

I look forward to seeing support from all members in this House. We can do the right thing. Today is the day and I look forward to seeing a positive vote.

• (1110)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, I am proud to speak in support of Bill S-203, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts, also known as the act for ending the captivity of whales and dolphins.

I also realize that I am speaking to the bill two days after World Oceans Day. Canada has the longest coastline in the world, and this past weekend, Canadians across the country raised awareness and celebrated our magnificent oceans. I took part in two community cleanups in Conception Bay, where I live.

While our oceans are vast and full of life, we also recognize the peril many of our ocean friends and marine ecosystems face due to threats from climate change and, of course, pollution. More than ever, we must work together to ensure that our oceans are clean and healthy for the many species that call them home, and to support our communities that depend on them.

Let us imagine whales and dolphins, which are used to having the ocean as their playground or feeding ground, being put in a cage not much bigger than a large outdoor swimming pool. Let us imagine the effect this would have on their ability to survive and flourish if they ever were released again. Let us imagine ourselves being put in a room which is 10 feet by 10 feet and being told that is where we have to live out the rest of our days. It certainly would have drastic effects on anyone, or on any animal, for that matter.

The bill has been strongly supported by my constituents of Avalon, and several members of the House have also supported the bill moving forward. I would like to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, who has been strongly advocating for the bill to move forward in the House, and all the other members who have spoken on the necessity of the bill for the protection of our whales and dolphins.

As many members know, the bill comes to us from the Senate, first by retired senator Wilfred Moore, who originally brought the bill forward in 2016, and then sponsored by Senator Murray Sinclair. The work of these senators cannot go without mention. I would like to thank them for their leadership when it comes to the protection of our oceans and the species that call them home.

Whales and dolphins are part of our Canadian wildlife, and we are very lucky to have them live in our waters. In Newfoundland and Labrador, whales are a major tourist attraction. We see many visitors each year and if they are not coming to see the icebergs, they are coming to see the whales.

Private Members' Business

Canadians know how important it is to preserve our marine wildlife. That is why our government is not only supporting Bill S-203, but through Bill C-68, making amendments that also strengthen the bill.

Over the years, we have come to learn more and more about the nature of whales and dolphins and the conditions required for their livelihood. Research has told us that these animals undergo an immense amount of stress when taken into captivity, and this stress persists throughout their life. That is why Canadians and this government support the bill banning the captivity of whales and dolphins.

I want to thank the House leadership team, especially the member for Waterloo, for working so hard to get the bill through the House at this time. Again, I commend the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Senator Moore and Senator Sinclair for their leadership on the bill and this issue, which is important to so many Canadians. I support the bill and look forward to its passage.

• (1115)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House to speak to Bill S-203. Despite good intentions, this legislation is flawed in its current form. It should come as no surprise that there are many issues with this bill. In the short time it has been before the House for consideration, one of the major problems identified is an English-French language conflict in the text of the bill.

As we all know, Canada is a bilingual country. Our two official languages are French and English, and all legislation drafted and passed in Parliament reflects this. Anyone who has ever read these documents knows that the English text is on the left side, while the French text is on the right. We also know that Canadian laws and legislation must be applied in the same manner for all Canadians, regardless of language. This is fundamental for ensuring a fair justice system, which is key to our democracy. Otherwise, it would be grossly unfair and inhumane for a state to subject its citizens to different laws and penalties based on the language they speak. I hope in this place, and across Canada, we can all agree on that.

That is why I believe the mistake in Bill S-203 was an unfortunate oversight made by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. Issues like this are more likely to happen when legislation is rushed through the process without being subject to a thorough study. As members may know, Bill S-203 was given only two meetings before it was pushed ahead without amendment.

It began on March 18, 2019. In a meeting of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the government member from Miramichi—Grand Lake identified an important and significant language conflict in the text of Bill S-203. The following is a quote from the Evidence, as the member questioned a department official on this issue:

Another thing that would need to be clarified for me is clause 4 of Bill S-203 to prohibit the importation to Canada of living cetaceans as well as cetacean tissue or embryos, subject to a special permit. Apparently the English text of the clause refers to permits issued pursuant to proposed subsection 10(1.1) of WAPPRIITA [the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act] while the French version of the text is silent on the type of importation permit required. That sounds very odd. I wouldn't know of any other piece of legislation in which the French version would be different from the English version.

The departmental official replied, "I am not completely sure about the two clauses you are referencing. I haven't done a comparison of the English to the French so I don't have a response for you on that." In response, the member asked, "Do you think we should clarify that?" The departmental official replied, "It would be important to make sure that the intent in both the English and the French is the same."

Interestingly, it was a member of the current government, from a bilingual province, who flagged this critical language concern. It is also interesting how the department official stressed the importance of getting the language right.

The story does not end there. It continues.

On March 26, 2019, the Honourable J.C. Major, a former Supreme Court justice, penned a letter to all members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. He, too, identified the same language conflict as the member did. However, rather than merely stating his concern, he elevated the issue to be a constitutional matter. In addition to that, he informed the committee that this part requires amendment.

This is what the Honourable J.C. Major wrote to the members of the committee in his letter:

I have reviewed the proposed Section 7.1 which is scheduled as an amendment to Bill S-203 of the Wild Animal and Plant Protection Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (WAPPRIITA).

In addition I have reviewed the French to English and English to French review certified by...ABCO International which on review concludes that the wording of Section 7.1 between the French and English version is starkly different. The question raised is whether the difference is so material that compliance is affected. In my opinion the differences are material and confusion is inevitable and an amendment is the only remedy that will clarify the intent and purpose of Section 7.1.

Canada, by virtue of the Federal Government's legislation, confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada and evidenced by the Charter of Rights, is officially bilingual. In addition, under S.18 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Part 1 of the Constitution Act 1982), both English and French are made equally authoritative.

• (1120)

Given that both languages are authoritative and that differences between the French and English drafting of Section 7.1 are materially different, it is apparent that revisions by way of amendment of that section would by its uniformity confirm Parliament's intention as the section would then be clear to parties affected by it and invaluable to the judiciary.

The latter consideration is important as explained below as case law is replete with decisions evidencing the difficulty the courts in all provinces have from time to time reconciling statutory conflicts and either succeeded in doing so or entering an acquittal.

Section 7.1 of Bill S-203 is an enforcement provision under the Act. Given the conflict in the English and French versions of the proposed legislation its passage without a clarification amendment would, in the event of an illegal violation and subsequent prosecution, present a dilemma to the court. An obvious example being that an application under the English version would be required to meet the conditions set out in s. 10(1.1) whereas an application adhering to the French version would not. In the result the same law would be different depending on the site of the application. Should a charge be laid under the proposed Section 7.1 the difficulty described would be left to the court then to attempt a reconciliation of the conflict in the language and if not possible to strike down the section and order an acquittal.

The foregoing is a brief response to the difficulties that are inevitable if there is no amendment clarifying the intent of the legislation.

It is of value to consider the unequivocal recommendation number 35 of the Uniform Law Conference of Canada which concluded "the English and French versions of a bilingual Act must be identical in substance".

Private Members' Business

My observation is that the member and the former Supreme Court justice both share the same concern: There is a language conflict in the bill's text. That common ground should be encouraging. However, what happened next in the committee at clause-by-clause was anything but. My party brought forward two amendments. One would make the English text read the same as the French, and the other would make the French text read the same as the English. Both amendments were rejected by the government, and Justice Major's legal opinion was ignored.

My second observation at committee was about the four government amendments that the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake suddenly withdrew at clause-by-clause. The withdrawals came as a surprise to the opposition members, because they were sensible amendments. Their intent was largely to coordinate Bill S-203 with the Liberals' own Bill C-68, which I can understand. Both bills share overlapping objectives, and if both were to pass, their implementation could clash or create confusion. In short, it made little sense for the member to make those withdrawals, especially when the changes were responsible ones that the Conservatives were prepared to support.

[Translation]

Here we are then. This is the second hour of third reading of Bill S-203. This bill is flawed. A former Supreme Court justice was called in. Bill S-203 is a constitutional challenge in waiting, and the scariest thing is that this bill is about to come into force.

This is as good a time as any to remind all members of the House that it is our responsibility as parliamentarians to ensure that the bills we pass are constitutional and legally sound.

• (1125)

[English]

Given the government's majority position, this decision ultimately weighs on the Liberal government to do what is right. It must act in the best interests of Canadians. That action is passing legally sound and constitutional legislation.

So here we are, at the second hour of third reading debate. The bill, in its current form, is flawed. A former Supreme Court justice has weighed in on the constitutionality, and those changes needed to be made. Now is a good time to remind all members of the House that it is our responsibility as parliamentarians to ensure that all laws we pass are constitutional and legally sound.

Given these reasons, I hope the government reconsiders its position on Bill S-203.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour to speak today in the House of Commons. With this bill and with the support of my hon. colleagues, Canada is on the cusp of making history and ending cetacean captivity and making sure it is a thing of the past. Not only is this important to me, but it is important to the people of my riding, to people right across this country from coast to coast to coast, to countless environmental stewards who have fought hard on this issue, and certainly to the Nuu-chah-nulth people and indigenous people across this country.

I have heard from many of them. Many Nuu-chah-nulth people see the orca, in their language the *kakaw'in*, as a spirit animal and as

an animal that is a reflection of their ancestors. To think of their ancestors being held in captivity is certainly something they do not want to see happen again.

If we pass this bill, it would do a couple of things. First, it would give us credibility and legitimacy to take it even further, to push for a global ban on having cetaceans held in captivity. We know that cetaceans held in captivity suffer in a way that is not justifiable. Bill S-203 is a reasonable, balanced piece of legislation.

Let us look at the life of a captive whale, dolphin or porpoise. In captivity, conditions are spartan and prison-like. Cetaceans suffer confinement, isolation, health problems, reduced lifespans, high infant mortality rates, sensory deprivation and trauma from transfer to other parks and calf separation. Given the evidence, captive facilities cannot provide for their social or biological needs. They need to roam widely and dive deep in order to thrive. The range of captive orcas is only 1/10,000th of 1% the size of their natural home range, and 80% of their time is spent at the surface, looking for food and attention from their trainers, who make the choices for them when they are held in captivity. Captive-born animals are often forcibly weaned and shipped to other facilities, away from their mothers and the only companions they have ever known. It creates unnecessary trauma. It is cruel.

Let us compare that to wild cetaceans. They spend approximately 80% to 90% of their time under the water. They have the freedom to make their own choices, sometimes travelling up to 100 miles per day, following food and the members of their family. Many of these species, like the orcas, live in complex societies with their own cultures and dialects, maintaining close ties with family and friends. Some remain in family groups for life. For wild orcas, their pod is critical to their survival.

I want to add that I am excited that we just had a baby orca in the pod off Tofino, witnessed by my good friends Jennifer Steven and John Forde. It is another reminder of the importance of our orcas being able to roam freely in the wild and knowing that a baby orca will not be taken and put into captivity. It is a relief to all of us.

We know that keeping cetaceans is cruel, given the scientific evidence about their nature and behaviour. They are intelligent, social and acoustically sensitive marine animals.

New Democrats believe in the power of research, and we know that the continued study of cetaceans can be done ethically in the wild. There, scientists can get a realistic view of their natural behaviours without causing a lifetime of pain and suffering.

Private Members' Business

Our party also understands the need for legislation to be measured, and Bill S-203 does balance a fair transition for the two remaining facilities that hold captive cetaceans. It grandfathered in existing animals and gives the zoo and aquarium community a long phase-out period. It is not asking these facilities to close overnight. Certainly we will not be supporting the movement of cetaceans or sale of cetaceans anywhere from those facilities.

There are a few people we need to thank today. First of all, we need to thank the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who brought their voice to all elected officials, whether in the House of Commons or in the Senate, calling for this legislation to be passed; the environmental groups and animal rights organizations for mobilizing people; and indigenous communities for raising their concerns, which led to the bill and today's debate.

• (1130)

Also, there are people in the House whom we need to thank, for coming together and showing this is not a partisan issue; it is a moral issue. First, I want to thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He had a very important piece of legislation to end zero-waste packaging, with which we hope the government will move forward. It made some announcements today in response to my motion, Motion No. 151, around phasing out single-use plastics. I would like to congratulate the government on that first step, and I look forward to seeing more momentum and movement, especially around industrial-use plastics, and rethinking how we use plastics.

I thank my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley because his bill was supposed to be in the House today, and he gave up his spot so we could move forward with this piece of legislation, knowing the only way we could save it was for it to be in the House today. I also want to thank Terrace's Ben Korving. He is the one who helped my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley bring the bill forward on zero-waste packaging through a contest held in his riding to ensure Canadians' voices were heard in the House. We have not lost sight of Ben's work. We have ensured the government heard the proposal that Ben brought forward. I want to thank them both.

In that same spirit, I want to thank my colleague and friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands for the considerable work she has done on this issue and the stewardship she has shown by taking on this bill, working with us to find a path forward and showing a non-partisan approach when it comes to ensuring we do the right thing for cetaceans, which do not have a voice. We are their voice and this is an opportunity to demonstrate what we are going to do to look out for them.

I want to thank my colleague and friend from Port Moody—Coquitlam, the former vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, who helped move this bill through committee and worked very hard on it. I also want to thank my friend and colleague, the chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the member for Avalon, who has done some great work to help ensure the passage of this bill. I really mean that, because without his help, working with all of us in the House, we would not have got this done. I commend him for his work on that.

This bill would not have made it this far without the courageous and bold efforts of Senator Wilfred Moore. We sometimes raise concerns about the Senate, and I certainly have my doubts right now

on a number of pieces of legislation, so I will take it away from the Senate and give it to a human being who is a huge champion, and that is retired senator Wilfred Moore. He has been a champion of this bill. He tabled this bill in the Senate and stayed on this bill even beyond his retirement, showing his dedication and commitment, and we owe him a round of applause. I thank him for being completely committed and devoted to seeing this through.

I thank Senator Murray Sinclair for taking on and championing this bill in the Senate, bringing the really important wealth of indigenous knowledge and his connections across this country and ensuring those voices were also heard in the Senate.

In closing, I hope this bill passes very quickly. I thank the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have been the voice of cetaceans, which do not have a voice, and look forward to Canada having legitimacy and credibility on the international stage when it comes to fighting for cetaceans and ending the captivity of whales internationally. I hope that is the next step for our country.

• (1135)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that I rise today to speak to Bill S-203, which on its surface seems to be popular and appeals to the emotional drives behind it. Like many Canadians, I have seen cetaceans in captivity at places like SeaWorld and the Vancouver Aquarium; and at places like Marineland, where personally I have never been. I just want to put this in context.

This bill is designed to shut down one business in Canada. There is only one business in Canada actively pursuing or using cetaceans right now for the purpose of entertainment. That is what I want to talk about in this bill.

I am not against the notion that, if Canadians are by and large against having cetaceans in captivity, we can have that conversation. Of course we can have that conversation. It is the approach that this piece of legislation is taking that concerns me. It concerns me because I am a hunter and an angler. I am a guy who grew up on a farm and used animals every day at every stage and walk in my life. I am a guy who represents two areas of my constituency. One area hosts the Ponoka Stampede and one area hosts the Canadian Finals Rodeo in Red Deer.

I am also a conservationist. I have a zoology degree. I am pretty sure the guys who are laughing at me right now probably do not. I am going to ask that they just sit and think about this for one second. Many scientists appeared before the committee in the Senate and the committee in the House of Commons. They were people with not just bachelor of science degrees in zoology but with Ph.D.s. They were very concerned by the precedent that this piece of legislation would set. I asked the question in the committee whether we could end cetacean captivity in Canada in a simpler way, such as by just ending the permits of this particular business. We could do that by making a small change to the Fisheries Act and to the plant and animal transfer act.

Private Members' Business

However, this bill would change three things. It would change the Criminal Code of Canada and would do some interesting things. The bill is not about how humans handle animals or about the welfare or treatment of animals in people's care. The bill would, for the first time ever, make it a criminal act in Canada to keep an animal in captivity. That is the first time in our legislation anywhere that having an animal in captivity would be considered an illegal act. It would be illegal in the Criminal Code of Canada to breed animals, and these particular cetaceans—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I will ask the member to stop. I will not mention who the hon. member is.

One of the things we have to look at in this chamber is that, when somebody is speaking, whether we agree with the individual or not, out of respect, we deserve to hear what that person has to say. I just want to remind the hon. members that decorum is something we want to keep. Shouting out or laughing while somebody is reading is not proper decorum.

I will let the hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe continue and, hopefully, we will continue in a respectful manner.

The hon. member for Red Deer—Lacombe.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, all I am asking for is the same respect I granted the speakers from other political parties while I sat and listened to them.

The problem, as I and the people I represent see it, is with the Criminal Code amendments as well as the follow-through and execution of this piece of legislation, which creates a framework and structure whereby anybody can add onto that by simply adding a comma into the legislation and saying that horses can no longer be kept or used for breeding or for purposes of entertainment. I am not saying that is going to happen, but the structure is actually there in the legislation to do it. One has to ask the question why this would need to be done. Why do we need this sledgehammer in legislation to effect the change we are looking for?

We are known by the company we keep. If we look at the organizations that are publicly and vocally expressing support for this bill, we see they call for the end of things like rodeos, fishing, eating animals and raising animals on a farm. These organizations, like Animal Justice and some SPCAs, call for these kinds of things. This is the company that this piece of legislation is keeping.

As I said, I am actually okay with it. I understand the science behind cetaceans and that not all cetaceans do well in captivity, but we also have to be logical. We have to think with our heads too about whether this is the right way to go. I will give an example. Dr. Laura Graham, who has a Ph.D., testified at committee and said there is no actual definition of cruel anywhere in this bill. As I said, it would create new definitions. For the very first time, it would make it illegal and criminalize the breeding of animals. This is something that is a very dangerous precedent for anybody involved in animal husbandry or any of these industries.

Dr. Laura Graham says that the definition of cruel is not anywhere in this bill, and as a scientist, she finds the lack of objective assessment troubling. She has also observed that the people pushing

this bill are dismissing the importance of zoos and aquariums in educating the public and eliciting a concern for conservation and saving the planet.

As a matter of fact, she highlighted a very specific case about Vaquita dolphins down in the Gulf of Mexico, of which there are about 10 left; that is all that is left. If we were to use the facilities in Vancouver, Marineland and various SeaWorld installations as something other than entertainment, but rather as a conservation tool, through captive breeding programs we could potentially some day get to the point where we could release a viable population of Vaquita dolphins back into the wild.

I will get back to Dr. Graham in a second. When I was talking to Senator Sinclair at committee, I asked him about this notion of going to a national park, for example. Where I live in Alberta, there is a park called Elk Island National Park, which is not the typical national park that people think of when they go to national parks in their neighbourhoods. Elk Island National Park is a completely fenced-in enclosure. It is a captive facility for the purpose of breeding and population enhancement. People buy a park pass and go in there for the purpose of seeing that wildlife. They may have other purposes, but make no doubt about it, they go there to see the elk and the bison. There has just been a relatively successful, depending on the standards one wants to measure it by, reintroduction of bison into Yukon. There has been reintroduction of bison into Banff National Park, which would not have happened without the captive facility and the breeding program that went with it to re-establish this population.

The whole argument behind getting rid of cetacean captivity is an emotional one. I get it. Look, I have those same convictions when I look at animals in captivity as well. As a guy who goes hunting and fishing and sees all kinds of things in the wild, I get those same heartstring tugs that everybody else gets. I am not some cold and cruel individual. I get the arguments. However, as a conservationist, I also know that we need to make use of every tool available to us in order to help reintroduce wildlife lost through bad practices or mismanagement. Not everybody in the world does things as well as Canada, and we do not do some things all that well either.

However, we have an opportunity to ask ourselves if this bill is actually going to do more harm than good in the long run. It is the same emotional tug that wants us to end the captivity of whales and dolphins that never would have created these facilities in the first place. The City of Vancouver made the choice to end cetacean captivity for the purposes of entertainment without needing this big piece of legislation to do it, yet that facility is still used for rescue and rehabilitation of cetaceans.

Private Members' Business

●(1140)

It could just as easily use that facility to save a population of belugas, such as the population of belugas in the St. Lawrence Seaway. We know from the experience at Marineland that belugas are actually breeding quite well there. This legislation would be for the express purpose of making that breeding impossible or illegal, actually to the point that someone could go to jail for it. What is that going to do? It is going to split up that family pod at Marineland. It is going to separate the males from the females, and it is going to create the exact same issue that others are arguing captivity is causing in the first place. It is going to create divisiveness and stress in those families.

We know that belugas in captivity are quite successful at breeding. They have a very high success rate. They have a very high birth rate and a very high survival rate. We have populations of belugas right now in the world that are in trouble. If we do not get the environmental conditions right in nature, in the wild, before those populations are actually gone for good, we would have an opportunity to save those genetics. We could actually use the revenue from letting people come and watch them to help the science and research and help that captive breeding program do more good than harm in this particular case.

That is what I am asking my friends in the House to consider. Yes, it is going to be very popular to vote in favour of this bill. We have *Free Willy* and *Blackfish* and others movies that create the desire to do what we think is right.

Dr. Laura Graham talked about Dr. Jane Goodall. She had the same feeling about keeping chimpanzees in captivity, and then she changed her mind. As the habitat was encroaching on the natural range of these chimpanzees, as she saw how zoos and other captive facilities were treating these animals and as research and knowledge expanded, she changed her mind. I am simply asking my colleagues to at least consider that before passing this flawed legislation.

●(1145)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to speak today during the final hour of debate after several years of work on a bill that is important to the world's whales.

[*English*]

I am particularly honoured to rise this morning because we are at the point that most members in this place appear ready to see this legislation pass. The legislation was first brought forward in the last few days of the Senate sitting of 2015. It has been, to put it mildly, a long haul.

The hon. member just raised concerns, and I think all concerns by my colleagues in this place are legitimate. However, it is important for anyone watching this debate to recognize that the bill is based on science.

Many scientists testified as to why it is critical that we stop keeping cetaceans in captivity. We understand why. They are obviously not akin to livestock, for instance. Cetaceans require the ocean. They require the space. They require acoustic communication

over long distances. The scientists who testified before the committee who made the case so strongly made it based on science.

Yes, Canadians care. Yes, the school children who wrote to us in the thousands were not moved by the science; they were moved because they see movies and nature films and they understand that whales, dolphins and porpoises are of a different character than other animals.

I would reassure my friend that we could not just substitute the name for another species. Bill S-203 is firmly tied to the Fisheries Act. I do not think we would find any horses in the wild in the ocean. We have tied it down legislatively in such a way that others should not worry that there will be a creeping effect.

In the time remaining, I want to say how grateful I am for the non-partisan spirit. It has been my entire honour to be the sponsor of this legislation in the House. I am enormously grateful to my colleagues.

I mentioned the scientists. Let me thank Dr. Visser, who testified at committee, coming in by Skype from New Zealand in the days right after the Christchurch killings. It was an emotional time for everyone. I would also like to thank Dr. Naomi Rose, and from Dalhousie University, Dr. Hal Whitehead. Phil Demers, a former whale trainer at Marineland, offered excellent real-life testimony as to the cruelty of keeping whales in captivity.

Certainly Senator Wilfred Moore and Senator Murray Sinclair have done an enormous amount to help. So too has the government representative in the Senate, Senator Harder.

I also want to thank the Minister of Fisheries and his predecessor for taking companion elements in Bill S-203 and embedding them in Bill C-68. Bill C-68, the reform of the Fisheries Act, remains before the Senate.

I want to take a moment to urge all colleagues in the other place to move Bill C-68 through. I also urge everyone here, if there are amendments, to move Bill C-68 through, because the Fisheries Act is critically important on many scores, as well as being companion legislation to Bill S-203.

Again, in a non-partisan spirit, I want to thank the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, who we will miss in this place, and the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. I also want to mention his constituent, Ben Korving, who put forward the legislation regarding zero-waste packaging. I pledge, as leader of the Green Party, to take on Ben Korving's motion and make sure that it does not die in this place, because those members made a sacrifice to allow Bill S-203 to pass before we rise at the end of June.

I also want to thank the hon. member for Beaches—East York, a Liberal, and my friend from Courtenay—Alberni, who was gracious in his praise earlier.

Everyone pulled together on this. The member for Charlottetown, the parliamentary secretary, helped enormously.

●(1150)

[*Translation*]

I would once again like to thank my Bloc Québécois colleague, the member for Repentigny.

Business of Supply

[English]

I know that there were Conservative colleagues who did what they could.

I cannot tell members how important this legislation is. I will close with a few words that we have not heard in this place before. They are from the book of Job. They are found in chapter 41, verse 1.

Behold, Behemoth,
which I made as I made you;...

He is the first of the works of God;...

Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook
or press down his tongue with a cord?
Can you put a rope in his nose
or pierce his jaw with a hook?...
Will traders bargain over him?
Will they divide him up among the merchants?...

On earth there is not his like,...
He sees everything that is high;
he is king over all the sons of pride.

To everyone in this place, let us think for a moment. We behold Leviathan. He belongs in the wild. He will never again be placed in a swimming pool in this country.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is as follows. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House will now suspend until 12 p.m.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:52 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved:

That, given telecommunication services in Canada cost more than most other countries in the world, leaving far too many Canadians with unaffordable, inadequate or no service at all, the House call on the government to implement measures that will make those services more affordable, including:

- a price cap to ensure every Canadian saves money on their bill;
- abolishing data caps for broadband Internet and mandating that companies create unlimited data plans at affordable rates for wireless services;
- putting an end to egregious and outrageous sales and services practices through a Telecom Consumers' Bill of Rights;
- revisiting the structure of the spectrum auction to make sure everyday Canadians benefit most from the revenue, rather than repeating the failures of

previous Liberal and Conservative governments, which squandered almost \$20 billion from previous auctions; and

(e) directing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to reverse their rural and remote broadband implementation policy, which condemns these areas, including many Indigenous communities, to years of substandard broadband and wireless services.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I want to let you know that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the fabulous member for Jonquière.

[English]

I want to praise the work of the member of Parliament for Windsor West. He has been dogged and determined in bringing fairness to the telecom charges people are paying across the country. He does an extraordinary job. He will be speaking in the House a bit later on today. Right now, he is in a press conference, ensuring that journalists across the length and breadth of the country are familiar with the NDP's five-point plan to not only save Canadians money, but also expand telecom coverage right across the country so broadband and cellular services are made available in remote areas where they are not available now.

What does the five-point NDP plan mean and what does it mean if Parliament adopts it? It could mean a savings of up to \$600 a year for a Canadian. I want to go into that in some detail, because Canadians are struggling to make ends meet.

As members are aware, half of Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency in any one month. Over the past few decades, we have seen more inequality and a greater struggle for average Canadian families to make ends meet. It should be a source of shame for us that the average Canadian family now has the worst family debt load in any country in the industrialized world. That means Canadians have been struggling to make ends meet and for decades, the federal government has done very little to assist them with that. We often find that lobbyists, such as the big Internet companies from the United States, which do not even pay taxes in Canada, have had an influence. The lobbyists for the telecom companies have also made a difference. Therefore, it is common sense, not rocket science, to simply have the federal government take the measures needed to make a difference in the lives of Canadians.

As we know, in the developed world, Canadians pay some of the highest prices for mobile, wireless and broadband services. It costs them a lot more per month than people who live in other countries. That means price gouging is taking place. The federal government has basically allowed big telecom to gouge Canadians with impunity. That has to end. The NDP five-point plan would put measures in place to ensure that would not happen anymore.

Let us take one example. This has come out of many studies, which have shown consistently that the average price for Canadians who have a two gigabyte plan per month for data, and I am among them, as I am sure many Canadians are, is now somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$75 to \$76 a month. How does that compare with plans in other parts of the world? Obviously if Canadians are paying too much, then putting measures in place to ensure Canadians are not being gouged makes a great deal of sense.

Business of Supply

Similar studies show the difference between what Canadians pay and what people in other parts of the industrialized world pay. If we were in Toronto, a monthly plan for two gigabytes of data would cost about \$75.50 a month. What is the price for a two gigabyte plan in Paris? The same two gigabyte plan would cost \$30.91. That is a substantive difference. The difference can basically be summed up as the big telecom companies in Canada are allowed to gouge Canadians with impunity. In other parts of the world, governments have taken action to restrict the amount of money that can be gouged from the consumer.

• (1205)

In London, the same gigabyte plan, which is \$30 in Paris and \$75 in Canada, is \$26.56 on average, which is \$50 less per month than in Canada. In Rome, for the same plan, two gigabytes per month, one would pay \$24.70. Those are European examples.

We can look at a country that is similar to our country, such as Australia, which is a vast land and differing infrastructure. Many parts of Australia are remote, as are many parts of Canada. Australia has put in place measures to ensure it had a cellphone and Internet broadband infrastructure. Australia has found that those same prices are substantially less than what they are in Canada. I mentioned \$24.70 and that is the price per month in Australia. Therefore, it is \$50 less a month for a two-gigabyte plan in Australia, which faces the same infrastructure challenges, as Canada does, with its vast expanse. It has a better degree of remote broadband and cellphone access. It has put in place a better infrastructure, and the cost per month for the average Australian is \$50 a month less than in Canada.

I talked about Italy, and I misspoke a moment ago. In Rome, if one is looking at broadband and wireless access, it would cost \$21.11, which is a profound difference to Canada. Canadians are paying about \$50 more for a two-gigabyte plan, and this is just one of many examples.

Consumers living in France, the United Kingdom, Italy or in the vast expanse of Australia are paying \$50 a month less for a two-gigabyte plan than we are in Canada. There is no other way to explain this except rampant price gouging and governments refusing to protect consumers. That ends today with the NDP five-point plan.

The motion was read earlier, but it is important to reiterate what the NDP five-point plan is proposing.

First, we would put a price cap to ensure every Canadian saves money on their bill. This is a best practice that other countries have put in place and it has saved money for their consumers.

Second, we would abolish data caps for broadband Internet and mandate that companies create unlimited data plans at affordable rates for wireless services. This abolishing of the data cap has also made a substantive difference for consumers in other countries who are paying substantially less, \$600 a year less. What could the Canadian population, the middle-class, working-class families, do with that \$600 more they are paying compared to the Italian, French, English or Australian consumers. There is simply no way to legitimize or justify the price gouging that is taking place.

Third, we would put an end to egregious and outrageous sales and services practices through a telecom consumers' bill of rights.

Fourth, we would revisit the structure of the spectrum auction to make sure everyday Canadians benefit.

Fifth, we would redirect the CRTC to stop its interpretation that is guaranteeing substandard broadband and wireless services for rural and remote communities.

This five-point plan makes sense to everybody but the big telecom lobbyists. It makes sense for Parliament to adopt it today. The result would be a \$600 saving per year for the average Canadian family. It would make a difference.

Therefore, I urge all members to vote for the NDP five-point plan to reduce the cost of telecom and to expand services in the country.

• (1210)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my fellow British Columbian raising an important topic. Canadians obviously are finding life less affordable under the Liberal government and we should be looking for ways to find some relief for them.

In true NDP form, the intention is fine, but the execution is terrible. Some of the policies being presented in the motion are right out of the 1970s. The “zap, you're frozen” approach of a price cap would alter the way we can access new technologies. For example, 5G technology is coming. It will require tens of billions of dollars of new Internet infrastructure. It will allow Canadian businesses and Canadian individuals to innovate. However, with a price cap, how does the member propose that those investments of tens of billions of dollars be made?

Can the member explain how, under a price cap where the price is pushed down to a certain amount, companies will be able to unroll this 5G technology that people want?

Mr. Peter Julian: Once again, Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are supporting the big telecom lobbyists, like they have done with big oil and gas. No matter how much money the Liberals pour into companies, for the Conservatives it never seems to be enough. Here is a case where the Conservatives could have taken action for 10 years and never did. That means every Canadian consumer, including consumers in the member's own riding, are paying \$600 more than they should be because of the lack of government action. The member threw out a drive-by insult, but the reality is that other countries have put these measures in place. Other countries have protected their consumers and it is about time the Canadian government actually protected consumers.

Another point is that this would also have a profound impact on small businesses. Small businesses are being gouged, including in the member's own riding. Putting these measures in place not only helps individual Canadian families but it helps small businesses that can be competitive and create jobs in communities right across the country.

Business of Supply

The average revenue per gigabyte in Canada is up to 70 times for big telecom than it is in other countries. We are talking about excessive windfall profits. We need some common sense and decency and we need to save money for Canadian consumers.

•(1215)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians as a whole, compared to people in other countries in the world, are very well-educated consumers. They understand the principles of consumption, for the most part.

I appreciated some of the statistics the member across the way gave. It is really important when drawing comparisons to compare apples to apples. I am glad the member brought up the country of Australia. Let us say the disposable income of an individual is x dollars and the average cost of housing is around 30% or 32%. Has the member across the way or the NDP done a calculation related to the average cost for communications for a consumer in Australia compared to in Canada? Just to say one bill is \$60 and another bill is \$50, we do not know what that works out to in terms of the percentage of an individual's annual income.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I wish the member had listened to my speech, but he will have other opportunities as other NDP members explain it again later on.

The difference I cited is for a two gigabytes per month plan. The average cost in Canada, in places like Toronto or the member's own riding in Winnipeg, is \$75.44 per month. In Sydney, Australia, for example, it is \$24.70. That is what I cited in my speech and I will be reiterating it throughout the course of the day. There is simply no way to justify Canadians in Winnipeg having to pay \$50 per month more for their telecom, wireless and broadband services, than an Australian pays. They have the same infrastructure challenges, apples to apples.

What has happened, though, in Australia is that the government has taken effective measures to ensure there are not these windfall profits and that consumers are not being gouged. That is what New Democrats are bringing to the floor of the House of Commons today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no one in the House would be surprised to hear that cellphone service in Canada today is amongst the most expensive in the world. This should spur us into action. This is 2019 and we live in one of the world's major economies. Canada is a G7 country, and yet we are often a laughing stock.

Canadian consumers are paying as much as tens of times more for their cellphone plans than people in Europe or Asia, so they should at least have access to quality service. In some areas of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, such as Lamarche, which is located between Saint-Fulgence and Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, on Highway 172 heading towards Lac-Saint-Jean, you sometimes have to stop your car and hope that the call does not drop in the middle of your conversation.

Access to affordable cellular and high-speed Internet services has become a necessity these days, both at home and at work. It is an essential economic tool in a large region like Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Canadians deserve to have reliable telecommunications service, without having to pay \$20, \$30 or \$40 more than in other OECD countries for a similar plan.

Consider this: a two-gigabyte data plan costs a Canadian consumer the same as unlimited data plans in several dozen other countries. Telecommunications lobbies have long argued that the prices are justified because of Canada's geography and its significant impact on the cost of maintenance, but that argument does not hold water. For example, Australia has even bigger geographic challenges than Canada and yet it is able to offer faster connectivity and more affordable plans than we get here at home.

It is high time for the Liberals to take action, vote in favour of the NDP motion and have the courage to stand up to the Canadian telecommunications giants to provide Canadians with affordable plans.

The way forward is clear. It is unacceptable that in 2019, several regions of a G7 country still do not have quality Internet and cellular connectivity at an affordable rate. This is even more unacceptable when we know that compared to many other countries, Canadian telecommunications companies generate obscene revenues for less service. Canadian providers pocket 23 times as much revenue per gigabyte as telecoms in Finland, and 70 times as much as those in India.

Naturally, this reality is putting off many businesses whose growth directly depends on affordable, high-quality national telecommunications services from investing in Canada. The upshot is that we are losing investors, who would rather focus on countries where wireless and high-speed Internet services are less expensive. This needs to stop.

The Liberals have nonchalantly released a report stating that there is nothing wrong with the rates, the Conservatives are shouting from the rooftops that we should trust market forces to take care of everything, but all the while, nothing is getting done.

To put an end to this farce, the NDP is moving a motion today to make our wireless and broadband services more affordable and more accessible.

Our proposal contains five components. First, we are calling on the government to implement a price cap to lower bills, especially cellphone bills. In Ontario, Rogers' 85-gigabyte plan costs \$415 a month. Honestly, Europeans could get a lifetime plan with virtually unlimited data for a tenth of the price. That is just ridiculous.

Second, we are calling for data caps for broadband Internet to be abolished and for companies to be mandated to create unlimited data plans at affordable rates. Together, these two steps, abolishing data caps and mandating companies to create unlimited data plans, would upend the current pricing structure by creating more affordable rates providing better value for consumers.

•(1220)

Every supplier would finally have an inexpensive base plan similar to what is offered in the OECD. That is not so much to ask.

Business of Supply

Third, we are asking that a telecommunications consumers' bill of rights be created to eliminate certain unacceptable sales and service practices. This proposal is based on previous recommendations by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission to regulate the industry.

Creating this bill of rights that clearly spells out the rights of consumers would help everyone make more informed purchases and above all would be an effective means of combatting certain scandalous sales and service practices. Agreements between operators to increase prices, arbitrary price increases and one-off discounts are a thing of the past.

Fourth, the spectrum auction system is in dire need of an overhaul to ensure that ordinary Canadians benefit fully from revenues. At present, new spectrum licences are auctioned from time to time by the Canadian government. The 600-megahertz band, for example, is prized by operators for its ability to penetrate concrete buildings in urban areas.

The problem is that ordinary Canadians do not benefit from these auctions. In 2001, billions of dollars in licences were granted to telecommunications companies, which do very heavy lobbying. None of these auctions is designed to protect consumers, to lower prices or to increase investments to ensure that Canadians in rural and remote areas have access to affordable, quality services. This must change.

Fifth, we are calling on the CRTC to reverse its rural and remote broadband implementation policy in rural and remote areas. A decision made this fall slashed speeds by half of the speeds announced by the government in 2016 for rural and remote areas. This policy condemns these regions to years of substandard service. For years now, I have been sounding the alarm to protect competitiveness in my region of Saguenay. The region needs access to cell service and high-speed Internet, but nothing is being done to make these services more accessible or affordable.

Since 2015, I have been attending meeting after meeting with local elected officials in Lamarche and Labrecque to advance the cellphone file in that area. The Liberals have always turned a deaf ear. The mayor of Labrecque, Éric Simard, announced a few months ago that approximately half the residents of his municipality were still having connection problems. That is unacceptable.

The government needs to face facts. Its connectivity plan does not meet the needs of the people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. There was nothing in the government's last budget to finally give rural and remote areas access to reliable and affordable telecommunications services. The government is giving even more money to rich corporations so that they can expand access to high-speed Internet, but the people of Saguenay know full well that the telecom giants will never do anything to meet the needs of rural areas. These companies would rather invest in urban areas, where they can turn a higher profit.

It is time that the Prime Minister stopped finding billions of dollars just to subsidize his private sector friends. It is time that the Prime Minister had the courage to stand up to the big telecom companies and rein them in. The people of Jonquièrre have been waiting for years for a program to build cell towers.

When will we be able to benefit from a cellular network designed for the 21st century?

This problem is not unique to my riding. A total of 63% of rural households across the country still do not have access to broadband high-speed Internet and 0% have access in the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut, where over 70% of major roads and highways still do not have access to proper cellular service.

• (1225)

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am having a little difficulty understanding the NDP motion. Obviously we are familiar with the problems the New Democrats have raised, but I do not see any solutions in their motion. Did they read budget 2019? It includes an accelerated capital cost allowance for businesses. We also expanded the infrastructure fund, adding Internet services and cell towers to the eligible categories, which is a first. We also set aside \$1.7 billion, despite the member's claim that there was nothing in budget 2019. On top of that, to support innovation, we invested in Telesat to look at the entire country. We also worked with the CRTC, which created a \$750 million fund.

Did the NDP members read budget 2019 and see the concrete measures it includes?

Will they acknowledge the action we have taken to change the situation with respect to Internet access?

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, if my colleague had listened to my whole speech, he would have heard me list the five measures that the NDP is proposing in its motion. I am happy to reread them:

- (a) a price cap to ensure every Canadian saves money on their bill;
- (b) abolishing data caps for broadband Internet and mandating that companies create unlimited data plans at affordable rates for wireless services;
- (c) putting an end to egregious and outrageous sales and services practices through a Telecom Consumers' Bill of Rights;
- (d) revisiting the structure of the spectrum auction to make sure everyday Canadians benefit most from the revenue, rather than repeating the failures of previous Liberal and Conservative governments, which squandered almost \$20 billion from previous auctions; and
- (e) directing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to reverse their rural and remote broadband implementation policy, which condemns these areas, including many Indigenous communities, to years of substandard broadband and wireless services.

Those are the five measures that the NDP is proposing in its motion. I hope that was clear. I can spend this entire opposition day repeating it if need be. Yes, we read the budget and, in answer to the next question, I will give some examples showing that the Liberal government's investments are inadequate.

Business of Supply

•(1230)

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have done a terrible job when it comes to this issue. The Auditor General found their connect to innovate program poorly designed. The Liberals have done announcements, but less than 10% has actually been funded.

In addition, the member has suggested some alternative paths. Number one of their points was a price cap. In the Auditor General report of last fall, the Auditor General said it would take tens of billions of dollars to invest and bring up substandard Internet access, particularly in rural and remote communities. A price cap would be the fastest way to stop reinvestment, which would see rural areas receive the connectivity we all want to see.

I would simply ask the NDP member this question. Does she have a solution? If the amount of money is lowered that goes into the industry to be able to supply these things in order to have rural connectivity, where is the money going to come from? Where is the money, in the self-created shortfall the NDP is creating in investment, going to come from?

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question about prices.

We need to give small businesses a chance to set up shop in our communities. Earlier, I mentioned the mayor of Labrecque, Éric Simard. Some people in his municipality are still isolated, because the big telecom companies do not think there are not enough people to warrant investment. This means residents cannot choose to work from home, for example, and teens who live in these municipalities and want to pursue higher education have to move to big cities to access all services at a lower cost.

In Saint-Fulgence, in my riding, I often have to pull over in my car to talk on the phone, and my calls get dropped. It is 2019, and it is unacceptable that our calls get dropped when we pull over to use the phone, and that isolated communities do not have access to Internet and other telecommunications services.

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

Today I have the pleasure of rising to highlight the excellent work our government has accomplished, no matter what the opposition may say, over the past four years to support Canada's telecommunications sector and Canadians, who work hard and rely on these Internet and mobile services every day. Telecommunications services are essential to all Canadians, regardless of where they are. That is why the government's telecommunications policy focuses on three objectives, namely quality, coverage and affordability.

•(1235)

[English]

Canadians need access to high-quality telecommunications services where they live and work in order to participate and thrive in the digital society and economy. Canada is already among the

world's leaders when it comes to fast wireless networks. However, we understand that more can be done in terms of coverage to ensure that everyone can benefit.

[Translation]

Cell coverage is essential, and Canadians find service issues frustrating. The government has taken steps to expand wireless and broadband access in rural areas. I am from Gaspé, where 40 towns in the riding of Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia will have access to high-speed Internet as of next year thanks to a \$45-million investment. The people who live in those 40 towns, including Grosses-Roches, Matapédia, Carleton-sur-Mer and Sainte-Félicité, and all across my riding will have fibre optic service with download speeds of up to 100 megabytes. That is the kind of service we hope to offer. As of next year, 98% of the households in my riding will be connected. We have a plan, and that plan is working extremely well.

Obligations related to service delivery in rural areas like the ones I mentioned earlier must be integrated into spectrum licences to ensure that Canadians across the country have access to state-of-the-art wireless services.

[English]

This is not just it. Our government is also looking to the future. By 2023, experts expect as much as 10 connected devices for every person on earth. This is just the beginning. Wireless airwaves, known as spectrum, are essential to supporting increasing demand for data.

Our government is responding, especially by releasing new types of spectrum, as announced by my colleague the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development last week at the telecom summit. The goal is to ensure that the right spectrum is ready at the right time.

[Translation]

Releasing spectrum is part of the government's broader rural strategy, which also includes the connect to innovate program. The program will invest up to \$500 million between now and 2021 to improve access to high-speed Internet in more than 900 rural and remote communities.

Also, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, recently announced the details of its \$750-million broadband fund. The CRTC's goal for the fund is to ensure that wireless coverage includes as many major roads as possible. Wireless projects will be chosen on the basis of geographic coverage and kilometres of road covered.

[English]

Supporting new technologies also requires private investment in network infrastructure. In 2016, Canadian telecommunications companies invested more than \$11 billion in their networks. Wireless 4G networks, also known as LTE, are now available to 99% of Canadians.

Business of Supply

The government understands the need for reliable and affordable high-speed Internet and mobile coverage. We also believe that Canadians in all regions should have affordable access to these services.

[*Translation*]

Our government is working hard to ensure that all Canadians can benefit from quality telecommunications services at the best possible price. The 2018 annual report shows that competition is starting to have a downward impact on the price of wireless and Internet services.

Competition has driven the price on mobile wireless service markets down by 16% since last year. It is no secret that despite the progress that has been made, prices remain high compared to other countries.

[*English*]

Our government also supports a competitive marketplace where consumers are treated fairly. This is why we put forward a policy direction that would require the CRTC to consider competition, affordability, consumer interests and innovation in all its communication decisions. We are giving clear direction to the CRTC, but Canadian consumers must be at the forefront of all future decisions. In doing so, we are ensuring that the communications policy will be made through a consumer-first lens to ensure Canadians have access to quality service at more affordable prices.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

As I was saying, we have already accomplished a lot for Canadian telecommunications consumers. Prices are going down as coverage and speeds increase, which is excellent news.

We know that we need to do more to keep up with the rapid pace of change. However, only one party has demonstrated clear determination to take concrete action and that is our government. We are working for all Canadians.

At the beginning of my speech, I gave some tangible examples. Starting in 2017, we announced measures in the regions. If there is one region that is undoubtedly rural, it is the Gaspé Peninsula. In my riding, there are four RCMs and 58 towns and villages. As I was saying, 98% of homes will be connected to fibre optic broadband by next year. We started with the Avignon RCM, then we moved on to La Matapédia. Now it is La Mitis' turn and next it will be La Matanie's. Every village will be connected to high-speed Internet.

Those are concrete measures that our plan has delivered. We will continue our efforts with the investments we announced in budget 2019, for example. Money has been allocated for infrastructure. In terms of affordability, for example, money will be allocated to provide Internet services at \$10 a month to families receiving the Canada child benefit. Our government is implementing concrete measures to ensure that all families will have access to quality services. That is important.

No region anywhere in Canada should be left behind. Canada is a large country. There are businesses and families in every part of it and all Canadians must be connected to quality services to ensure their full development and allow them to reach their full potential.

Once again, our government has implemented a set of measures in pursuit of its specific commitment to ensure that these services are indeed made available.

I would like to close by saying that I am very proud of the work our government has done. We will continue our efforts because there is still more to be done. In fact, the policy recently put in place by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development seeks to ensure that the customer receiving the service is at the centre of the CRTC's decisions in order to guarantee adequate and timely coverage at a good price.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion and to ask a question.

It is important to recognize that Canadians received \$20 billion for auctioning off the spectrum from the use of the cellphone and the mobile industry. A lot of people are not aware that \$20 billion has gone to the coffers of Conservative and Liberal governments and, at the same time, their policies have also resulted in the highest costs in the world. It is a bad policy because it also is coupled with a lack of coverage to 63% of rural and remote areas.

We heard testimony from the CRTC at the innovation committee this past week where it admitted again that it is cutting the rural and remote speed times down to half the urban times in terms of expectations. On top of that, there is no plan to enforce improvement on that. Why are Liberals building obsolescence for the future of our rural and remote communities?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleague that our government has made some significant investments since we came to power. For example, we have invested in about 180 connectivity projects that will give 900 rural or remote communities in Canada access to high-speed Internet.

I also want to remind him that the cost of Internet services and cellular service dropped by 16% in the past year. Work is ongoing. The minister has implemented a policy to ensure that the CRTC puts customers at the forefront of its decisions. Our objective is to ensure affordable, quality access to all Canadians, no matter where they live.

● (1245)

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, the government has clawed back a spectrum, not because companies did not own up to the conditions of the spectrum but because the spectrum itself was worth more.

Business of Supply

In question period last week, I asked the minister about the clawback and repurpose of the 3,500 megahertz spectrum, and he called it a clawback. The Liberals are kneecapping rural and remote communities where small and regional players have designed networks, have innovated and are supplying services. They are either going to cut services to rural customers or they are going to have a permanent cap on the services' ability to grow.

Why is the Liberal government talking a good game on affordability and access in rural areas, and handicapping the very people who are offering the services that are bringing up the quality of life of rural residents in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for his commitment to rural communities across Canada.

Internet access is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Our government has worked to ensure that Canadians in rural areas can participate fully in the digital economy. This is why we announced changes to the 3,500-megahertz spectrum. We want to support the development of 5G access without jeopardizing Internet access in rural areas.

I do not think I need to spell it out for my colleague, who knows very well that 5G comes with some particularly transformative benefits for consumers and businesses across Canada. We are keeping our promise to connect all Canadians in rural communities. I want to clarify that we will provide 5G service as soon as it is available, before any other services for rural Canadians are affected.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise today to join in the debate about telecom service in Canada. I am very proud of the work our government has done on this file and what we have achieved.

Our government is focused on three elements of telecom services that matter most to middle-class families: quality, coverage and price. We are committed to promoting greater competition to give Canadians more choice and better prices. We have been focused on this since coming to office. Solid, reliable broadband and mobile Internet are vital to supporting Canada's vibrant and growing digital economy. Ensuring Canadians have access to the latest technologies is a fundamental part of our innovation and skills plan.

That is why our government is committed to a national target in which 95% of Canadian homes and businesses will have access to Internet speeds of at least 50/10 megabits per second by 2026 and 100% by 2030. This is an important commitment and one that is perfectly in line with the broadband Internet speed objectives set by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, for Canadian households and businesses. To achieve this we are opening up new wireless airwaves also known as spectrum.

Spectrum is a critical resource for wireless communication and to meet these commitments. Whether it is for smart phones, fixed Internet, streaming videos, or GPS, current and next-generation services would not be possible without these airwaves. New spectrum will also be the backbone of the 5G revolution that we are on the verge of.

5G is expected to be a paradigm shift in how wireless services are delivered. It will support more data, more devices and faster speeds than previous generations. To roll this out effectively, our government will ensure the right spectrum and rules are in place at the right time to support the timely introduction of new and innovative technologies in Canada.

Our five-year spectrum release plan lays out our plan for making spectrum available in a timely manner. We are working to pave the way for 5G deployment in Canada to ensure that all Canadians have an opportunity to benefit from this new technology and participate fully in the digital economy. It will be important for providing Internet connectivity to Canadians in urban and rural areas. It is designed to provide both mobile and home Internet services.

For 5G to be delivered effectively, operators need a variety of what are called spectrum bands. In this case, low-band spectrum will help with coverage, mid-band for a combination of coverage and capacity and high-band for significant increase in capacity.

In early April, we completed the first of the auction in our plan. Through the 600 megahertz auction, regional competitors more than doubled their share of low-band spectrum.

The auction raised \$3.47 billion, which, as has always been the practice, will be remitted to the consolidated revenue fund administered by the Receiver General for Canada. This money will be used to support priorities for Canadians.

It is important to remember that this revenue is collected over the life of the agreement with providers, which is often decades. In the case of the 600 megahertz auction, it is 20 years.

We are pleased that regional providers more than doubled their share of 600 megahertz spectrum following our auction in March. This will strengthen competition, which will drive prices down and improve coverage.

We are also planning to release more spectrum. In fact, we are planning three more spectrum auctions over the next three years making more spectrum available for mobile services than we have ever before.

Of course, we also understand the need to modernize our rules. That is why we launched a developmental licence playbook to help innovators get temporary access to spectrum which will allow them to test the functions of 5G.

Our government is taking action to empower current and future innovators and entrepreneurs by making it easier for individuals and businesses to test and research leading-edge spectrum devices.

Business of Supply

In addition, the new developmental spectrum licence process supports the R and D of new technologies and services that will benefit all Canadians. This includes medical service companies that want to enable doctors to monitor their patients remotely. It will help tech firms working to equip municipalities with automated systems. It will allow research firms seeking to bring connected cars to market to better test their technologies, to improve safety and save lives on Canadian roads.

• (1250)

Officials at Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada have noted explosive growth relating to requests to test in Canada and have received positive stakeholder feedback for our efforts to accommodate new systems. In the past two years, ISED has issued over 300 developmental licences that facilitate innovation and experimentation in the wireless industry.

Looking to the future, we are currently preparing decisions on two consultations aimed at improving access to spectrum. This includes backhaul licence fees that take into account future innovative and data intensive uses. The current fee structure, which is based on how much data one sends, can make it prohibitively expensive to move large amounts of data via wireless backhaul. A new fee structure would significantly reduce the cost of offering 5G services in remote locations or where fibre is not yet available.

My colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, is consulting on a new set of smaller spectrum service areas known as tier 5. The intent of these consultations is to meet current and future wireless needs, encourage additional access to spectrum within rural areas and support new technologies and emerging use cases. This consultation responds to a specific concern we heard from small service providers that they face challenges in acquiring spectrum.

By creating smaller tiers, we will recognize the inherent differences in rural areas, make it easier for smaller service providers to acquire spectrum they need to operate and grow their businesses and ultimately lead to improved connectivity for rural Canadians. We are examining new, dynamic and innovative licensing approaches to respond to new service opportunities, including rural and remote connectivity.

We know that the demand for spectrum will continue to grow and we need to adapt in order to meet that demand. This means not just accelerating the pace at which we auction spectrum, but releasing it in innovative new ways. We are developing new innovative and advanced tools to get the most out of Canada's wireless airways. These tools will help us understand the spectrum environment so we can make more and better use of spectrum available in the future, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Our government has achieved a lot already on this important file. Prices are going down and speed and coverage are going up. However, we are committed to encouraging affordable telecom services to help bridge the digital divide, foster inclusivity and support an innovative economy. Our government recognizes that in some cases rural and remote communities can only be served by having access to spectrum, and we are working to ensure that spectrum resources are available for the various services that offer rural broadband connectivity.

Officials are already meeting with small wireless Internet service providers to better understand any challenges they have experienced in accessing spectrum. To date, they have heard back from over 100 small Internet service providers that have shared their experiences and ideas.

Delivering universal high-speed Internet to every Canadian in the quickest and most cost-effective way will require a coordinated effort with our partners in the private sector and across all levels of government.

To meet this commitment, budget 2019 proposed a coordinated plan. This includes a \$1.7-billion top-up to the connect to innovate program, a new universal broadband fund and commitment to securing advanced low Earth orbit satellite capacity to serve the most rural and remote regions of Canada. Through this comprehensive and important work, we will deliver on our commitment to ensure every household and business in Canada has access to high-speed Internet by 2030.

• (1255)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his work at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. Over the last year, the member chaired a review of the Copyright Act, which was very difficult. I congratulate him on his efforts in doing that. It was a long process that required a lot of hard work from all parties, and I commend him as the chair.

I take some concern with regard to this particular issue, especially given the fact that his Liberal government already has billions of dollars from the spectrum auction in its coffers. He suggests that a new fund is going to be rolled out in a new budget, which will require a future government to make that resource available. Why did the government not use the previous billions of dollars it had for this, and why is it relying on more Canadian taxpayer dollars for the future? Is he satisfied with the previous government taking \$20 billion and now only 30% is required to make this investment into rural and remote areas? Why did the government not act sooner with this money? Where did it go?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. colleague for his question and comments. I have certainly enjoyed spending the last four years on the committee with my colleague. Throughout our term, we did a study on broadband connectivity in Canada. One of the things we heard, time and again, was that Canada is not a one-size-fits-all; different areas require different approaches.

Business of Supply

When we look at what we have been doing over our last term, we see there was a \$900 million investment in the connect to innovate program to bring in high-speed Internet and \$1.7 billion put into a universal broadband fund to target every connecting household in the country by 2030. That is the plan. In order for us to move forward, we must have an end game. When we want to ensure that everybody in Canada has access to those types of speeds in order to hit our target of 2030, these are some of the things we have to do. One of the things that came from our last recommendation in that study was to invest in low-earth orbit satellites, LEOs. The government has invested \$100 million in LEOs, which help rural communities, especially up north. This is new technology. As we look around, there will be a lot more new technology as it continues to develop.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes is served by the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, which has developed a working group, the Eastern Ontario Regional Network. It has a shovel-ready project that requires a \$71 million investment from the federal government. The provincial government in Ontario has committed \$71 million and the municipalities have committed the same. All of the Liberal members in eastern Ontario, including a minister of the government, have signed on and endorsed the Eastern Ontario Regional Network project. If my colleague is unfamiliar with it, this project would close the cell gap, which is vital in our region, but it would also allow for reliable broadband Internet in homes and businesses. This region is home to 1.1 million people. The current government has made all the noises and waved its hands about being committed to connecting Canadians, but there are 1.1 million Canadians in eastern Ontario, including in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, who are counting on the current government to commit \$71 million. Will it commit that money?

• (1300)

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, from what we are hearing, the Doug Ford government in Ontario does not want to co-operate with the federal government.

Having said that, I would like to point out that more than 190 indigenous communities have already received support with new and improved high-speed Internet to 900 rural and indigenous communities. That is what this program is all about. There are many different programs in this country, and I look forward to working toward getting to where we need to go.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to stand and represent the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

When I found out we were going to be debating telecommunications policy here today, I was very excited. Accessing services and the cost of those services are barriers that Canadians from coast to coast to coast experience every single day. When I speak to Canadians, cost of living is their number one concern. With the Liberal government's huge tax increases weighing them down, the added cost of a \$100-a-month cellphone bill can be devastating. Canadians are struggling with affordability more now than ever and the Liberal government has just made it worse.

Yes, I was excited to talk about and debate real solutions and ideas about how we can support Canadians and make their lives more affordable. Then I read the NDP motion. This motion is typical New Democratic policy. It identifies a very real problem and then proposes terrible ideas to deal with it. This motion is full of ideas that are impractical at best and ruinous at worst.

Let us examine the motion and see how many of these proposals would only serve to hurt Canadians. My NDP colleague proposes a price cap for mobile phone bills. That would be a disastrous idea. Canadian mobile phone companies have to spend billions on new infrastructure every year to keep up with new technology and new data demands. They must spend hundreds of millions of dollars on spectrum so they can offer services at all, not to mention the immense cost of bringing Canada into the 5G future we all desire. One report estimated well over \$20 billion. If the government were to implement a price cap on mobile services, it would make these investments impossible.

We all want lower prices. In committee last week, I questioned a representative from the telecommunication industry about how we can lower prices and ensure we see the investments we need. The only solution is more free market, not less. I know that New Democrats prefer big government, bureaucratic ideas that only work in university classrooms and, I suppose, probably in their caucus room, but they do not work in the real world. We need to see more competition in the marketplace, more new entrants and smaller regional companies; and the existing big mobile companies are going to have to accept that fact. I want to make myself extremely clear. I am not defending the status quo. Clearly, data prices are too high in Canada. However, a top-down big-government price cap would only make things worse in the long run.

Regarding the second point on data caps, I agree with the sentiment. Like many Canadians, I also see the mobile phone plans available around the world that offer unlimited data plans. Unlimited data plans should be an attainable option for Canadians. However, mandating that is not the right policy. Again, only free market solutions will ensure we have the services we all demand. Canada has among the fastest mobile networks in the world, a testament to the amount of investment we have seen in our country. However, data usage is a challenge. Modern services like video streaming put a huge drain on network resources, and if everyone is using these services, it can bog down the connection speed. This is why I find it annoying when mobile phone companies advertise steaming sports in high definition on their networks. That activity is not really practical across the board under current circumstances.

Business of Supply

In a future world, with 5G and Internet of things and all of the innovations those will bring, it is unavoidable that data caps will have to go. However, we are not there yet and we have to make sure the accessibility of the network is open to all Canadians. Therefore, the logical question is, do I like data caps? Of course not; no one likes data caps, but forcing a big-government solution on the issue is not the right way to proceed.

Regarding the point on outrageous sales practices, let me start by saying that no one supports companies preying on people and using abusive practices. I question if an entire bill of rights is necessary when consumer protection rules already exist, but in principle, this is a point I believe there is widespread agreement on, and I would like to hear more from New Democrats as to exactly what that would entail.

• (1305)

Clearly, when the government put out its air passenger bill of rights, it was all marketing and, even now, on the implementation, when I talk to most Canadians about air travel, they want to know who is going to enforce it. They do not see the actual promise attached to the marketing. I would say, in this case, unless the NDP starts putting forward concrete proposals on how current legislation could be improved so that we deal with this, it is just marketing for a party that is quite low in the polls.

Sales practices that lie or misrepresent what a customer is agreeing to need to stop, and they need to stop now. The point in the motion that talks about spectrum is a great opportunity to speak about how the government is hurting rural Canadians with its 3,500 megahertz clawback. I asked the minister about this last week, and he did not deny that rural customers will lose service, and he even called it a “clawback” in this place. At least he gets points for being honest.

The 3,500 megahertz band is essential for ensuring Canadians can join the 5G future. We are not denying that at all. However, government policy that cuts off service to rural Canadians with no recourse is absolutely unacceptable.

The chair of the industry committee just spoke, and he talked about all the new technology that will help people in rural areas to access medical services. This policy eats away at that promise, because if those areas that have the least access are being clawed back spectrum that is necessary to run the service, these innovations, these abilities to offer medical services in rural areas, just will not happen.

Exactly how many people will be affected at this point remains unclear, but I asked a mobile fixed wireless company about the impacts during an industry committee meeting last week. The response it gave was that it would be significant.

The 3,500 megahertz band has been previously allocated to fix wireless for rural communities. Now that band is in major demand for 5G. The fact is that it is not the government's fault. International forces determine which bands should be used. However, what is the government's fault in this case is not addressing the fact that crucial rural infrastructure is now in conflict with extremely important new technologies.

Even if no one lost service from the clawback, and I think many will, repurposing the band to mobile without first finding an

alternative for fixed rural wireless will stop rural providers from being able to acquire more spectrum to grow their business or to provide faster speeds.

We also need to be mindful that fixed wireless technology and the spectrum required to run it has allowed regional players to provide service to rural areas, which raises competition, which facilitates better prices.

This whole decision needs a rethink to ensure rural customers would not be left in the cold. However, over and over again, the Liberal government has proven it is not especially concerned with rural Canadians.

Looping back to the NDP suggestion within the motion, it is fundamentally flawed. Frankly, I am surprised that the NDP, a party that never saw a tax it did not like—well, except for when the B.C. NDP opposed the carbon tax—would oppose money flowing into general revenue. The NDP says that over \$20 billion brought into government over the last number of years has been squandered. Do not get me wrong. The Liberal government has squandered much more than \$20 billion. However, under a Conservative government, that revenue was used for health care, old age security, social transfers. I suppose the NDP does not think those things are important.

In principle, can spectrum auctions be done better? Absolutely; we can never stop working to make sure that government programs function better. Unfortunately with this motion, the NDP would clearly rather attack the previous Conservative government for funding health care and social services than find a workable solution.

Regarding rural broadband in general, this is a topic that every single Canadian needs to pay attention to, to work to find solutions. While the major mobile companies like to say that the vast majority of Canadians have good services, many do not and they are Canadians too.

I was very disappointed during a committee meeting last week when the member for Pontiac lamented the fact that the first phase of the CRTC rural broadband funding was only open to the territories. The needs of our northern brothers and sisters are immense, and if service even exists in the remote north, the cost would make most Canadians' heads spin.

Business of Supply

•(1310)

Making sure that remote northern communities get a first crack at broadband funding is a positive move, but clearly at least one government member disagrees. To give him the benefit of the doubt, he is probably just frustrated because the government's connect to innovate program is such a disaster. This program was supposed to bring broadband to rural communities. Unfortunately, it has largely been a communications exercise in trying to get Liberal members good press.

Based on an Order Paper question from my colleague from Edmonton Riverbend, we learned that less than 10% of the funding promised and announced has actually gone out the door. This is a government of stalled and delayed infrastructure funding, so it should not come as a surprise, but the government at least seems to pretend to care about rural broadband.

It is not just me saying that the Liberal government has problems. The Auditor General declared last year that the connect to innovate program was poorly designed and did not get good value for money. Maybe that finding is why the government refuses to fund the Auditor General now.

There has been announcement after announcement with press releases, but no funding. I have a list of projects with start dates in 2017 and 2018 on which literally zero dollars have been spent. For Câble-Axion and Projet Redondance Estrie in Brome-Missisquoi, Quebec, the amount of money pledged was \$119,000, but the money given to date is zero. For CoopTel, Quebec, again, with just over half a million dollars, to this date zero dollars have been paid. We also have Duclos & Michaud Télécom, projet Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Quebec: Again, from over \$1 million, the amount actually provided to date is zero. I could go on and on with these things right across this great country. It is absolutely shocking to see that a program designed and launched with so much fanfare still has not found its feet.

Canadians expect that their MPs show up with a cheque that maybe two years later might be cashed. It seems to me that the Liberal plan is to break ground on these projects this summer as a pre-election, taxpayer-funded media blitz. I asked the minister responsible if any projects announced already would be re-announced this summer, and she refused to say no. Now, as we know with the Liberal government and the SNC-Lavalin scandal, a denial often means yes. Therefore, a refusal to answer probably definitely means yes.

Now we need to have a real plan to deliver broadband services to all Canadians, no matter where they live, a plan that works with every single level of government to identify where and when we can get cable in the ground and people connected. We also have to work with the existing telecommunications companies, not to do what this motion does and simply attack them.

Earlier, an NDP member said she was concerned that small companies are being played down by the larger companies and that more competition is needed. The price cap, again, affects all companies, including small or regional players, and they have the least access to capital and the smallest footprint in terms of already existing infrastructure. Therefore, the New Democrats really need to

figure out what they want to do and the mechanism they want to do it by.

Do not get me wrong, the big three are not innocent. Canadian mobile companies receive among the highest revenue per customer in the world, while claiming poverty. Over the last number of days, I have seen several things from various telecommunications companies that make it seem to Canadians like they do not take affordability seriously. The other day in a panel at an industry conference, one representative said that there is no price challenge because most Canadians have phones. This is a totally absurd statement and extremely unhelpful when we need everyone to work together. Just because most Canadians have a place to live, that does not mean there is no housing affordability crisis in much of the country.

Another statement that struck me as incredible was that Canadians cannot expect price drops because their demands on data are increasing. Now, taking it to the extreme, are we then to expect a \$1,000 basic data bill when 5G rolls around? Prices have to come down, not data prices relative to what data cost 10 years ago, but real prices in real terms. The sector must take that seriously. Canadians are not an endless piggy bank. Despite all that, and despite how good it can feel to criticize the telecommunications sector, that would be absolutely zero towards connecting Canadians and lowering their bills. It is perhaps good politics, but bad policy.

•(1315)

This is a major challenge for everyone, and everyone must work together to get this done.

The motion contains ideas that would do nothing to address the structural problems in Canada, help rural and remote residents get connected, or ensure adequate competition.

In the NDP world, where the motion would be law, companies would never be able to build the capital needed to invest in facilities to connect more Canadians. There would never be 5G, or there would be 5G but it would happen in other places. We would see a continued flight of talent and capital to other regions. Young, aspiring creators and programmers, the people who want to create new systems and innovations, would just go to the places that allow them. Again, the NDP is putting a cap on all these plans.

The answer is not big government and less freedom. More economic freedom is what brings prosperity. More freedom in this space to adopt new technologies and push the envelope would allow Canadian innovators to stay in Canada, participate in our economy and help Canadians lead the field when it comes to the adoption of new technologies, particularly regarding the Internet of things.

We need more competition in that sector, not regulations that ensure no company will ever want to compete. We also need new investment, innovation and price caps.

We need only look to the 1970s line “Zap, you're frozen.” It is very easy for government to dictate a price. However, it is very difficult for those operating in the market to then be able to invest properly and make capital plans. It would run from small operators all the way up to the large ones.

I have never faulted NDP members for having their heart in the right place. They clearly have identified a problem. However, their solutions, I have to say, border on the absurd.

We have a New Democratic Party that thinks with its heart and a Prime Minister who wants to grow the economy from the heart out. Conservatives will use their heads to find good policy that ensures all Canadians can live a prosperous and successful life.

Canadians are drowning under the weight of the Liberal government's affordability crisis. A future Conservative government would ensure that people have more money in their pockets and more market choice, because that is what brings prices and costs down for everyone.

Again, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. I hope I have added some thought to the debate. I certainly appreciate that all of us come here with our strong ideas on how things should be. I know I have mine, and I am prepared to defend them. However, as we move forward, let us really focus on trying to find practical solutions.

Canadians do not care what is in our minds. They just want to be able to pay their bills and see their kids go to school, get good access to the latest health care, utilize technologies and be able to stay in Canada. Those are the things we should be focused on in our telecom policy, and a future Conservative government would ensure that Canadians can get ahead and will not simply tread water.

• (1320)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member has made the industry committee entertaining and interesting in all aspects. I do enjoy serving with him. It has been a good committee to serve on, and the member has made it a good environment for that.

I want to be very clear about where our current predicament started. It was partly with the member for Beauce as the minister of industry. I do not know if the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola supported the member for Beauce, who has now created his own People's Party. It was the policy direction of basically taking the spectrum auction in and not using it appropriately. The question is, with regard to policy, why we did not actually put more competitive things in place.

There were other expenditures that the previous government did. An example is the implementation of the HST, which the previous government did and the NDP opposed by itself. People now pay HST on their phones and their services, and if they are happy about it, they have the previous government to thank for it. By the way, the \$6 billion used to grease the wheels of the provinces is still being paid with interest, because we are still in record deficits, thanks to the record deficit the previous government put us in.

Germane to this discussion is the issue surrounding the cap. The cap is to put in price stability, which is necessary right now. The

Business of Supply

member described this idea as absurd. However, the reality is that many countries have used this, including our own country when it comes to utilities and telephone prices. Why is that an absurd idea, when other countries use this type of measure to protect consumers?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's work and I enjoy sitting with him on the committee so we can have these discussions.

There is a certain danger in thinking that because one country has a particular set of circumstances we need to apply that to our own situation. Let us just focus on the Canadian context for a moment. The Auditor General has said that it could take up to \$160 billion to bring the whole country up to the standard that has been dictated through different committee reports and CRTC's own goals. That is an incredible amount of money.

Regarding 5G, I mentioned earlier that industry estimates that it is going to be a \$24-billion investment so that Canada can be, while not the first, among the first to adopt that. The ability to have higher download speeds would increase Canadian productivity, which is important to our economy. Both of those things require massive investments. The New Democrats have not been able to answer the question of where that money would come from. They can point to the spectrum, but they have talked about \$20 billion in about 14 years. That is not going to pay. If they were to divert money from the spectrum, that would not even help toward investing in 5G, let alone what the Auditor General has pointed out.

I question the policy because it is impractical for moving forward to ensure universal accessibility and the next wave of innovation with 5G.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor West for bringing forward this motion for us to discuss today. I feel like I am in the industry committee. We all serve together on that committee, and we have the same kind of humour going back and forth around policy, understating some positions and overstating others.

I am interested in how we can measure success in this area. The government is proposing \$11.5 million over five years, starting this year, for two Statistics Canada surveys, so that we are not relying on industry data but rather Statistics Canada data. In a previous study we did in the industry committee around rural broadband, we were having a lot of trouble getting to the root of where we have gaps in coverage.

I know the party of the hon. member across the way really was against Statistics Canada, if the truth be known, cutting out the long-form census and gutting Statistics Canada. Would the member approve the spending of Statistics Canada's budget in this area?

We were talking about mesh technology. It is not just about money; it is also about introducing technology that will change the game. We heard at our last committee meeting about mesh technology and low-earth orbit satellites. We have committed \$1.7 billion for technology development. Would those be two good investments that the member would approve of?

Business of Supply

•(1325)

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I think any Canadian government is going to look at innovative ways.

Specifically, on Statistics Canada, the member knows I have some concerns about how Statistics Canada operates. The government had a mandate to bring back the mandatory aspect of the long-form census. It was clear it had a democratic mandate to do that. However, I do not believe Statistics Canada should be getting access to people's personal financial information without their consent, which is something at which the Privacy Commissioner is currently looking.

Getting to the brass tacks of it, affordability means that Canadians feel they can access services and do not have to choose between paying their rent or paying their Internet bill. We want to see, through market mechanisms, a stronger emphasis on affordability. Unfortunately, even with the 35 megahertz clawback and repurpose, and the minister has clearly called it a clawback, members must know it will reduce the amount of service or even cut off service to certain areas.

We need to be focused on the real issues. There are all sorts of things government can support that are new and novel. However, when someone cannot access e-health or cannot process an Interac transaction because the broadband is insufficient, that is what we need to be focused on in this place.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola on his background knowledge on this.

I want to provide a little background. I had a small business in my community of Salmon Arm in the North Okanagan—Shuswap, which is semi-rural community. I worked with a rural internet provider who would actually tap into my fibre optic plan, because we had good access. He would beam it out through a radio signal on the roof, bounce it off another antenna and hit a remote community. He was trying to address the needs of about 20 rural homes that were simply out of range. However, because of data hogs, he had to put caps on the amount of usage. The motion asks for abolishing data caps on broadband internet, but that was one example where it had to be put in place, because of one data hog who simply put all of the others off-line.

I would like the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola to respond to that.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member and his work in his riding and also in this chamber. He gives me far too much credit, I think most of us would agree.

However, again, under the current technology we have now, it only takes a few data hogs, as the member called them. They are using different streaming services and can block out other things. Therefore, it does not make any sense under the current technology.

I know Great Britain has seen an increase, with just the basic introduction of some new technology, that is ten times the previous speed. In that kind of environment, we may be able to see some progress on dealing with data caps. Until that point, a data cap is a market mechanism for those people who consume a certain amount to ensure they do not over consume and crowd out the bandwidth.

We all have had cases where we have important things we need to do. That just points again to the NDP. It has really good intentions, but terrible execution on policy items.

•(1330)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to this important issue today. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Windsor West.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Windsor West, who continues to fight for affordability in the key issue of connectivity. That is really important work. As the dean of our caucus, his leadership and his continued patience with those of us who are new and still learning has been absolutely tremendous. I want to acknowledge him for that.

I represent North Island—Powell River, which is a very rural and remote community. I have a lot of small islands in my riding, a lot of communities that are very hard to access with respect to cell connectivity. A lot of communities are challenged with Internet connection. In fact, several constituents in my riding still use dial-up. That is just the reality facing so many rural communities across the country.

In the last few weeks, I have stood in the House with numerous petitions that desperately ask for more connectivity for cell.

In November of last year, a young man named Duncan Moffat drove off a road between Campbell River and Sayward. He was trapped in his vehicle for seven full days. His cellphone was right beside him, but he could not make a call because there was no reception in that area. For seven days, he lived off the oranges and Gatorade, which he had in the front seat. Luckily he was found by a passing hunter, and he is still with us today.

What was most poignant for me as a mother was hearing the story of when he was found. His mother could not be contacted immediately because she was out in the rural areas, putting up signs alerting people to the fact that her son had gone missing. It was not until she drove into an area with cellphone reception that she was notified her son had been found. This is the reality of many rural and remote communities.

Affordability is a big issue in my riding. There are a lot of hard-working people in my riding and I am really grateful for their input. They connect with me all the time and talk about the challenges they face.

Business of Supply

I heard a member earlier speaking about gas prices. Rural and remote communities, like the ones I represent, have some of the highest gas prices in British Columbia right now. Recently, I wrote to the minister to ask for a petroleum monitoring agency to be set up. We need to have more accountability to everyday Canadians about why the costs are so high, especially when at people in those communities have no other way to get to doctor appointments, to go to the hospital, to get to specialists, which in my riding are ferry rides away, hundreds of kilometres away in some cases.

Affordability is exactly what we are talking about. We are talking about the high cost to Canadians of cellular and Internet services. I think it is \$20 a month more in this country, sometimes even higher, than other countries. Comparable countries have done similar work to what the NDP proposes today to really take this issue seriously.

I have seniors in my riding who are struggling from month to month to just meet their basic necessities. We need to look at all the costs and ensure they are as low as they possibly can be.

The big telecom businesses in Canada are making almost 40% profit every year. They are not taking a portion of that and investing it into rural and remote communities. They are leaving that to small telecom businesses, which are working their butts off every day. I have talked to some of those businesses in my region. They have some great solutions, but they do not see anything happening to make it the next step.

● (1335)

Sixty-three per cent of rural Canadians do not have high-speed broadband. I think of a community in my riding, Gold River, that is doing a lot of active work. It had a mill closure many years ago. A year and a half ago it lost its grocery store. It does not have a bank. People live over an hour away from a larger community. People are really working hard in that community every day to build an economy. What they do not have is cell reception. It has people come out in droves because it is a beautiful place to go. Tourism and community services are very strong, it needs that to attract more people.

Highway 28 and Highway 19 in my riding are two of the most dangerous highways, with thousands of people driving them every day with no cell reception.

Cost matters, but so do these rural communities, which are working every day to make a difference in the lives of their communities. They want to build an economy, but they have been left behind by successive federal governments when the resource-based economy changed. They need to see some of these things happen.

We need to ensure that rural and remote communities are a priority. We know Canada pays some of the highest costs in the world for cellphone usage. One of the measurements is for two gigabytes, \$20 on average. When we see those high costs, I think of some of the people in my riding who have to make a decision whether to their pay rent or buy their medications. We recently heard that many people across the country were \$200 away from financially falling apart.

It is motions like this that take concrete action, that take the next step. Companies are making 40% profit. We want to ensure that

everyday Canadians stop being gouged by big corporations. When is the government going to take the side of hard-working, everyday Canadians? People are working their butts off and the least we can do is work our butts off on their behalf.

The government has multiple spectrum auctions. From 2001-19, the government has made over \$17 billion in revenue from telecommunications companies. Where is that investment in small communities? How are we going to make those prices go down? Rural and remote communities are often forgotten.

When I was first elected, I started getting numerous phone calls from seniors who had been cut off their guaranteed income supplements. It resulted in Bill C-449, which I have tabled in the House, to ensure they would not be cut off. Simple solutions sometimes make the best impact. The solution I proposed was to give seniors a one-year grace period. They receive the guaranteed income supplement and they have a one-year grace period to get their taxes done. Seniors have health challenges and family commitments that make it hard to get their taxes done on time. If we do not look after those who built our country, we fail them.

The bill also asked the CRA to reach out to them and find out why they were not getting their taxes done on time. That is important because some families are challenged because their loved ones have Alzheimer's and do not do what they should do. We need to support them. It would mean that no seniors would be cut off GIS if we gave them a year's grace period. Tens of thousands of seniors would not lose that small stipend that can make the difference between having a place to live or being evicted.

When I look at something as smart as this motion, it is time we seek practical solutions that make a difference, that we support hard-working Canadians over those giant corporations that are making significant profits. It is time to see them as a priority.

● (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, for those who are following the debate, I emphasize that this is a government that has done a lot more than just talk about the issue. Through several budgets, millions of dollars have been allocated to the connect to innovate fund to ensure that hundreds of communities all over Canada could be connected in one form or another. In fact, one of the programs in the 2018 budget enabled access by some of the poorest families in all regions of Canada for \$10 a month. Through a budgetary measure, and by working with the companies, this is something we were able to attain.

Business of Supply

For the NDP, there would be equal access and one level of pricing throughout the country, whether it was in a community with 25 people in the furthest northern parts of Canada or in a high-density city like Toronto. That is what the NDP would ultimately like to achieve, which is very admirable. When we look at what this government has been able to achieve over the last couple of years, such as committing \$500 million, gaining access for up to 900 different communities and ensuring that it is affordable with the \$10 plan, would the member not at least acknowledge that these are helping Canadians get connected, and at a much more affordable price than what the members opposite are suggesting?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out to the member that my job in this House is to represent the people of North Island—Powell River. I represent them with great honour, because they work very hard under challenging circumstances. My job is not to compliment the government. It is to look at what it can do better. As a member who represents rural and remote communities, I take that responsibility very seriously.

When those communities are doing well, the resources are flowing and they have good resources and are paying outstanding amounts of taxes, everyone is good to them, but when those challenges come and those resources change, those communities are left behind. I hope this member understands that rural and remote communities across this country have some of the most agile, creative folks he would ever have the honour and privilege of meeting, which I regularly have. They are creating solutions every day.

However, trying to find ways to attract and retain people and find ways to bring their children home, or for them to stay when they want to, is a challenge every day because of the lack of those resources. If we gave some of those small communities affordable Internet and cell reception, it would change their lives and their opportunities. Shame on any government that will not honour them for the work they have done for this country.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, being from British Columbia, the member understands the challenges in British Columbia, particularly in rural and remote communities that have little to no Internet. The NDP proposed a price cap. A price cap would basically make it more difficult for small regional players, with less access to capital, to reinvest in their networks to expand affordable Internet. The price cap would kneecap these smaller operators. Does the NDP have a solution to the problem it would create by proposing this?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to this member that in 2007, the Conservatives said that they were going to set aside spectrum so that those smaller organizations would be able to do that incredible work. It was an absolute failure, and the reason it did not work at all was that the rules excluded them because they had less capital. Those organizations working in my riding and in many ridings across the country are willing to do the work, and they have innovative solutions. We can make that work, but it needs investment and support, and it definitely needs rules that do not exclude them. That was absolutely false advertising, which the Conservatives are well known for.

• (1345)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the session is getting long, but I want to acknowledge you, and

more importantly, your staff. We share the same floor in the Valour Building, and I think it is appropriate to say how nice the people on your team are to everyone on the floor, including to my staff. That is something to note as the session winds down, because I appreciate that.

I am proud that the member for New Westminster—Burnaby brought this motion forward. People should be concerned and upset about what is taking place with respect to mobile devices, because they are now an essential service. They are essential not only for emergencies but for the way people do business, connect to family, entertain and experience cultures and the world we have at our doorstep and beyond, as we are now connected globally with friends, family and other people.

What has happened over the last number of years is that we have squandered the opportunity as a country to make this a process we could use for innovation and investment. The reality is that the spectrum we have been selling is similar to our air, water and land. It is the people's asset. It is basically the ability to rent the space to send signals and data. That is something I do not think the Canadian public has come to realize. Previous governments, including the current government, have received over \$20 billion in compensation. That should be acknowledged, because that is reflected in the pricing, when we look at Rogers, Telus and Bell, to name a few that have gone to these spectrum auctions. It has been done differently in many other parts of the world. In fact, it has increased the prices Canadians pay.

Are people happy with the status quo? If the answer is yes, if they are happy with their cellphone prices, the data policies and their experience as customers, then the Liberals and Conservatives are the people to advocate for the status quo. The motion we have put forth, which I will get into in a few moments, offers ideas that would enhance accountability, price stability and innovation for this country.

We believe that the status quo need a shake up, because Canadians download the least among developed nations, yet we experience the highest costs. If usage starts to climb, our prices are going to skyrocket to double and triple the costs we have now if we keep the status quo, which the government and the Conservatives are advocating with their strategies. They have not worked. There have been success stories with respect to how we have rolled this out. However, the reality is that we cannot keep the status quo. Canada is falling behind, not only regarding individual pricing but in blocking innovation and jobs. Most important, we are not doing anything about it, other than essentially passing it on and hoping that something is going to fix itself, and it will not.

The motion we have crafted is in line with something I have also advocated for in the House in the past, which is Motion No. 175, regarding a digital bill of rights. The digital bill of rights would have a rules-based system for everything from net neutrality to how people are treated as customers. There would be a set of rules and principles in place so that companies and customers could evaluate what they were getting into.

Business of Supply

It is fair to say that when we go to buy a cellphone or a mobile package now, we feel frustration similar to when we buy a car, insurance or a number of different products for which there are a litany of qualifications and excuses. It can be very complicated and undermine our experience and grow our frustration. That is no way to run an essential service.

In fact, to some degree, the data cap of \$10 per month we are proposing would put us in line with the average for the OECD countries. Price caps have been in place for other types of things we have had in the past, such as electricity and phones, when we rolled out phone programs in the past. Price caps and those types of measures can come and go. We have a regulatory body that could do this right now, the CRTC, to bring stability and fairness to the market.

• (1350)

If those caps were put in place, they would be adjusted on a yearly basis, with input from the public, the provinces, industry and consumer groups. There would be a process in place to create a sense of stability. The review process would take place every year, as I mentioned, and we would look at the average pricing in the OECD countries, which is a fair and representative way to do it.

There are some interesting anomalies out there with regard to comparables. Australia has pricing that is 40% lower than in Canada, and it has better service and range. In India it is 70% lower. What is unique to the Canadian experience right now is that our average for downloading data is low compared to different countries. As we grow to 5G and go to more content that requires more downloading, it is going to raise the price under the status quo. I hope the other parties will come around on this, because it will be a recipe for failure in the future. It will block innovation and restrict investment in this country, because countries look at our infrastructure for wireless and broadband technology as a way of measuring whether they can grow and expand their markets.

I would also note that an important part of a solution is to have a basic plan. For example, there are individuals who do not want a phone. It is an essential service right now for emergencies and connecting with families. We are moving away from land lines. Even to find a job, someone needs a reliable phone plan. We marginalize people even more when there is no basic plan. Those trying to lift themselves up into the digital economy are prevented from doing so because of the policies in place.

Data caps should be abolished. CRTC representatives appeared at committee and said that they are not going to have data caps. Rural and remote communities, where 63% of Canadians do not have high-speed Internet, are going to have unlimited data, but the speed will be half of what it would be in urban centres. They will not have more to download; they will have more waiting for buffering. They will be able to download more but will wait longer, which is not efficient. That is important to note. The CRTC, and I was quite shocked that the government did not challenge this, has decided that there will be half the speed for rural and remote areas, with no plan for these communities to eventually catch up.

Not only is the speed not based on the future, it is based on half of what there is right now. The goal of the CRTC is 2030, but at the

same time, there is not even any enforcement of that. We are talking about a basic, minimal experience.

There is a telecom bill of rights. I mentioned the digital bill of rights. The same principles apply. When people go from one carrier to the next, there should be some consistency.

When I presented these ideas in the past, they were seen as absurd and could not be done. The first was unlocking cellphones. We were told that in Canada, we could not do it. New Democrats fought to have that reversed, because it was being done in the rest of the world.

The second thing I championed was cellphones being portable, because people own their numbers. Right now, our signals are dropped from carrier to carrier. That should not happen, because the spectrum belongs to all of us, and in emergencies and in other matters, it is important that the carrier transition. It is the same thing with cellphones.

In conclusion, these are practical solutions based on propositions, not just opposition. It is something I learned from Jack Layton that is now supported by the member for Burnaby South.

• (1355)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot about cheaper telecommunications services in other countries. I would like to highlight that in Saskatchewan, we have affordable unlimited data plans because SaskTel is a Crown corporation owned by the people of Saskatchewan. If there is one element missing from today's otherwise excellent motion, it is public ownership of telecommunications as a means of ensuring affordable and accessible access to what the member for Windsor West correctly describes as an essential service.

I appreciate that we cannot move amendments during questions and comments, but I would like to ask the member for Windsor West whether he would be amenable to adding a paragraph (f) to his motion, directing the CRTC, the Competition Bureau and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development not to approve privatization of SaskTel?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with privatizing SaskTel. I am not sure if that amendment to the motion would do it or not. I would have to research that more. However, I do not want to see SaskTel privatized.

Statements by Members

It is important to point out that with SaskTel, when the deferral accounts took place, this was money taken off phone bills by companies being allowed to take place. Bell owed over \$1 billion, approximately. It took a law case at the Supreme Court to actually get that money back for consumers, something I fought for years for. SaskTel, of all the companies that were involved, had the least amount of overcharges. In fact it was a minuscule amount. It was insignificant. However, private operators had upwards of almost \$1 billion.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing the way to keep prices down and the idea of a cap versus competition. I am looking at the proposal of the Government of Canada working to introduce data only plans to try to drive down the cost of plans, as well as setting aside 43% of the 600 megahertz spectrum auction so that we could have regional carriers looking at things such as data only plans.

Could the hon. member comment on competition and how it exists, and where we might head going forward?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contributions at committee.

With competition, the problem we are faced with is that some still believe in the white knight scenario, where somebody will just come into our market right away and be able to compete, driving prices down right away. I do not believe that is possible any time soon.

With the driving costs that are taking place, the cost of affordability, I believe in the price cap right now to bring market stability and to bring competition for some of the smaller players. It would be reviewable. It may not even be permanent, but it would provide stability and also, most importantly for some of the smaller and medium-sized businesses that provide data, it would also provide a registered approach for them to make sure their investment is protected. They would be able to compete knowing the cost structure for that.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contribution today, as well as his work on the industry committee with me and others.

I have asked several NDP members, and since the motion today is in his name, I am hoping he could elucidate some details here.

A price cap would immediately have an effect in the market, meaning that small regional carriers that do not have legacy systems would suddenly find that their ability to raise private capital would be halted, because there is a max that can be borrowed under a price cap.

Does the member not see how this would actually be the opposite of what we all want, which is to have a stronger presence of regional challengers to the big ones in these underserved communities?

•(1400)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, a price cap brings stability. It would bring predictability. If we wait for someone to come and solve the problem, even if it happened tomorrow, it would take years to develop and be competitive.

People are hurting right now. They need accountability. The price margins for profit are very lucrative. I believe competition will happen with stability.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

CATALONIA

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Catalonia's exiled president, Carles Puigdemont, has been forced to delay his visit to Quebec yet again. It was supposed to happen in April, then in June, and now it has been postponed to the fall because Canada once again did not allow him into the country in time. Mr. Puigdemont deserves to be treated with all the diplomatic consideration that a democratic nation extends to heads of state.

The Bloc Québécois is calling on the Prime Minister to ensure that Canada will not interfere with Mr. Puigdemont's right to visit Quebec. In the name of democratic values, the Prime Minister must condemn the authoritarian excesses of the Spanish government, which sabotaged a referendum and is subjecting Catalonian leaders to political trials, prison sentences and exile. Such actions are totally inappropriate on the part of any country that calls itself democratic.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this session of Parliament is drawing to a close. It is a special time because it also marks the end of the 42nd Parliament. Four years have gone by already.

Our government has accomplished a lot in four years. One of our first major initiatives that has had a significant impact on the lives of Canadian families is the Canada child benefit. In my riding, 10,470 families are receiving a tax-free sum of \$570 a month, on average.

We did not stop there. We brought in many effective measures to stimulate our economy. These measures have proven successful, because the unemployment rate is at its lowest in 40 years. Since 2015, Canadians have created more than one million jobs. I am proud of what we have accomplished. Our measures are having a real impact on the lives of the people of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

We went above and beyond what we promised.

* * *

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding is privileged to be home to Lac-Saint-Charles, one of the Quebec City region's largest sources of drinking water. This 3.6-square-kilometre lake provides drinking water for nearly half the residents of Quebec's capital.

Statements by Members

Although Lac-Saint-Charles is always beautiful to behold, preserving its health and the quality of its water is a considerable challenge that requires the co-operation of all stakeholders. We have taken this valuable natural resource for granted for too long. Over 280,000 Quebecers depend on this life-giving resource and we are all responsible for protecting it. We need to act quickly.

The Association pour la protection de l'environnement du lac Saint-Charles et des Marais du Nord has called upon many important stakeholders to take practical measures to protect Lac-Saint-Charles. I have heard their concerns. For the past few months, I have been working with this organization in my riding to find solutions to slow the aging of the lake and maintain the water quality. Water is sacred, and Lac-Saint-Charles is a priority for me.

* * *

[English]

ISLAMIC FOUNDATION OF TORONTO

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the Islamic Foundation of Toronto as it celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

Established in 1969, IFT is one of the oldest mosques in Canada. Over the years, what began as a small neighbourhood mosque has become much more to the Muslim community in my riding of Scarborough North and beyond. The centre serves thousands of people through its meals on wheels program, community tax clinic, workshops for seniors and high-ranking elementary school.

I congratulate Imam Shaykh Yusuf Badat, the board of directors, trustees, volunteers and the worshippers who make IFT the incredible institution it is today.

Last week, I joined the IFT congregation to mark the end of Ramadan and wished everyone a happy, peaceful and prosperous Eid-al-Fitr.

Eid Mubarak.

* * *

MEMBER FOR KOOTENAY—COLUMBIA

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during my lifetime, I have sat in many different chairs. I have been the chair of community organizations, manager for B.C. Environment, mayor of Cranbrook and chair and vice-chair of committees and caucuses in the 42nd Parliament. While I am proud of all of these roles, the most memorable one was the first time I took my seat in my chair as a member of Parliament on December 3, 2015. I felt the incredible sense of history, the stories in the walls and the sense of responsibility that comes with serving constituents and working to make a better Canada. What an incredible honour.

However, we must never forget why we get to sit in our chairs. It is because of the support of our families and the people in our ridings.

I would like to thank my wife Audrey, my children Shawn, Kellie and Adrian and my favourite granddaughter, Lalita, who is graduating from grade 12 this month.

Some members are probably thinking this sounds like a farewell speech. Far from it. With the blessing of my family and the good people of Kootenay—Columbia, I fully intend to return in the 43rd Parliament. Who knows, as a returning veteran, I might even get a chair closer to the front of the House.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

FLOODING IN NIPISSING—TIMISKAMING

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many communities in my riding have experienced devastating flooding since spring began.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the ongoing efforts of the dedicated volunteers who have given of their time, energy and resources.

[English]

In my visit to the affected areas across Nipissing—Timiskaming, I have witnessed communities coming together to fill sand bags, clean up damaged properties, supply food and foster optimism. I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to help out their neighbours affected by the flooding. As well, I would like to thank the mayors and chiefs from Jocko Point, Mattawa, Coleman, Latchford, Callander, Temiskaming Shores, Temagami and all communities for their ongoing leadership through these difficult times.

* * *

HUNSDEEP RANGAR

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, about a decade ago, a bright young man resplendent with energy and optimism came into my life. Hunsdeep Rangar invited me to participate in South Asian Fest, an event of which he was very proud. Later, he would invite me on his famous local Ottawa radio show. His purpose in all of these things was to bring the South Asian community together, introduce other Canadians to that community and to raise money for local charities. In my friendship with him, I came to know his incredible love for his wife Oshima and his daughter Neela.

Tragically, he passed away suddenly at the young age of 43 to heart failure last week. This is a devastating loss to our community.

This Sunday, the community will come together at the local gurdwara to pray for him, right after the funeral services.

On behalf of all my constituents and Parliament, I say goodbye to Huns. We will miss him. We love him. May Waheguru welcome him into his home.

* * *

[Translation]

STELLAR GALA

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Thérèse-De Blainville chamber of commerce and industry held its Stellar gala on Friday. This event highlights the successes and community involvement of our region's entrepreneurs.

Statements by Members

I want to congratulate Serge Dion and his team at Jardin Dion, which is celebrating 65 years of operations, for winning the Coup de cœur award and the business of the year award for businesses of 15 employees or more.

I also want to congratulate Rose de Angelis, from the Académie Ste-Thérèse, who was awarded the Jean-Marc Boisvert award for her outstanding career.

Valérie Kennedy and Kareen Lamy, owners of the Steakhouse St-Charles & Tartares restaurant, received the prestigious Michèle-Bohec award for most outstanding person of the year.

I congratulate the finalists and award recipients. They are all winners. Their drive is our trademark. I am extremely proud of our local businesses. After all, Thérèse-De Blainville is the absolute best riding in Canada.

* * *

[English]

HOST OF JEOPARDY

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about an individual who was born and raised in my riding and who has, shall I say, been questioned for the past 35 years. This person is none other than Alex Trebek, the host of the award-winning trivia game show, *Jeopardy!*

[Translation]

His father was a Ukrainian immigrant and his mother a Franco-Ontarian. Alex grew up in Sudbury and attended École Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague.

[English]

He then went to Sudbury Secondary School.

After reporting for a decade for CBC, he eventually found his way into game-show hosting and later landed his role on *Jeopardy!* in 1984. During his many decades of hosting the beloved TV show, he was made an officer of the Order of Canada and given a star on Canada's Walk of Fame.

A few months ago, Mr. Trebek was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I want Alex to know that Sudbury, this House and all Canadians are with him in his battle with this cancer. We are looking forward to watching Alex host the upcoming 36th season of *Jeopardy!*

* * *

• (1410)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' carbon tax has made life more expensive for Canadians. It has raised the price of everything, including buying groceries, driving the kids to hockey or dance and even the luxury of home heating. Canadians are being punished for living life in Canada.

The carbon tax was advertised as a measure that would save the environment and that Canadians would be better off because of rebates offered to cover the cost of the tax. However, we know that

the Prime Minister's carbon tax is a tax plan to pay for consecutive deficits and his reckless spending.

The carbon tax rebates are a third lower than the Prime Minister promised and have no correlation to the amount of hard-earned money that Canadians will pay through the carbon tax. We can bet that as the Liberal carbon tax rises to \$300 a tonne, the carbon tax rebate will not rise with it. Like his entire mandate, the Prime Minister's carbon tax rebate is not as advertised.

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AWARD FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate an extraordinary educator in my riding of Don Valley East.

Kim Lussier teaches grade 3 at Norman Ingram Public School. She was awarded the Prime Minister's regional Certificate of Achievement in teaching last month.

Ms. Lussier has a unique approach to education that emphasizes hands-on activities and fosters digital learning. Ms. Lussier is herself a digital learning mentor for the school board. She encourages other teachers to use digital tools to prepare students for the future.

Her classroom is a creative and supportive space that sparks the students' imagination and fosters their confidence.

I am proud to honour Kim Lussier for her remarkable teaching style. It is teachers like these who inspire their students to achieve success.

I congratulate Kim.

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[Translation]

2019 GENERAL ELECTION

Mr. Richard Hébert (Lac-Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in October 2017, the voters of Lac-Saint-Jean decided to elect a government member who puts family, economic development and equality of opportunity first.

I am proud and honoured to be part of a government that has helped my region move forward on a number of key projects. I am thinking of infrastructure investments, specifically the \$12 million invested to build a railway bridge across the Mistassini River, a project that is vital to the economic development of my region. I am also thinking of how well our economy is doing; it has helped create one million jobs and has brought unemployment to its lowest rate in 40 years. Lastly, I am also thinking of the Canada child benefit, which is helping nearly 20,000 children in Lac-Saint-Jean every month, not to mention our investments to support seniors.

Our government is having a real and positive impact on our families and our businesses. There is no question that we are the only government that will be able to preserve these gains. On October 21, the choice will be obvious.

Statements by Members

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will remind Canadians what the Minister of Environment said recently, “if you actually say it louder, we’ve learned in the House of Commons, if you repeat it, if you say it louder, if that is your talking point, people will totally believe it”.

Well, in addition to this fascinating insight into how naive Liberals think Canadians are, the minister stood in the House repeating the talking point that the carbon tax rebate program would totally give people \$248 in New Brunswick, \$300 in Ontario, \$336 in Manitoba and \$598 in Saskatchewan.

Well, it turns out that the carbon tax rebate, like everything else the Liberals and the Prime Minister do, is not as advertised.

In a report over the weekend, as of June 3, the CRA says Canadians are receiving much less of a rebate than they were led to believe by the environment minister, yet we all are paying more for the necessities of life in Canada and paying more despite the fact this Liberal scheme will fall 79 million tonnes short by 2030.

Let us call the Liberal carbon tax plan what it is. It is not an environmental plan; it is a tax plan, and it is not as advertised.

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30TH FIELD REGIMENT, ROYAL CANADIAN ARTILLERY

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to draw the House’s attention to Ottawa’s reserve artillery unit, first formed as the Bytown Gunners in 1855.

This proud and distinguished unit, now called the 30th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery, has contributed trained gunners to fight the Fenian raids, the South African War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, numerous peacekeeping missions and the latest war in Afghanistan. For 164 years they have answered the call to duty, with many being wounded or killed.

When not training to fight, they conduct the ceremonial gun salutes on Parliament Hill and elsewhere in the capital region, rain or shine.

My family’s history is linked to the 30th Field Regiment. My great uncle, my father, brother, two nephews and my son have served in the regiment, as have I. My eldest daughter is a captain in the regiment and, like so many, deployed to Afghanistan in 2009-10.

I congratulate the commanding officer, the RSM and all ranks for their best efforts in keeping alive the tradition of service before self.

The next time members see or hear the guns fire a salute on or near Parliament Hill, I urge them to go out and thank the troops who make it all happen, the Bytown Gunners.

* * *

● (1415)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the threat from climate change is very real.

The economic, ecological and social consequences are almost too overwhelming to think about.

Too many people are apathetic or in outright denial of the change coming our way. Too many are worried about their daily needs or where their next paycheque will come from.

However, I believe politics is an inherently optimistic enterprise and that, with political will, we can mount the Herculean effort necessary to change our course. The old ways of thinking on the economy and the environment are over.

Now is the time to completely end fossil fuel subsidies, to divest from polluting industries, to decarbonize our economy and to help transition working people to the new clean energy economy of the future.

It is for this reason that I am excited about the NDP’s “Power to Change: A New Deal for Climate Action and Good Jobs”, the first comprehensive plan to address both the needs of the environment and those of Canadian workers in a realistic and meaningful way, a plan consistent with global best practices in addressing climate change.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the supposed carbon tax rebate is significantly less than the Liberals advertise and it will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will cost Canadians a lot.

When asked today by a reporter what his family was doing to protect the environment, the Liberal leader floundered and said, “We, uh, uh, we have recently switched to drinking water bottles out of, uh, water out of, uh, when we have water bottles out of, uh, plastic, uh—sorry, away from plastic towards, uh, paper, um, like drink... water bottles sort of things.”

I checked, and one of those drink water bottle sort of things is actually lined with plastic and is 20% less likely to be recycled. When they are recycled, a significant portion of the box is not actually recycled. They still produce plastic waste and cost nine times more than a bottle of water does.

Come on. When it comes to the environment, the Liberal leader is not as advertised.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT**

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I got involved in politics was to help create opportunities for people back home to find work, so that fewer young people would have to move away just to find a job. I am thrilled to share that, since we formed government, the Canadian economy has added more than one million jobs and we are seeing the benefits locally.

Every day I see evidence in my community that our plan is working, whether it is the 350 jobs added or made permanent at the local Michelin plant on the heels of a new NAFTA agreement, the 200 positions that Zenabis is hiring for a new industry or the hundreds of folks who are employed working on infrastructure projects at StFX or the Nova Scotia Community College campus in Stellarton, or the many, many small craft harbour projects that are providing a safe place for fishermen to land their catch.

We will not stop there. I cannot wait to see work getting under way on the new Highway 104 twinning, which will put 500 people to work this summer, or the remediation of Boat Harbour, which will create good jobs to clean our environment and right a historical wrong. These stats do not happen by accident. They happen because hard-working Canadians have been given the chance to succeed through the investments we are making in communities like mine. When it comes to jobs in Nova Scotia, we are better than advertised.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***CARBON PRICING**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the Liberal carbon tax is a not an environment plan. It is a tax plan that takes money from Canadians and accomplishes nothing for the environment. It is no surprise, then, that Canadians have found out that the Liberals have been misleading them about the amount of the so-called rebate. It has been confirmed. Canadians are getting about one-third less than promised. Just like the Prime Minister, the rebate is not as advertised.

What else is the Prime Minister misleading Canadians about when it comes to his useless, ineffective carbon tax?

• (1420)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to climate change, the Conservatives have no plan whatsoever.

We have a plan in place, and that plan is working. It is reducing pollution, it is reducing emissions and it is also keeping affordability in mind by giving eight out of 10 families more money, which remains with them to make choices they can use to reduce their consumption. We are proud of the plan that we have put in place.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just not true. In fact, according to their own numbers, families are getting about one-third less than what the Prime Minister promised. The Liberals spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on a misleading campaign about the so-called rebate while at the same time refusing to come clean on how high the carbon tax will actually go.

Why will the Prime Minister not just admit his carbon tax scheme will do only one thing, and that is take more money from Canadians to fill his coffers?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, based on the independent analysis that was done by the Parliamentary Budget Office, eight out of 10 families are better off under our plan, because they get more money in incentive than they pay in a price on pollution.

However, it is interesting. It has been more than 400 days, actually 407 days to be exact, that the Conservatives promised to introduce a climate change plan, which they have not done yet, because they have no plan, because they do not care about the environment, and they do not care—

The Speaker: The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is quite humorous to watch, because the Liberals actually believe that if one repeats a talking point and says it louder, even if it is not true, Canadians will totally believe it. It has now been confirmed, however, that despite repeating it and saying it louder, Liberal claims about the carbon tax plan are simply not true. It is not an environment plan. It is a greedy Liberal tax grab.

Why do the Liberals not just admit it? Given the chance, they are going to increase the tax on Canadians and keep hosing them all the way to the bank.

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, let me share some facts with the hon. member.

Of the Canadians who were eligible to get the rebate, 97% actually got the rebate, and eight out of 10 of those are better off under our plan than they pay on a price for pollution.

It is very interesting that the official opposition talks a good talk but has no plan when it comes to making life affordable for Canadians and also taking action on climate change to ensure our communities—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

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*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the Liberals' record: four budgets, four years of irresponsible handling of taxpayer money, and four years of deficits. Who will pay the price? Our children, our grandchildren, and Canadian workers who work hard for their money and are paying more today than they were four years ago.

Will the Liberals ever realize that raising taxes and racking up deficits is not the way to create wealth?

Oral Questions

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of weak growth, the Canadian economy has bounced back. We now have one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7. The economy has created over a million jobs since 2015, and unemployment is now at its lowest in 40 years.

Our economic record is excellent. We are undoing the damage that the Conservatives created in their 10 years in office. We are going to keep moving forward.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that, over the past four years under the Liberal government, the cost of living has steadily increased.

Canadian families have been paying an average of \$800 more a year since the Liberals took office. The Liberals even abolished the public transit tax credit and the children's sports and culture tax credits.

Will the government stop taking more and more money out of taxpayers' pockets?

• (1425)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's basic assumptions are incorrect.

A typical middle-class family of four is receiving an average of \$2,000 more a year thanks to the Canada child benefit. The debt-to-GDP ratio is clearly on a downward track. We have control over our finances, something the previous government never managed to do in 10 years.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals like to make grand statements about the economy, but the fact is, people are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find affordable housing and pay for cell service. A survey has shown that half of all Canadians are \$200 away from a personal financial crisis.

When will the Liberals realize that people deserve a lot better than that?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an outstanding proportion of Canadians are benefiting from our measures. Indeed, eight out of 10 families are going to receive more thanks to our climate change initiative. Since July 2016, nine out of 10 families are receiving the Canada child benefit, which makes a huge difference in their lives. They are receiving \$500 tax free every month. We are also making investments in housing and child care. In 2019, we need everyone to contribute. Not only is this good for the economy, but it will also help reduce poverty. There has been a more than 20% drop in poverty over the last two years alone.

* * *

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians rely on having good access to cellular services when they go to work, when they go to school, when they are at home and in between. However, the reality is that they are anxious about how

much this bill costs them. At the same time, big telecom companies have made \$7.5 billion in profits and they receive millions in handouts from the government.

The New Democrats believe we need to make life more affordable for Canadians. That is why we are putting a cap on cellphone bills.

Will the Liberals finally stand up to telecom companies and protect Canadians instead of those big friends?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been taking a number of steps to support affordability, competition, consumer interests and innovation in telecommunications. We have seen some encouraging steps in the right direction. Prices are up to 32% lower in regions with more competition and there are now low-cost data plans. We know we still have more work to do.

That is why, for example, we have issued a policy directive to the CRTC, which states that consumer interests must be considered when making decisions, and why we have directed the CRTC to investigate high pressure sales tactics.

We are going to continue to take action to ensure Canadians can access good-quality telecommunications.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is whose side the Liberals are on. They sided with KPMG and tax avoidance. They sided with drug companies over people. They let the big telecom companies have their profits rise to \$7.5 billion.

Teachers, small businesses, families, students, everyone needs access to the Internet. The reality is that it costs too much and they do not have the access they need. The NDP would end data caps and would ensure everyone would have access to affordable unlimited data plans.

Why do the Liberals continue to choose the profits of these companies over people?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was expecting to talk about tax evasion all day in the House. The NDP changed its mind at the last minute, as its leader is wont to do. I notice that the NDP seems to care about tax evasion only when it is front page news. On this side of the House, we take tax evasion very seriously. Canadians deserve a transparent, fair and impartial tax regime, which is what we are delivering.

*Oral Questions***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cellular service is essential to every single Canadian, but the reality is that it costs too much. Meanwhile, the big telecom companies are raking in millions of dollars at the expense of Canadians. The NDP has the courage to take action to lower costs for all Canadians.

Will the Liberals vote with us to protect the interests of Canadians, or will they continue to protect their telecom friends?

• (1430)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from day one our government has been taking action to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of telecommunications services. Consumers are our top concern. I encourage the member to look closely at the work we have done so far and to acknowledge that this government is taking action for Canadians when it comes to telecommunications.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives left behind a \$7.5-billion surplus in fiscal year 2015-16. The Liberals are being irresponsible by burying generations under a massive deficit. They promised to balance the budget in 2019. That promise was broken, along with many others.

When will the Minister of Finance table his plan to balance the budget?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is irresponsible is the Conservatives constantly misleading the House and Canadians about their economic record. The numbers do not lie. Frankly, it was 10 years of economic darkness under the Conservatives which saw the lowest growth since the Great Depression. Wages were stagnant.

Under our plan, we are seeing a million jobs created. Actually, over a million jobs have been created under our plan and the lowest unemployment rate in recorded history. We will never take lessons from the failed Conservatives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, middle-class taxes have gone up by \$800 per family. According to accounting firm MNP, nearly half of all Canadians are within \$200 of not being able to pay their bills. Canadians cannot afford higher taxes to cover the Liberals' deficits.

Everyone knows the government will have to raise taxes. When will the Minister of Finance admit it?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to be clear for our viewers' sake. I know the Conservatives do not like international organizations but, last summer, the OECD, a totally impartial international organization, reported that the average Canadian family has \$2,000 more now than it had under the previous government.

That is because of progressive policies such as the Canada child benefit.

With respect to his previous question about debt, it is important to note that Conservative governments have been responsible for 72% of all the debt Canada has ever incurred. Stephen Harper's government incurred \$150 billion worth of debt.

We will take no lessons from anyone.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government sent out little leaflets, promising tiny rebate cheques just before the election to offset the cost of the carbon tax that would come largely after the election. However, now we find out that those leaflets were not as advertised. In Ontario, for example, a family will receive a third less than the government promised in its taxpayer-funded advertising. The reality is that Canadians will pay more and get ultimately nothing in return.

Why will the Liberals not admit that the carbon tax is not as advertised?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, the climate action incentive is precisely as advertised. I have been telling the hon. member for months in this chamber that a typical family of four in the province that he represents will receive an incentive of \$307. That remains the case today. The numbers he is citing are based on demographics that represent families smaller than a typical family of four. This is not rocket science; it is simple arithmetic.

If the hon. member would actually read our platform and our commitment, he would understand I am telling the truth.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, but in reality, nothing the Liberals write for others to read can be believed.

If people looked at the little leaflet, they would think they would be getting over \$300. In fact, they are getting significantly less and not enough to compensate for the higher gas, grocery and heating bills they will have to pay in the province of Ontario and the other provinces in which this high tax applies. Worse, the tax is expected to rise 250% if the government is re-elected. God forbid.

Why will the Liberals not admit that this carbon tax scheme is not as advertised?

Oral Questions

●(1435)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, previously in the chamber, I have invited the hon. member to read the pan-Canadian framework on climate change. I have invited him to look at our website. I have told him where to find the details of our plan.

We can lead a horse to water, but we cannot make it drink.

I have one final invitation for the member. The Parliamentary Budget Officer actually produced a report that demonstrated eight out of 10 Canadian families would be better off as a result of our plan. If the member cannot track down a copy for himself, I will provide it to him.

I look forward to seeing this member in the next campaign, going door to door with a promise to take money from his constituents.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite him to campaign for the next election on making gas prices, home heating prices and grocery prices thousands of dollars more expensive for families in his riding.

The reality is that the out-of-control promise-breaking deficits of the government will lead to higher taxes down the road. There is no question. Canadians are already paying \$800 per family more in income tax than when the government took office. However, the worst is yet to come.

Why will the Liberals not admit that if they are re-elected, they will take more from Canadians when they no longer need voters' votes, but still need their money?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the worst already came. It was the 10 years of the Harper Conservative government.

Thankfully, our plan has been focused on Canadians. A typical Canadian family is actually \$2,000 better off. The Conservatives do not want to base their questions on facts. They want to scare Canadians because they know they cannot run on their record.

On the other hand, the Liberals can because we are focused on Canadians. We have one of the best economies in the G7. We are focused on making life more affordable. The Conservatives focus on power, helping their wealthy friends and on policies like Doug—

The Speaker: Order, please. I ask colleagues to try to hear things, even those they do not like, without having to blurt things out themselves when it is not their turn.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to run on a record of a million net new jobs right in the middle of the great global recession. We had the biggest drop in poverty, one that was remarked on by UNICEF, the largest increase in middle-class incomes of any government in 40 years, and we left a balanced budget while lowering taxes.

By contrast, the Liberals have broken their promise to balance the budget this year and their out-of-control spending will lead to higher taxes.

Why do the Liberals not do the honourable thing and admit that before the election, rather than keeping it hidden from Canadians?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we will take no lessons from the Conservatives on how to be honest with Canadians, when we are focused on Canadians.

We know we need to create an economy that works everyone. That is why we lowered taxes on the middle class, we stopped sending cheques to millionaires, like the Conservatives did, and we made sure that Canada child benefit cheques were tax-free. We are investing in Canadians. Because of those investments, we have created over a million new jobs.

I cannot say it enough that we will not take lessons from the government that added \$150 billion to the debt.

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[*Translation*]**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2019, having cellular service and high-speed Internet is essential, and yet, too many people cannot access these services because they are not available or too expensive. Meanwhile, big telecoms are raking in billions of dollars in profit. They are even collecting millions of dollars in subsidies from the Liberal government. It is time to take a stand against these big companies.

Will the government commit to implementing measures to make the telecommunications market more competitive?

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only is our government taking a stand; it is taking action.

Our government has invested more than \$900 million in 190 projects to ensure that communities across Canada can connect to high-speed Internet and have access to cellular service. In my riding, 98% of households will be connected to fibre optic high-speed Internet.

The problem is that the NDP voted against it.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the government is letting the CRTC set the speeds and services on rural and remote communities, creating a second-class citizenship experience that will evolve in our country. In fact, the Liberals have endorsed that policy, even last week at committee when they could have challenged the CRTC.

Oral Questions

Instead, the Liberal policy is to give an antiquated system even more life, making sure that we are going to have two sets, one for urban communities and one for rural communities. The Liberals are institutionalizing this.

When will the Liberals stop apologizing and put in equal service for all?

• (1440)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians need access to high-speed Internet, as well as mobile wireless networks, and our government has taken a number of steps to support affordability, competition, consumer interests and innovation in telecommunications. As a matter of fact, we have issued policy directives to the CRTC to state that consumer interests must be considered when making decisions, and we are directing the CRTC to investigate high-pressure sales tactics.

We know that rural Canadians and all Canadians deserve access to high-speed, affordable, quality broadband and cellphone coverage, and that is what we are making sure is going to happen.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have failed on Trans Mountain from the very beginning. If the Prime Minister really supported this project, it would have proceeded as first proposed and construction would be done by the end of this year. Instead, the Prime Minister's failures have forced taxpayers to purchase Trans Mountain, and now they are on the hook for all of the additional delays.

Next week, the Liberals will make another announcement about approvals, but the real question is this: When will this pipeline get built in Burnaby?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member and his party are really serious about this project moving forward in the right way, they would not have voted to kill the process we have put in place. We are moving forward with meaningful consultation with indigenous communities. We know that for a project such as this or any energy project to move forward, we need to get the process right, which means the proper involvement of indigenous communities, as well as taking action on environmental sustainability.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, experts agree the Liberals are not getting it right. Their tanker ban and their no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69, are sinking Canada's energy industry, and the Liberals' energy ineptitude is continuing with these delays to the Trans Mountain expansion. The Liberals are going to announce next week, once again, approval for this project, but it means absolutely nothing unless there is an actual plan to get it built.

The construction season is half over. What is the Prime Minister willing to do to ensure that construction begins in Burnaby this summer?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me correct the hon. member. We have seen one of the largest private sector investments in our oil and gas sector with \$40 billion in LNG; we have seen \$9 billion of investment in

Alberta in our petrochemical sector; we have seen Enbridge Line 3 moving forward in our country; we are working hard on the Keystone XL pipeline with the U.S.; and we are moving forward in the right way on the process related to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three and a half years ago, the Liberals approved the Trans Mountain expansion the first time. It was supposed to be operating by the end of 2019, in the next six months, but their failure to exert federal jurisdiction and their mistakes on consultation have held it up. A year ago, they said spending billions of tax dollars would build it immediately, but not a single inch has been built. Now they are eight days away from approving it again.

What exactly is the plan to get construction started in Burnaby on June 19?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to remind Canadians and everyone listening that under Stephen Harper, 99% of the oil that we sold to the outside world went to one single customer: the United States. That was the case in 2006, and that was the case in 2015 when the Conservatives left office. For 10 years, they failed to build a single pipeline to get our resources to non-U.S. markets. We understand that in order to move forward with energy projects, we need to get the process right, and that is exactly what we are focused on.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives, four new major pipelines were approved and built, and not a single one has gone ahead under these Liberals. The Trans Mountain expansion was supposed to be built by the end of this year, but after taking the longest, costliest, most uncertain approach, the Liberals delayed their second approval by a month. Further delays will cost taxpayers billions more, and the Liberals must tell Canadians the plan to deal with new court challenges, who will build, own and operate the pipeline, the cost to taxpayers and when the expansion will be in service.

What is the Prime Minister prepared to do for construction to start in Burnaby on June 19?

Oral Questions

●(1445)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I think that if the member opposite, her party and everyone else in the Conservative caucus are really serious about the energy sector and really serious about getting pipelines built in this country, they would not have gutted the environmental assessment plan in 2012, which took away Canadians' ability to participate in the process and took away the protection of the environment: the water, fish and everything else that is important to indigenous communities and Canadians. We are fixing a broken system so good projects can move forward in a meaningful—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people's anxiety about the economy and the environment is growing. The causes are obvious: the signing of free-trade agreements that hurt workers, a tax regime that is more lenient than ever before towards big business, and the climate emergency.

Canadians expect the federal government to show leadership, but, instead, they are getting an old, \$15-billion pipeline. There is clearly no plan. The government is always improvising. Fortunately, the NDP has a climate transition plan that would create 300,000 quality jobs in the green economy.

When will the government follow our example and take appropriate action?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to matters pertaining to the environment, I have a lot of time for New Democrats, who I believe have their hearts in the right place. However, they often approach policy without thinking through the consequences.

I note in particular that when it came to their plan for big emitters, the Ecofiscal Commission indicated that their plan would both hurt the Canadian economy and have no impact on reducing emissions.

We are moving forward with a plan that is going to protect our environment and grow our economy at the same time. That may mean getting our energy resources to new markets, but doing it in the right way.

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GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, climate leaders do not build massive bitumen pipelines.

Canadians are now crushed by the worst family debt levels of any industrialized country in history. Nearly half of Canadians are \$200 away from not being able to make ends meet in a month. Housing is unaffordable, and people cannot afford their medication. Instead of helping families, the Liberals continue to put rich corporations first.

Why are the Liberals pouring tens of billions of dollars into tax cuts for the richest corporations, when the Canadian families cannot pay their bills?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Youth Economic Opportunity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is simply not true. One of the first things we did was lower taxes on the middle class, which the NDP in fact voted against. We then made the Canada child benefit more generous, which again the NDP voted against.

It is hard for Canadians to take the NDP seriously, when it took on the Conservatives' economic plan to balance the budget at all costs. Meanwhile, we promised Canadians we would grow the economy through investments. As a result, a typical Canadian family is \$2,000 better off.

Perhaps the NDP will come up with a different economic plan next—

The Speaker: I remind the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby that after he has asked a question, it is time to stop speaking and listen to the answer.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, plastic pollution is a global challenge that requires immediate action. Plastic waste ends up in our landfills and incinerators, litters our parks and beaches, and pollutes our rivers, lakes and oceans, entangling and killing turtles, fish and marine mammals.

Right now, less than 10% of plastic used in Canada gets recycled. We have reached a defining moment, and this is a problem we simply cannot afford to ignore.

Unlike the Conservatives, who have no plan for the environment, our government knows that we need to take action on this issue to protect our oceans, wildlife and planet.

Could the parliamentary secretary please update the House on the—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member, as a fellow MP who represents coastal communities, for his advocacy to rid our oceans of plastic pollution.

We know that plastic pollution is choking our oceans and putting an undue burden on our marine environment. I was so pleased to hear the Prime Minister announce this morning that we would be moving forward with a ban on single-use harmful plastic products and implementing extended producer liability.

Oral Questions

It is the 21st century. It is time we rid our oceans of this pollution once and for all.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada announced that it is going to use social media influencers in the upcoming election. The Chief Electoral Officer agrees that this type of campaign is very politically sensitive, but it refused to release the names of these 13 influencers.

The Prime Minister promised to be open and accountable to Canadians, but will not provide even this basic level of transparency.

Will the Prime Minister finally be transparent and reveal the identity of the 13 people who have been hired to influence the next election?

• (1450)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is only one party in the House that tries to suppress the vote. It is the Conservative Party of Canada.

When it was in government, it brought in the so-called Fair Elections Act, which actually made it harder for Canadians to vote. It also banned the CEO of Elections Canada from talking to Canadians about how to vote.

Well, thank goodness that in 2015, Canadians elected the Liberals. We have made it easier for all Canadians to vote and we have given the CEO of Elections Canada the power and authority to talk to Canadians about voting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government amended the Elections Act to impose its vision of the electoral process. It is forcing Elections Canada to jump on to the new social media trend of recruiting influencers that the government itself chose. Now that these influencers know that they have been chosen and that they will be paid by Elections Canada, we have doubts about whether they will be able to remain impartial.

The Liberal government has a duty to guarantee more transparency in the electoral process.

Will it share the names of these mystery influencers?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only the Conservatives do not want Canadians to vote. When they were in government they restricted Canadians' voting rights and restricted Election Canada's mandate to talk to Canadians and encourage them to vote. We do not need any lessons from the Conservatives.

We made sure that Canadians have the right to vote and we made Elections Canada responsible for helping them do so.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the Liberal leader admires China's basic dictatorship. We know the Liberals are forcing Elections Canada to hire social media influencers to influence the election. We know the Liberals chose a partisan union to decide which newspapers will receive election-year subsidies and which will not. We know the Liberals have

threatened to shut down Twitter if it does not promise to remove what they consider to be inauthentic content. Do the Liberals really want to follow China, Iran and North Korea regarding Twitter?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is just as unbecoming of politicians to troll online as it is in the House. That is a wild extrapolation on comments that were made.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I urge members to rely on the ability of the public to judge and determine their views on what they see and hear in the House. It is not necessary to always interject.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, that is a wild extrapolation the Conservatives are making and they are misleading Canadians. There was a witness at the Grand Committee who talked about suggesting that. I was talking about Twitter being a better actor when it comes to the declaration of electoral integrity. The Conservatives owe it to Canadians to tell the truth and to not mislead them.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre will come to order and restrain himself.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

• (1455)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have dithered on developing meaningful measures to prevent foreign and domestic interference in Canada's democratic electoral process. They confected deeply deficient legislation to stack the deck in their favour. Now the minister fears that it will not be enough. She is afraid of voices she cannot control, so she is threatening to shut down Twitter during the election. Do the Liberals realize they are walking in the basic footsteps of the Chinese, Iranian and North Korean dictatorships?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is one party in this House that continues to mislead Canadians, and that is the Conservative Party of Canada. There is one party in this House that has consistently been found in violation of elections legislation. There is one party in this House, the Conservative Party of Canada, that has had a member of Parliament go to jail for undermining elections legislation. I issued a challenge on Friday to the Conservatives: Will they make 2019 the first time they do not break elections law?

*Oral Questions***HUMAN RIGHTS**

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in April, Liberals announced Canada would finally join other countries to stop slave labour. The supply chain legislation was to be tabled in the Senate, yet the bill mysteriously disappeared. Now the Liberals are sending out to businesses surveys that ask, “If the Government of Canada considers supply chain legislation, what should be the focus and scope?”

If? We thought it was in the Senate. What is going on here? Does the government understand it has waited too long to pass legislation in this Parliament?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, making sure that we have a commitment to a supply chain that does not use slave labour is incredibly important to this government. That is why we have been consulting so closely with all of our partners, international partners, labour partners, business partners.

As the member opposite knows, this is not an easy task, but one that we are fully committed to. We continue to have those conversations and look at ways that we could move forward to ensure that everything that we purchase in this country is free of the use of slave labour.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance system is sexist. Why are only 35% of women workers entitled to these benefits? This government, which claims to be feminist, has done nothing in the past four years to make the system fairer for women. Women workers need a government that is on their side and stands up for them.

My question is simple. What will it take for the government to finally take action and fix the employment insurance system, which is obviously sexist?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, making sure that the employment insurance system is sound and fair is part of our plan to grow the middle class and help more Canadians join it. That plan is working.

We have not only created more jobs, reduced poverty and helped middle-class families, but we have also enhanced gender equality by improving maternity, parental, compassionate care and caregiving benefits and making them more generous and flexible. We also introduced the new five-week employment insurance parental sharing benefit in 2019. These measures are helping both men and women fully participate in the labour market.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, things are bleak when a government commits to meeting very specific targets and cannot even see that it is running into a wall.

How can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change keep a straight face when she tells Canadians that the Liberal government will meet the Paris Agreement targets? It is irresponsible. The government does not take the environment—or sound fiscal management—seriously.

I will ask a simple question and hope for an honest answer. Will Canada meet the Paris Agreement targets?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple. Our government will meet its Paris Agreement targets and we do not have a choice because failure is not an option. I am happy to do more than say we will meet our targets. I will lay out a few of the ways that we are going to accomplish that.

We put a price on pollution so it is not free to pollute anywhere in Canada. The member's party as its first act as government has committed to repealing this to ensure that it is free to pollute again. By 2030, 90% of the electricity in our government will be generated from non-emitting resources. We have made the largest investment in the history of public transit in Canada. We are investing in energy efficiency, and we are creating good jobs in the green economy of tomorrow.

* * *

● (1500)

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in Canadian history, the Auditor General has stated publicly that he does not have the funds necessary to do his job. The Liberals have consistently rewarded their friends and silenced their critics and now they are targeting the Auditor General.

This Liberal attack on the Auditor General has forced the office to cancel audits that would have been released right before the election. Why do the Liberals think they can get away with silencing the Auditor General?

Hon. Joyce Murray (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to see the Conservatives finally taking an interest in officers of Parliament in this House. Actually, what they are really doing is reminding Canadians of the fact that the Conservatives are the ones who cut the Auditor General's budget by 10%. When our government reinstated the budget for the Auditor General, the Conservatives voted against it.

We take the Auditor General's reports to us very seriously. We really respect and appreciate the work that the Auditor General does on behalf of parliamentarians and all Canadians.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is ridiculous. The Auditor General has never, until now, come out and said publicly that he cannot do his job for a lack of funds. At no time during the previous government did the Auditor General ever say he could not do his job.

Oral Questions

This is an unprecedented attack on our democracy. When will the Liberals give the Auditor General the funds that he needs to do his job and hold the government to account?

Hon. Joyce Murray (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative member opposite probably understands that, so far, over 70% of the Auditor General's reports have been based on failed Conservative policies. I know we are coming through that era. I have confidence in the Auditor General and his work, but this is just another officer that the Conservatives do not respect. Canadians remember when they told the Parliamentary Budget Officer that they would not allow him to audit their platform. Why? What did the Conservatives have to hide in their platform, the lack of a climate plan?

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, four years ago, I ran as a member of the Liberal Party to defend our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and among those rights, a woman's right to choose. Last week, 8,000 women from across the world came to Vancouver to promote, defend and extend women's rights for all. Canada is a leader in women's rights.

Can the Minister for Women and Gender Equality tell this House how Canadians can count on this Liberal government to advance gender equality?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sadly, the attack on women's rights is very much a domestic issue fostered by Conservative politicians in this House by refusing to support a woman's right to choose, by pledging to cut abortion services and by voting to cut funding for organizations that work to prevent violence that is costing a Canadian woman her life every six hours.

Canadians deserve a government that is working to advance the financial security of women by adding one million new jobs to the economy, a government that will not reopen a debate that was settled decades ago. Canadians live in the 21st century and Conservative politicians living in the past will do so at their own peril.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in December 1941, Canadians died in defence of Hong Kong and her liberty. Yesterday, a million people took to the streets of Hong Kong and thousands more here in Canada to voice their concerns about their liberty because of proposed changes to Hong Kong's extradition law. These changes would allow anyone in Hong Kong, including 300,000 Canadians living there, to be extradited to mainland China where two Canadians are being improperly detained and two others are on death row.

Will the Prime Minister make a clear statement about these proposed changes and has the government taken a *démarche* with the government in Beijing or the Government of Hong Kong?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the

member for Wellington—Halton Hills for his very sincere concern about this issue. We have, indeed, raised very serious concerns with the Government of Hong Kong regarding these proposed changes.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs issued a joint statement with the U.K. The foreign secretary has said, "We are concerned about the potential effect of these proposals on the large number of Canadian and U.K. citizens in Hong Kong, on business confidence and on Hong Kong's international reputation."

In May, while I was in Hong Kong, I raised these concerns directly with the legislature. We will continue to raise them at every opportunity possible.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Border Services Agency is still the only public safety agency in Canada that does not have an external review process.

CBC reported that a Canadian woman, Jill Knapp, went through a traumatizing experience because of the CBSA.

[English]

For years, I have asked the minister to keep his promise and table legislation to correct this. Bill C-98 is too little, too late and another broken promise.

Why did the minister wait until the eleventh hour before tabling a bill that would allow proper scrutiny of CBSA and allow us to protect Canadians' rights?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all allegations of this nature are taken very, very seriously. The minister is aware of this file. We are committed to ensuring that border services earn and deserve the trust of Canadians. We have put \$24 million into a civilian review and complaints commission to handle these kinds of specific complaints and there is legislation. We hope that all members will work with us to get Bill C-98 passed.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal-Boston corridor is currently served by highways except for a 13-kilometre segment in Quebec. Our government made a major announcement this morning. I was there. It announced a project to establish a direct link between Highway 35 in Quebec and Interstate 89 in Vermont. This is a key corridor between Quebec and New England, so it will be great for tourism in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi, and it will promote sustainable economic development in both my riding and the riding of my colleague from Saint-Jean.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities give us some details about this major investment?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Highway 35 is an important artery for tourism and commercial trade with the United States. Extending it will benefit everyone in the Montérégie region and contribute to the economic development of Quebec and Canada. Our government will contribute \$82 million for phase III of the project.

We have big plans for our regions and are proud to invest in their long-term prosperity.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba-Minnesota hydro transmission project is good for Manitoba and is good for the environment by replacing Minnesota's coal-fired power plants. However, the Prime Minister has made it perfectly clear: It is either his way or the highway.

Former B.C. premier Christy Clark had it right when she said the Prime Minister does not consider himself first among equals, because he believes that he is the only one who has no equal.

Will the Prime Minister just once humble himself, change course and allow Manitoba to build this clean energy project?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that for good projects to move ahead and grow the economy, we must protect our environment and respect the human rights of indigenous peoples.

Our government extended the time. There is an outstanding issue that was caused by the withdrawal of Manitoba Hydro's proposed financial and economic benefits to indigenous communities. We have extended the time for them to resolve those issues. We are scheduled to make a decision on this issue by June 14.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Netflix announced a training program for French Canadian cultural artisans. That is a pittance and does nothing to stop the hemorrhaging that

cost TVA 68 jobs just last week. The web giants are not collecting taxes, paying taxes or providing funding for French-language content. We are not asking for anything special. We just want the rules that apply to Quebec companies to also apply to foreign multinationals. As the saying goes, what is good for the goose is good for the gander.

When will the government force them to pay their fair share of taxes?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows full well that we have been working on this file for quite some time. We set up a panel of experts that is currently reviewing this issue and will be submitting recommendations, which will enable us to legislate quickly based on a set of principles, one of which is absolutely essential.

As I have said many times, we are going to ensure that the system is the same for everyone and that everyone who participates in the system contributes to the system. There will be no free passes.

● (1510)

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 68 people lost their jobs last week at TVA, and Ottawa continues to support web giants. We are told that it will take some time but that they are working on it.

Our television and film productions are at the heart of our identity. They identify us as Quebecers and have helped us develop our star system. Productions like *Bye Bye* epitomize our traditions, while shows like *Lance et compte*, *Annie et ses hommes* and *Les beaux malaises* are a reflection of our culture. Our cinema is recognized all over the world, but it cannot be found online.

When will the government force web giants to pay their share and contribute to our culture?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, we have contributed to our culture in record amounts. Examples that come to mind are Telefilm, the Canada Media Fund, the CBC and our export program. I will stop there but I could go on and on. We have made historic investments.

I would like to highlight the additional \$7.5 million in support allocated to Telefilm Canada, specifically to support Quebec productions and films. This was very welcome and very much appreciated by the industry in Quebec. That is meaningful action.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, PPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been a series of attacks against free speech by the government recently. At the same time that it is trying to influence mainstream media with its \$600-million bailout, the Liberal government wants to control what Canadians can say on social media.

Government Orders

Will the Minister of Democratic Institutions confirm that she is thinking about shutting down Twitter during the election if the company does not comply with her demands, yes or no?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House agrees with the recommendation from the 27th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, and that the name of the—

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: Order, please.

I would prefer that the members allow the House to hear if a member is asking consent to move something, but also what the nature of it is. We heard a bit of that, but I ask members to try to be a little more patient. However, it is very clear that there is no unanimous consent.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

MACKENZIE VALLEY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

The House resumed from June 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-88, An Act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, be concurred in.

The Speaker: It being 3:12 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 28, 2019, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in Bill C-88 at report stage.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 1345*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Baylis
Beaulieu	Bendayan
Bennett	Benson
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chen
Choquette	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal

Dhillon	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Gameau	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Hébert
Hehr	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Jolibois
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Morrissey)
Soeurs)	Morrissey
Monsef	Nassif
Murray	O'Connell
Nault	Oliver
Olipphant	Ouellette
O'Regan	Pauzé
Paradis	Peterson
Peschisolido	Philpott
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Picard	Quach
Poissant	Ramsey
Qualtrough	Rioux
Ratansi	Rodriguez
Robillard	Romanado
Rogers	Rudd
Rota	Rusnak
Ruimy	Saini
Sahota	Samson
Sajjan	Sarai
Sangha	Schiefke
Scarpaleggia	Serré
Schulte	Shanahan
Sgro	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sheehan	Sikand
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Simms	Sorbara
Sohi	Tabbara
Stetski	Tassi
Tan	Trudel
Thériault	Vandenbeld
Vandal	Virani
Vaughan	Whalen
Weir	Yip
Wrzesnewskyj	Zahid — 194
Young	

NAYS

Members

Albas

*Routine Proceedings***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

* * *

CROWN-INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a number of documents: the annual report on the implementation of the Labrador Inuit land claim agreement for the period April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016; the annual report of the Déline self-government agreement for the period April 1, 2016, to March 31, 2017; the annual report on the Déline self-government agreement for the period ranging from April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018; and finally, the annual report on the implementation of the Sahtu Dene and Métis comprehensive land claim agreement for the period April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Health, entitled “Impacts of Methamphetamine Abuse in Canada”.

I just want to report that the Standing Committee on Health had eight meetings on this issue, received 10 briefs and heard from 34 witnesses here in Ottawa, and we also travelled to Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal and Vancouver over the course of the study, where we saw and heard stories of the terrible impacts of methamphetamines.

What we have learned from organizations on the ground, such as the Bear Clan Patrol in Winnipeg, and from our witnesses here in Ottawa is that urgent action is needed to be taken on this methamphetamine crisis.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives agree with many of the recommendations in the report on methamphetamines, there are three with which we do not agree. The first has to do with using taxpayer money to buy free methamphetamine to keep drug addicts safely addicted. We believe the answer is recovery and to get drug addicts off drugs, so we do not support that.

In addition, there is a recommendation to decriminalize all hard drugs, and we also do not agree with this position.

Albrecht	Alleslev
Arnold	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Davidson	Diotte
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genius
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kusie
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nater
Nicholson	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Viersen
Wagantall	Warkentin
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga — 77	

PAIRED

Members

Goldsmith-Jones

Kmiec — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. When shall the bill be read a third time? Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 28, later this day.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[Translation]***PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER**

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 79.22 of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled “Analysis of Active versus Passive Management of Canadian Public Pension Plans”.

* * *

*[English]***CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER**

The Speaker: Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(a) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2019.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Routine Proceedings

Finally, the government wants to continue to increase funding for supervised injection sites. We have seen that, with this crisis of addictions across the country, the number of deaths continues to escalate. Clearly, this is not working. We need to move to a more holistic approach of prevention and recovery.

• (1525)

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 97th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, dealing with regulations respecting the non-attendance of members by reason of maternity or care for a new-born or newly-adopted child.

[English]

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

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Precarious Work: Understanding the changing nature of work in Canada”.

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

* * *

COMPETITION ACT

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-455, An Act to amend the Competition Act and the Bank Act (reduction of administrative burden—credit unions).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola who, coincidentally, every time I stand to talk about the credit union movement in this country, are very happy with that.

As they know, Canadians benefit from a strong, competitive and vibrant financial sector. Currently, we have a challenge where federally regulated credit unions are subject to both federal and provincial regulations. This situation creates regulatory duplicity in having a second layer of often redundant administrative burden to comply with. In fact, as credit unions seek to merge and grow to better serve their members, it actually acts as an extremely costly disincentive to do so. There are also provisions in the Bank Act that create unique challenges for financial institutions that use a co-operative structure versus those of a bank. That is why the credit unions themselves, along with the Canadian Credit Union Association, have asked for many of these changes.

It is a great honour, on behalf of Canadian credit unions, to present this bill to support these requested changes, and I thank the member for Provencher, who is a small business owner and also served on a credit union in his area. We both know the value that credit unions bring to this great country, and we would ask for all members in this place to support this legislation and bills like it.

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

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you were to seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion.

I move:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for New Westminster—Burnaby, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, June 11, 2019, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our colleague and good friend, the member for Langley—Aldergrove, with three petitions to present on his behalf. Knowing that he is at home and not well, I appreciate the opportunity to do this.

The first petition is from citizens of Canada who acknowledge that the current impaired driving laws are too lenient. In the interests of public safety, the petitioners want to see tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. They also want the Criminal Code of Canada to be changed to redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

Routine Proceedings

● (1530)

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents of Canada who draw the attention of the House to the following: that coercion, intimidation or other forms of pressure intended to force physicians and health institutions to become parties in assisted suicide or euthanasia are a violation of fundamental freedoms of conscience; that during testimony at the special joint committee for physician-assisted dying, witnesses stated that the protection of conscience should be included in the government's legislative response to *Carter v. Canada*; that the Canadian Medical Association confirmed that conscience protection for physicians would not affect access to physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia because 30% of physicians, 24,000, would be willing to do it; that section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the freedom of conscience and freedom of religion.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience for physicians and health care institutions from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer for assisted suicide or euthanasia.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition indicates that a CBC documentary revealed that ultrasounds are being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that expectant parents can choose to terminate the pregnancy if the unborn child is a girl. An Environics poll found that 92% of Canadians believe sex-selected pregnancy termination should be illegal. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Canadian Association of Radiologists strongly oppose the non-medical use of fetal ultrasounds.

There are more than 200 million girls missing worldwide. This gendercide has created a global gender imbalance resulting in violence and human trafficking of girls. The three deadliest words in the world are "It's a girl". Therefore, the petitioners call upon Canada's Parliament to support legislation that would make sex selection illegal.

The Speaker: I am sure that all members and all those who work on Parliament Hill continue to send our best wishes to the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present an electronic petition signed by more than 500 people from across the country, Canadians from every single province and territory. This petition was sponsored by Colleen Dunbar from Richmond, British Columbia.

The petitioners call upon the government to increase commitment and investment, financial and otherwise, to the development of renewable resources and a clean energy future for future Canadians and for generations to come. The petition also includes concerns about climate change having a further detrimental impact on Canada's food and water system, and the importance to take proactive measures to protect our soil, rivers, lakes and oceans.

On behalf of those constituents and other Canadians, I hereby table this petition.

SUDAN

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present an e-petition signed by 635 Canadians, and many of them are from the Niagara region.

The petitioners are worried about the escalating situation in Sudan with live ammunition being used against brave protesters. They call upon the Government of Canada to continue its pressure on the Government of Sudan to refrain from using militia groups, live ammunition and excessive force against peaceful protesters and support the rights of the people of Sudan to assembly and expression and the right to protest the government's political and economic policies without fear of intimidation.

VISION CARE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to once again table petitions in support of a national framework for eye health and vision care. This time I am tabling two petitions on it.

The petitioners reinforce the fact that there is a growing need to take action, given that vision loss is expected to double in the next 20 years. It is a crisis that affects all segments of the Canadian population. At particular risk are Canada's most vulnerable populations, seniors, children and indigenous peoples. The petitioners note that just 1% of the total expenditures on vision loss is invested in post-vision loss rehabilitation therapy.

[*Translation*]

The petitioners join thousands of Canadians across the country who are calling on all levels of government to work together to develop and implement a national eye health strategy.

[*English*]

EQUALIZATION

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents are furious with the government's attempt to pass Bill C-69, the no more pipelines act. They are similarly furious with having to pay equalization payments under the current formula, given all the efforts of the government to stop the development of Canada's natural resources sector, specifically the energy sector. The petitioners believe that enough is enough. The context has changed. They believe that it is not fair for people in my province to pay equalization under the same formula, given the punitive policies the government has put forward.

I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of my community, which calls on the government to immediately cancel Bill C-69 and launch a study on the economic impact of equalization, including an examination of the formula.

Routine Proceedings

●(1535)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from 149 members of my community. They draw attention to fact that atmospheric CO2 is now above 414 parts per million and continues to accelerate, despite international agreements and efforts to slow down CO2 emissions. They also point out that northern altitudes are warming at a much faster pace than the global average, that Arctic warming threatens ice cover, permafrost and frozen methane and that NASA data shows that global warming is now 1.4°C above the 1890 to 1910 baseline.

Petitioners call on the House of Commons and Parliament to pass a resolution declaring that Canada is facing a climate emergency.

[*Translation*]

LAC-MÉGANTIC

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition calling for a public inquiry into the Lac-Mégantic tragedy and the rail system as a whole.

Last week, the minister was talking about a conspiracy theory, but the petition was signed by 1,592 people online, and I have more than 2,000 signatures here. In addition, the Town of Lac-Mégantic adopted a resolution a few years ago, and the National Assembly of Quebec adopted a unanimous motion.

All of these people want to get to the bottom of what happened because a number of questions remain unanswered. For example, who writes rail companies' regulations? Are there enough inspectors? Is there a law requiring companies to install more hand brakes? Why is the number of rail accidents on the rise?

Those are just a few of the many questions. A public inquiry into the Lac-Mégantic tragedy and rail safety is essential to ensuring an accident like that never happens again.

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member that presenting petitions is not the time to debate the issues they cover.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have nine petitions to table in the House today.

The first petition is on Bill S-240, which seeks to address the scourge of forced organ harvesting. The petitioners call on the government and the House to get the bill passed as soon as possible.

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights challenges facing religious minorities in Afghanistan, in particular the Hindu and Sikh communities.

The petitioners call on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to use the powers granted to him to provide assistance to these persecuted minorities. They also call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to raise these issues repeatedly, regularly and effectively with her Afghan counterparts.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is in support of Bill S-240.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition highlights the issue of religious freedom. It is signed by members of the Christian community, who are calling on the House to protect the religious freedom of Christians and of all people practising their faith in Canada.

In particular, the petitioners ask the House to amend section 241 of the Criminal Code, which deals with euthanasia, to protect conscience rights and to ensure the protection of conscience in the context of the Civil Marriage Act to ensure that individuals and faith-based institutions have those protections afforded to them.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fifth petition is also in support of Bill S-240.

HEALTH

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sixth petition highlights the issue of health products. The petitioners call on Parliament to instruct the Standing Committee on Health to undertake a comprehensive study of the impact of uninsured self-care products and wellness services and of the barriers that exist for those wishing to access them.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the seventh petition is in support of Bill S-240.

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the eighth petition also highlights the issue of religious minorities in Afghanistan. The Sikh and Hindu communities call for action from the government on that.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ninth petition is also in support of Bill S-240.

FRESH WATER

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition calling on the government to develop a national freshwater strategy and to support my private member's bill, Bill C-439.

Canada has 20% of the world's freshwater resources. The federal government should have a clear plan to protect this valuable resource, domestically and under international agreements. We have not had an updated national freshwater policy since 1987. Our environment, both nationally and globally, has changed dramatically with climate change.

Canada's population is highly dependent on our freshwater lakes, rivers, wetlands and watersheds for tourism, commerce, recreation and household needs. National drinking water standards in Canada are not consistent from province to province, which is a problem, and they lag behind international standards. We know that the many freshwater bodies across Canada have been plagued, as have those in my riding, with harmful algal blooms and invasive species.

This petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to develop a national freshwater strategy.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Canada committed to combatting the effects of climate change by signing the Paris Agreement. There is an urgent need for action, and we must launch concrete projects to meet that need.

The riding of Brome—Missisquoi has an abundance of natural treasures that must be protected. The people of Brome—Missisquoi who signed the petition are calling on the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to pass legislation that creates an inhabited natural park in the riding of Brome—Missisquoi.

[*English*]

PALLIATIVE CARE

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our colleague from Langley—Aldergrove, I hereby present 50 petitions on the following.

The undersigned residents of Canada draw the attention of the House to the following: that in the 41st Parliament, the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion calling on the government to create a national strategy on palliative care to ensure that every Canadian has access to high-quality palliative care at the end of life; that in *Carter v. Canada (Attorney General)*, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that competent and consenting adults who have a grievous and irremediable medical condition that causes enduring and intolerable suffering should be allowed to access physician-assisted suicide/euthanasia; and that it is impossible for people to give informed consent to assisted suicide/euthanasia if appropriate palliative care is unavailable to them. Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to establish a national strategy on palliative care.

[*Translation*]

FORCED MIGRATION

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 17, I met with representatives of the organization Development and Peace in my riding office.

Routine Proceedings

This organization's mandate is to defend refugees and victims of forced migration. The organization has sponsored a petition that I was eager to present to the House.

The signatories are calling on the House of Commons to support grassroots organizations working for peace, democracy and human rights and to invest more in diplomatic and peaceful solutions to armed conflicts.

I would like to thank all those who signed the petition as well as the board of directors for their important work on this very crucial issue.

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of my constituents from Dufferin—Caledon highlighting that farmers should have the right to keep the seeds that come from their farming activities and use them as and how they see fit and to not have them subjected to intellectual property restrictions on how and where they can be used.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the petitions I have today has come up before. The petitioners are urging us to support either Bill C-350 or Bill S-240 on the issue of international organ harvesting, essentially making organ tourism unlawful in Canada.

CANNABIS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is one that has not been repeated dozens times by other members. It is in relation to a cannabis production facility in my constituency in Beckwith Township. The petitioners are concerned that the facility does not meet Health Canada requirements. They urge the minister to look carefully, prior to issuing a licence for it.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Niagara Falls.

I am happy to rise today and respond to the motion introduced by the hon. member across the way for Windsor West regarding telecommunications services in Canada. In fact, it is an item we are discussing at the INDU committee and is something that both of us have opinions on.

I would like to use my time to speak specifically to the concerns that have been raised by Canadians about aggressive and misleading sales practices.

Since coming to office, our government has made it clear that we understand that to achieve fast, reliable telecommunications services, we need to focus on three core objectives: quality, coverage and affordability. We understand that to make progress on these three goals, we need a competitive marketplace in which consumers are treated fairly.

Currently, there are measures in place to empower Canadians in their relationships with their telecommunications service providers. This includes, for examples, the creation of a consumer code of conduct. There is also a dedicated organization to help resolve the complaints Canadians have specifically about their telecommunications service providers. It is called the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-Television Services, the CCTS. The CCTS reported that in 2018-19, it had successfully resolved 92% of the complaints it received.

Furthermore, the CRTC has strengthened its own measures over time. In 2017, the CRTC revised its wireless consumer code with changes, including a ban on cellphone unlocking fees. That provided savings for millions of Canadians and also made it easier for them to switch providers if they chose to.

Our government recognizes that more needs to be done. The CCTS 2018-19 "Mid-Year Report" shows that a large proportion of complaints received are about home Internet services. In addition, Canadians have expressed serious concerns about the sales practices used by certain large telecommunications carriers. We share those concerns. That is why, in June 2018, we directed the CRTC to launch a public inquiry to thoroughly investigate this matter and to consider potential solutions. We required the CRTC to investigate what provisions carriers have in place to mitigate the risk of consumers being subject to misleading or aggressive sales tactics. Furthermore, we specifically called for the CRTC to address the most feasible ways to strengthen or expand the scope of existing consumer protections, such as its codes of conduct. We also asked the CRTC to consider creating new codes of conduct that relate specifically to new issues so as to further empower consumers to make informed decisions with respect to their telecommunications services.

In short, we want to ensure the fair treatment of all Canadians. The CRTC led the inquiry, and the Competition Bureau also participated, given its expertise in combatting deceptive marketing.

In February 2019, the CRTC released its report on misleading and aggressive sales practices, which confirmed that such sales practices were taking place.

That these practices occur is unacceptable. They harm consumers, in particular vulnerable Canadians, and are a serious concern for the CRTC. The CRTC confirmed that they exist in all types of sales channels, including in stores, online, over the phone and door to door. The CRTC also believes that the internal measures put in place by the carriers to address misleading or aggressive sales practices are not achieving their stated goals.

In its report, the CRTC outlined a range of measures to address the matter of these sales practices. In the near term, the CRTC has an Internet code of conduct already under development. The CRTC also noted that it was necessary to establish such a mandatory code of conduct to address consumer contracts and other related issues.

The CRTC sought comments on a draft Internet code, which is based on provisions in two of its existing codes of conduct: the wireless code and the television service provider code.

• (1545)

Issues addressed in this draft include contract clarity, bill shock, bill management tools, service outages, equipment issues and barriers to switching service providers. The CRTC also sought public comments from Canadians with disabilities and companies that worked in this field on the kinds of experiences, barriers and challenges they faced.

Final comments were received this year, and a decision will follow shortly.

Furthermore, in the near future, the CRTC plans to launch a secret shopper program to monitor behaviour in the marketplace and will also create information tools to help consumers better understand their rights and the avenues they have for recourse.

The CRTC has an ambitious agenda for future action, which will require multiple regulatory processes to consider and to implement. Among others, it will consider expanding the CCTS's mandate to include handling complaints about misleading or aggressive retail sales practices. It will also consider requiring service providers to ensure their offers and promotions match the consumers' needs and means. Any new measures will add to the consumer protections already in place. This is a good thing, giving more protections for Canadian consumers.

More broadly, our government is taking action to ensure Canadian consumers are at the forefront of all future regulatory decisions in telecommunications.

Business of Supply

Having a customer focused agenda, our government recently announced a proposed policy direction that would require the CRTC to consider competition, affordability, consumer interests and innovation in all its telecommunications decisions and demonstrate to Canadians that it had in fact done so.

Through this proposed directive, we will ensure that telecommunications policy will be made through a consumer-first lens to ensure Canadians have access to quality services at more affordable prices, focused on their needs as consumers. The proposed policy direction includes a specific focus toward measures that will enhance and protect the rights of consumers in their relationships with telecommunications providers.

The record shows that Canadians have shown significant support for this policy direction.

Following the publication of the proposed policy direction, we sought feedback from Canadians. Over 64,000 Canadians wrote to their members of Parliament and sent copies to my colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, to indicate their support for the general policy direction. Another 14,000 Canadians signed a petition in support of the policy direction.

This proposed approach will be a clear and binding direction to the CRTC and apply to all its decisions on a going forward basis. One of my colleagues will soon speak more on our policy direction to the CRTC and how it will put consumers at the forefront of decisions.

It is unequivocally unacceptable that Canadians are subjected to aggressive and misleading sales practices. This government has responded with concrete and effective actions to protect and empower Canadian consumers. Our government will continue to stand up for consumers to ensure they are treated fairly. In addition, we will ensure that the technical tools are there to ensure we have access to the services, technically speaking, getting broadband available across all of Canada.

●(1550)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member opposite's work, along with other members such as me, on the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

Last week, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development dropped a bomb, not literally but metaphorically, on the fixed wireless providers due to the new announced changes to the 3,500 megahertz spectrum auction. The government is going to be clawing back from rural areas and repurposing that, which is the first time this has ever happened. In previous years, if providers did not follow through with the conditions, that could have been possible. This is the first time the government has ever done this.

This policy will either cause service to be lost, because spectrum runs the system, or it will put a permanent cap on the growth of those wireless providers that are offering competition to the other large telecom providers.

I would like to hear the member comment on this. I know he is a great advocate for e-health and other innovations, but this will be very harmful to local economies.

●(1555)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member across the way for continuing the discussion we are having in the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. As these concerns come forward, they will go to the government to be looked at and analyzed.

The intention of the program is to increase the competition within the smaller regions of Canada. There are concerns from different types of carriers. We have not heard from the smaller carriers. However, in the end, we need to have something that is fair to Canadians and provides service at an affordable rate, which I know the hon. member would support as well.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was fascinated to hear a 10-minute speech from a member who obviously had not read what the motion was about. We are not talking about misleading pricing practices. We are talking about price gauging and the fact that people in my region are paying \$70 a month for two gigabytes, when in Australia people pay \$24 a month. This is supported by the government and the league of telecom lobbyists who knock on its doors daily. When my daughter was in Rwanda, she had better download rates than she can get in downtown Ottawa.

Let us talk about northern Ontario and the complete failure of the government, which ended broadband plans and said that it would another one. We waited two years for that. Many of the communities I represent do not have broadband service and pay outrageous fees. The government continues to protect the telecom giants that rip us off day in, day out.

To say that the Liberals will do something better about bad arbitrary calling and how they deal with it is a side issue. The issue is the price gauging by a protected market of telecom giants.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, I will turn that into a question about what type of frequency we need in the north. If we look at the 600 megahertz band, we had an auction on that band this year. The low frequency band covers long distances in the north. Of the 112 licenses, 104 from this auction were from nine participants that would go toward developing these types of services in northern Canada and, in particular, indigenous communities. The hon. member across the way should be glad to see the progress we have on the low frequency part of the auction.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I really would like the member opposite to reconsider his previous answer to me. The fixed wireless communities are usually small, local regional players that have offered services that, through no fault of their own, have had their spectrum clawed back. That is why it is called a clawback. It is going to be repurposed, as in, sold at a higher auction price. This is kneecapping those regional players that have traditionally gone to places where the big telecoms have not.

Does the member not understand there was a consultation and the minister announced last week this change in policy? It is ridiculous.

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): A brief answer from the hon. member for Guelph.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Madam Speaker, it is hard to be brief on these complex issues. When we look at the \$1.7 billion that we will spend on the universal broadband fund to connect every household in Canada by 2030, this will include all types of providers, including the types the hon. member across the way has mentioned.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Guelph, who was good enough to share his time with me, as well as all those individuals from different political parties who have been so supportive and helpful over the years.

It is with mixed emotions that I rise today to give what will be my farewell address in this chamber, the people's House.

Thirty-five years ago, the people of Niagara Falls first elected me as their member of Parliament, and I will be forever grateful to them.

I am proud today to be wearing the Nicholson tartan tie for this occasion. I am pleased as well to be wearing a medal that was given to family members of World War I veterans. I received this when I was over at Vimy Ridge a couple of years ago. I was told that the Borden government encouraged people who were related to people who served in World War I to wear the medal. I had two grand-uncles, Gordon Gunn and Stewart Gunn, who fought in World War I. I have been very proud to wear this in public since that time.

As a boy, I took an interest in Prime Minister John Diefenbaker during the Cuban missile crisis. We talked about it all the time and I got quite caught up with this. I wrote to Mr. Diefenbaker and told him of my support for him, and it started a fan club in my class on his behalf.

Among other things, I would like to point out to the chamber that on this day, June 10, 1957, John Diefenbaker won his first election as Prime Minister of Canada. That was a great day for our country.

At the age of 13, I had the privilege of meeting the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, who asked me if I wanted to become a Conservative MP some day. I said for sure I would.

What I did not know at the time was that since the creation of the Niagara Falls riding, the Liberals had won five straight elections. It came as no surprise to me that years later my teacher, Mrs. Gordon, told me that when she told other teachers I wanted to be a Conservative MP some day, one of them said she should have encouraged me to become the captain of the Zeppelin instead.

In my 24 years in the House of Commons, I have witnessed much, such as the rise and fall of governments, including my own. Regardless of political stripe, the important thing is that our democracy works. There is not another country in the world that does it better than Canada.

At citizenship courts and others, I always say that to be a Canadian means that one has won the lotto of life. That was consistently true in the roles I have had as defence minister, foreign affairs minister and justice minister.

Wherever I went in the world, representatives of other countries were always and completely consistent. They were appreciative of and grateful to Canada.

I remember being in Afghanistan a few years ago, talking with government officials. They wanted to talk about the difference Canada and our allies had made in that country. They told me that in 2006, 75,000 girls went to school in Afghanistan. They pointed to me and said that two million girls now went to school in Afghanistan, that this was the difference Canada and its allies had made. What we heard was so consistent with what we hear wherever we go.

One of the other things that always struck me was Canada's influence. I remember getting off a plane in Ukraine and being asked if I would wear a poppy on my left lapel. This was in March. I said I would. Everywhere I went I could see posters of people wearing poppies. I checked my briefing notes, but I did not see anything on this in particular. When I asked about it, I was told that up to a couple of years ago Ukraine had commemorated its war dead the way the old Soviet Union did, but had decided to do what Canada did, which was to wear a poppy. It is a perfect example of Canada's influence.

I remember getting off the plane in the United Arab Emirates and meeting Prince Abdullah, who was the foreign minister. We made a bit of chit-chat. He told me his son had just completed the Terry Fox run. I asked if he had visited Canada recently, to which he replied no, that the run was in Abu Dhabi, where 20,000 people participated in the Terry Fox run. He said that they got the idea from Canada, to which I replied "I know".

This is so consistent with what we have heard about Canada. Canada has always been there for the right reasons.

Over the years, I have always emphasized the great opportunities for our country. Sometimes we do not underscore that enough.

● (1600)

I remember, back in 1988, I had a meeting with an American congressman. We were going to have an election later in 1988, and he said to me, "Do you have your money lined up?" I told him that my party had a few dollars in the bank and that we could spend only \$50,000, because that was the limit. He said, "Fifty thousand? I don't think I could open an office for \$50,000." I asked him how much he had, and he said, "I am running for re-election as a congressman, and I have \$2 million in the bank right now." I thought to myself, what a wonderful country this is. One does not have to have a couple of million dollars to become a member of Parliament. We do not need that kind of money, and we are not dependent on people for that.

We are truly blessed to live in this country. In the words of Prime Minister Diefenbaker:

I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.

May all of us in this House continue to value those ideas, because that is what makes Canada great.

Business of Supply

It was a great opportunity to be elected in 1984, and it was a great day for Canada when Brian Mulroney was elected prime minister. I have had so many amazing experiences that I would need much more time than I have today to recall them all.

I do remember, for instance, that very soon after being elected, Brian Mulroney sent several of us MPs over to Ethiopia and Sudan to observe that aid was getting through to the people of those countries. It was no surprise to me that it was getting through. Canadian aid was being delivered to the people of Sudan and Ethiopia. Again, this is one of the things that are so characteristic of this country.

I was proud to be a member of the government that enacted the acid rain treaty between Canada and the United States and the free trade agreement between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, and I was proud of the fact that Brian Mulroney took such a determined stance against apartheid and was the first western leader to recognize the freedom of Ukraine.

One of the last pieces of legislation to be passed under that government was legislation that made the possession of child pornography illegal in Canada. I am most proud that as a government we stood to protect children from falling prey to this heinous crime.

I also had the honour of serving under Canada's first female prime minister, the Right Hon. Kim Campbell, first as her parliamentary secretary and then later as minister of science and small business.

Serving in the cabinet under the Right Hon. Stephen Harper was one of the great chapters of my life, first of all as his House leader, minister of justice, minister of national defence, and minister of foreign affairs. I thank him, because on the world stage, he stood up consistently for what is right. He stood up for the integrity of our justice system and the rule of law, and for victims of crime. I believe he will go down in history as one of Canada's greatest prime ministers.

During my time as an opposition member these last few years, I was very pleased to have passed my private member's Bill C-233, on Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. One of the most poignant memories I have, after the passing of my friend and colleague Gord Brown, was my initiative to distribute aspirin pill holders in his memory.

I also want to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for having placed his confidence in me. I am grateful to have served under him as shadow minister for justice and shadow minister for procurement. I thank him for putting my name forward for the national security committee. Canada is fortunate to have the Leader of the Opposition.

There are many I would be remiss if I did not thank. The countless volunteers who gave up their personal time to elect me are all remarkable Canadians, and I owe them a debt of gratitude. I want to thank all those who worked on my federal campaigns, people like the Lyon, Gibson and Stockton families, and members of my own family who have helped me for over 35 years.

This is also for Maureen Murphy and the outstanding staff I have had the privilege of working with in my ministerial portfolios, on the Hill and in the riding. I cannot name all the people who worked in

my Hill and constituency offices, but I will name those who are with me today: Stewart Graham, Tracy Alway, Anna Annunziata, Jenn Stockton, Billy Morrison and Cheri Elliott. I want them to know that it has been an honour to work with them, and a great privilege for me.

● (1605)

To my beautiful wife and partner, Arlene, so often she displayed extraordinary graciousness in not having her husband by her side when duty called. There were many special occasions I was not able to be present at. I often tell people, though, that if a spouse does not completely support them in their candidacy, they should not get into this job, because it is a 24-hour-a-day job. One of the blessings I have had is the unequivocal backing of my wife, and I thank her for her love and support. I am looking forward to being there for my wife and my family. I love Arlene dearly.

To my colleagues in the House and those who work with us, I am grateful. It has been a privilege serving with them, and Canada is a better place because of them.

There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens. Now is my time and season to say farewell to this venerated chamber.

This marks the beginning of a new chapter in my life for Arlene, myself and our three children, Rob, Peter and Christine. I have enjoyed the journey thus far and look forward to what the future holds. I have always been proud to be a loyal subject of Her Majesty the Queen, and I am proud that the people of Niagara Falls have given me the privilege of serving in this place.

I thank everyone for the memories, for they will last long after the goodbyes.

● (1610)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank the member for his passionate speech and wish him all the best as he starts a new chapter in his life as we head into a different Parliament.

I also want to acknowledge the other speakers who have made their speeches over the past few weeks with their farewells to this parliamentary session.

We do have time for questions and comments. I see that the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will not be asking a question, but I do have some comments for the hon. member for Niagara Falls. He is the dean of the Conservative caucus, and there is no doubt he has the immense respect of members on both sides of this House, for a number of reasons.

Business of Supply

First, as colleagues are well aware, he brings a wealth of experience to the House and has always brought that in the work that he does on the chamber floor. I will just quickly recount his experience: minister for science; minister responsible for small business; government House leader at a time of minority Parliaments, when it is not easy at all to be the government House leader, but he met that challenge; minister of justice; attorney general; minister of defence, and then a variety of critic roles, as well as parliamentary secretary roles. That experience has given him a wealth of knowledge, and I, for one, rely on that knowledge every time he rises to speak in this House. Sometimes I disagree with it, but there is no doubt he brings with that experience a wealth of knowledge that contributes to the work of the House of Commons and to Canada in a very real and meaningful way.

He is also a very fierce defender of Conservative values. I do not always agree with him, but what I appreciate most is that, good times and bad, he has always been there for the Conservative Party, even running in some of the most difficult times. Also, he is very collegial and has friends in all the party caucuses and on both sides of the House.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I am sad to see the hon. member go, but we all wish him and Arlene all the best in a very well-deserved retirement. He has made a difference in this place.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the hon. member's speech. He started by talking about something that we all know is true: that political leaders can have an impact on youth and inspire them to follow a career in politics. He talked about his experience with then prime minister Diefenbaker.

I am sure that the hon. member, through his experience speaking to students and being present in the community, has inspired others to follow in his footsteps. I sincerely hope, however, that he did not irrevocably steer these young people away from running as Liberals. I do not think he would have, because my experience with the member has always been that he has approached issues and the people in this House with graciousness. He has never been heavy-handed in his approach and has never resorted to personal attacks. I think he is a fine example, not only for the youth in this country but for all Canadians.

I had the pleasure of sitting on the transport committee with the hon. member when he was re-elected in his return to Parliament, and I have always enjoyed listening to him speak in debate. I wish him and his wife Arlene and his family the very best going forward. It has been a pleasure to sit in this Parliament with him.

• (1615)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to pass on my thanks to the member for his dedication to our great country, to our Queen and to his family. He has been a fantastic person to learn from, and I will always remember him as being the best minister of justice I have had the opportunity to serve beside. He did many great things for this country.

However, I have to say that I have tried, unsuccessfully, to convince the member that the wines of British Columbia, particularly the Okanagan Valley, are far superior to those of

Niagara and Ontario in general. I would like to ask the member whether he now agrees that B.C. wines are far superior to Ontario wines. Have I finally had some influence on his taste and his perspective?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I do not agree. The member was doing so well with his comments, and then he got a little off track.

I want to thank members from all three political parties. In the different roles that I have had, on many occasions, I have had the opportunity to work with members and their staff. It was a great experience for me, and I grew greater respect for all those who do work, because they truly believe. As the hon. member from the Liberal Party said, we do not always agree on the same issues, but we passionately agree with what we do understand to be the truth and what is the best for this country. While we may disagree, that respect continues.

Again, I thank all my colleagues very much. I appreciate it.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

I am so pleased to rise today to speak to this very important NDP opposition day motion that talks about cellphone and Internet accessibility and affordability.

I represent the beautiful rural riding of Essex. By far, this is one of our main issues. There are many places throughout rural ridings that simply do not have any type of service, and if they do, it is substandard at best. Therefore, I want to thank my friend and colleague, the member for Windsor West, for all of his work on this critical issue. I want to commend him. He has a fabulous way of understanding what matters to not just his constituents but all Canadians and working hard to improve those areas. He is a fantastic MP, because he constantly focuses on these pocketbook issues of affordability that make a real difference to his constituents and all Canadians. I want to thank him for that. It also adds to his body of work on a digital bill of rights, which I know he is passionate about.

People in our region of Windsor-Essex are extremely appreciative of the work we have been doing to bring this issue to light. Therefore, at the end of this Parliament, I am very pleased that we are rising to talk about an important issue for Canadians.

In ridings like Essex, being connected to a cellphone and high-speed Internet is not a luxury; it is an essential service. Farmers, seniors, small businesses, vintners, tourist-based industries and students all rely on connectivity. Every aspect of our lives relies on this. In today's connected world, having access to cellphone and high-speed Internet is essential to the lives of people, whether with respect to work, home or life in between.

Business of Supply

Many Canadians get their cellphone bill at the end of the month and are afraid to open it. They pause before they open it, because they are wondering what is going to be inside. They do not know what the total will be. Did they go over their usage? Did their spouse or another family member go over the limit? It is very hard to budget for a bill that is constantly changing every month. Trying to understand and interpret what is in the bill is difficult. Then, if something is wrong, they pick up the phone and have to spend hours and hours with these big telecom companies trying to get to the bottom of what exactly has happened. That is a reality for a lot of Canadians. They get that bill, open that bill and are truly afraid of what they are going to see. All of us have been in this position where we wonder what the charges are that are being added to our bill. It is not just that the basic packages are completely unaffordable. It is the unknown of what we will see when we open those cellphone and Internet bills.

Then there is a flip side. I am sure this will sound familiar to a lot of Canadians, because I hear it from people wherever I go. People are afraid to use their cellphones because they are not sure what they are covered for and they are afraid they will go over their data limit. People literally are not using their cellphones outside of an extreme situation because they know they will be dinged for doing that. It has created this whole other culture of people trying to interpret and understand something that, quite frankly, is not easy to understand. People are conditioned to seek out free Wi-Fi to limit their usage of their data because they are afraid of hitting that amount and going over on their bill.

There should be a study done in the House on the behaviours people have adopted because they are afraid of what their bill might be at the end of the month, as it really is changing the behaviour of people. Even with full-speed data there is a cap. When people hit that cap, their data is slowed down for the rest of the billing period. People are essentially being punished because they have reached their cap, and now their access to that service is slowed down. In rural communities like mine, this is a very serious safety issue. There are many people who are travelling on country roads. If they are suddenly unable to access things at the speed they need to, how fair is that for people? How safe is that?

If people want to know how much they are being ripped off by big telecom companies, which the Liberals and Conservatives are both defending here today, they should pick up the phone and call Bell, Telus, Rogers, or any one of the service providers, and say they are leaving. If they say they are leaving, the price will drop faster than they have ever seen. All of a sudden, the company is coming out with offers to take money off their bill. If people do not take advantage of that during the phone call, they will get emails and more phone calls afterward, because the company will go after them.

• (1620)

Essentially, there are already tiers of people paying different prices in Canada, because if people can spend the time to pick up the phone and call and complain, companies are quick to drop the price. There are lower prices that are accessible for some Canadians but not all Canadians. That is completely unfair.

We have these discrepancies that exist in the pricing because companies are all desperate to keep customers. They are making an

incredible profit on the backs of Canadians. They make the highest profit margin on gigabytes in the world. No wonder they are charging us the most money that they possibly can.

Everyone knows we are paying the highest prices for mobile wireless and broadband services in the developed world. It is time to fix that. We could ask any Canadian right now on Wellington Street or in my community of Essex, “Do you think we are paying a fair rate for services and broadband?” No one believes we are paying a fair rate. Everyone knows we have the highest costs. Why is this? We have been conditioned to accept it. Why are Liberals and Conservatives happy to accept this? I cannot quite get my head around it.

I want to say one other thing about the telecom companies. Last year, Bell had an offer if people called between certain periods of time and stayed on the phone for hours on end. I know about that because I did it. At first people did not think it was real, but Bell said they would get a cheaper plan, but only if they called during a certain window of time and only if they kept their current phone. It is not that the big telecom companies cannot reduce their profit and still make a profit; it is simply that they refuse to do it or will only do it for some Canadians some of the time. That is not acceptable.

My riding of Essex is a rural one and like most of Canada the access and affordability just do not exist; they are just not there. At times in my neighbourhood, people have to stand in a certain place in their house to be able to speak on their cellphone. If they need cellphone access for their business, or a student or a senior needs cellphone access, they simply do not have it and they have to manoeuvre within their homes.

It reminds me of back in the day when people would put tinfoil on the rabbit ears of televisions to get a channel. That is the reality of what rural communities face, and that is only if we can get service. Many pockets in my communities cannot get cell service. People know that their cellphone service will drop between one concession road and another because no one has service within that area.

Farmers are extremely high tech and need to know that every acre is covered. They are sending out drones and doing incredible things with technology on farms, but they do not have the access they need. That is outrageous. Liberals want them to wait 10 years for a plan that maybe will work. That just is not acceptable. We need service and it is becoming essential.

Many Canadians are asking how we have become this country with the highest costs. The Liberals and Conservatives have certainly heard this argument today and say that we can rely on the market and competition. They say not to worry, that the corporations will take care of it and somehow competition will bring the prices down. That has not happened. There is no evidence of that whatsoever.

Business of Supply

If we bring in new entrants, but do not have robust consumer protection, price ceilings, essential service mandates and market oversight, measures which are not being implemented by the way, we simply are not getting competitive rates. When we leave it up to the corporations to give us fair rates, we end up exactly where we are. That means Canadian consumers are being forced to pay more than \$20 more than the average monthly prices in other OECD countries.

Liberals and Conservatives once again want to leave it up to the corporations to lower their prices: "Let us not interfere in the market." They think that somehow these corporations, out of the kindness of their hearts, are going to take less money in profits and lower costs for Canadians. Who believes that? Who sees that happening? People in Essex certainly do not see that as part of their reality.

• (1625)

This is about having the courage to stand up to rich telecom companies to protect our wallets and improve the services we rely on. The NDP appears to be the only party willing to do just that on behalf of Canadians.

I am curious to see how Liberals and Conservatives will vote. To be quite honest, I do not know how they can vote against the affordability and accessibility of wireless and broadband Internet in our country. It would shock a lot of Canadians if they voted against this.

In countries like Australia, people are sometimes paying two times less than Canadians do for the same plan. While Canadian telecoms make the most revenue per wireless gigabyte in the world, Canadians are paying the highest prices.

On behalf of Canadians, New Democrats are saying enough is enough.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, certainly Canadians are experiencing an affordability crisis. The member and other NDP members are certainly right to raise this as one of the issues.

The problem is the impracticality of their suggestions. They say that they want to see further investments so that rural and remote areas, particularly indigenous communities up north, can have full, affordable access to Internet. That is certainly possible. The Auditor General chronicled it. He said there was about 160 billion dollars' worth of work that needs to be done. However, by putting a price cap on this, right away it handicaps small regional providers from being able to get the capital necessary to build out those networks.

Does the hon. member not recognize that by her party's own motion today, just that one simple suggestion is going to drive away investment and make it more difficult for indigenous communities and small regional players to get spectrum and give Canadians the services they need and desire?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, the member is invoking indigenous communities as a reason to help corporations. Only a Conservative would bring that argument into the House.

There is money here. Let us consider the spectrum auction. It is \$17.6 billion in revenue. This money could be used to improve the

services that are necessary. Quite honestly, establishing a cap would mean big telecoms would have to start looking at offering Canadians unlimited data, just as telecoms are doing across the globe.

If we never cap these big telecom corporations, will they ever stop overcharging Canadians? Will our prices every come down? Those are the real questions.

If we do not start looking at this in a way to make it affordable and accessible, like it is across the world, then shame on all of us. This is about, on average, \$600 going toward Canadian families, Canadian seniors and Canadian businesses every single year. Why would Conservatives not support that?

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the past few years, our government has invested more than \$900 million to connect communities across Canada. In budget 2019, we announced a \$1.7-billion investment in infrastructure projects, bringing the total to nearly \$5 billion.

Does my colleague believe these investments are important? Why did the NDP vote against those measures?

[English]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party has been in government for three and a half years, and it has not included any consumer price protection on any of the spectrum auctions that have happened during its mandate. After three and a half years, the result has been ever-rising prices for Canadians for wireless service, reaching levels that are among the highest in the world.

Why will the Liberals not talk about cellphone service affordability and Internet affordability for all of our communities? I am very curious to see how the member will vote today, given that we are talking about making these services more affordable for Canadians.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, the member has raised the subject of affordability a number of times. The previous Conservative government reduced the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. That lowered the cost of everyone's cellphone and Internet service. It is something the NDP opposed at the time. The NDP has always opposed tax relief that would help Canadians.

NDP members are now bringing up the spectrum auction, suggesting that somehow they can be the white knights of affordability without actually saying what they would do with the spectrum auction. I would like to hear what the member proposes concretely to change in the spectrum auction that would provide some relief for Canadians.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, I cannot believe the member is defending price gouging in some way. There is money in the spectrum auction, and this belongs to Canadians. The spectrum auction belongs to all of us, and the money that has been raised out of the spectrum auction can be used.

Business of Supply

When the Conservatives were in power for 10 years, they did not include any consumer protections on any of the spectrum auctions. To be quite honest, there were 10 years under the Conservatives and almost four years under the Liberals and we still have the highest costs in the world. That is what we are left with out of these governments, and it is time for better.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I noticed there were some questions as to how I picked individuals. I want to remind members that it has been going on for quite some time.

The way we do it is, when an individual from a certain party is delivering the speech, during a five-minute question and comment period, the other parties will ask questions, in order to have a healthy debate. Therefore, if they get up during the five-minute period, generally the party making the speech will not get a question. When it is a 10-minute round, they will get questions, unless no one else gets up. This is to allow for debate. This has been going on since I have been the Chair, and all of the other Chairs deliberate in that same fashion.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

• (1635)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are here today to watch the Liberals and Conservatives come together to defend price-gouging against Canadians, in order to defend what they are claiming is a free market and the importance of a free market. It is not a free market. The telecom market in Canada is a constructed market that is protected. It is protected for the interests of companies that make the highest profits in telecom services in the world, while delivering the highest cost per consumer.

I will begin by talking about two places.

One place is Rwanda. When my daughter was working in Rwanda, she contacted me on her cellphone. I said to her that it must be really expensive to contact us in Canada from Rwanda. She said that she gets better download speeds and download rates in rural Rwanda than she gets in downtown Ottawa. I was quite taken aback by that.

Another place, which you know well, Madam Speaker, is northern Ontario. I do not know if the Conservatives and the Liberals know that Highway 11 and Highway 17 are part of the Trans-Canada Highway route. That is where hundreds of millions of dollars in goods move every day. It is the national transportation corridor. Let us imagine the shock of a couple who invested in a business on the Trans-Canada Highway and were told, in 2018, that a telecom company cannot give their business cellphone service. The big telecom giants who serve the area say that there is no business case for serving those people.

We have been hearing from the Conservatives today that it is very important to gouge consumers; that is how the free market works. If companies rip people off and make them pay more money, then the magic of the free market is that the telecom capitalists will just reinvest all that and help rural areas. They said that they would help indigenous people. I have never seen, in the history of Canada, telecom companies help any indigenous community unless the government is putting up the money.

That is the market we live in. We live in a market where it is the taxpayers who put the money in for the broadband expansions. It is the taxpayers who pay through the nose, time and again, for the price-gouging that goes on. As my hon. colleague from Essex pointed out, if people do not think it is possible to get better rates, all they have to do is call Bell and Rogers and say they are quitting their service. The companies will do backflips to give them lower prices. I talk to seniors who have to give up their phone coverage because they cannot afford to pay for it. They phoned me, and they were shocked at how willing Bell was to give them so much better a rate. They would not have gotten that if they had not threatened to quit.

What does that mean for our economy? We have tried to build an economy that is a digital world-class economy, and yet Canadians have the lowest data use of pretty much any western country. The only countries that use less wireless service than we do are the Czech Republic, Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Greece. We had a period where people would say they did not want to use their cellphone, were not sure if they were covered and did not want to know what the extra costs are. Therefore, we have some of the lowest usage of phones and yet we pay the highest rates.

Let us talk about what gouging means, because it seems to be a confusing thing to Liberals and Conservatives. They want to compare apples to apples. On a two-gigabyte plan for their phone, people pay about \$75 Canadian a month, and they can still get gouged on top of that. In Paris, people pay \$30; in Rome, \$24. The Liberals and the Conservatives might say that is not fair and it is different in Europe. Let us compare a similar-sized country with a similar population and similar large rural regions, such as Australia. Australians pay \$24.70 a month on average for two gigabytes. In Canada, we are paying \$70.

The Conservatives and the Liberals would tell us that is the beauty of the free market. No, that is the beauty of Liberals and Conservatives hanging out day after day with the telecom lobbyists.

• (1640)

Folks back at home might not know, but we can hardly walk down the halls of Parliament without bumping into or tripping over a telecom lobbyist, because they do not want government to address the inequities that we are seeing. They want government to continue to protect this protected market that has allowed them the highest profits anywhere in telecommunications.

Business of Supply

In terms of total revenue per gigabyte, Canada is 70 times higher in revenue than India, which has pretty much one billion people paying into it. Now, the telecom companies might say that is not an apples-to-apples comparison. Well then, let us go to Finland, which also has a northern climate. The telecom revenues in Canada are 23 times higher than Finland. Yet, I am being told that the Canadian telecom companies cannot give us a break on our phones, that it will somehow break the companies and destroy the digital economy if they were not allowed to gouge that 23 times higher than what people in Finland have.

If we look at the success rate, 63% of people in rural Canada do not have access to high-speed broadband. The Liberals think they have done something great, while the Conservatives took the \$17-billion spectrum auction and spent it on everything but reinvesting in a modern digital economy. There are 14% of the highways and major transportation routes that do not have access to LTE wireless services. When we get up into the north, we get into much higher rates in terms of what people cannot access.

Phones are not luxury items anymore. They are essential. We have government moving to all online services, and yet it will not deliver proper rural broadband or proper rates that people can afford to pay to be able to even access the services of the government.

What are we talking about in terms of a vision? The New Democrats have been saying all along that the spectrum auction is the greatest opportunity to reinvest in a truly digital economy. We have protected the telecom data-opolies for so long that, if they are going to have a protected market, then they are going to have a market that is fair, and that market is going to end the price gouging and we are going to put the caps on. The Liberals will not and the Conservatives will not, because they will look after the friends of big business time and time again, and they will continue to leave ordinary Canadians behind.

We will put the investments in a truly digital economy, because that is where the future lies. It is not in protecting the insider friends of both the Liberals and Conservatives. It is about protecting ordinary Canadians. It is about protecting seniors. It is about making sure that, when we drive on a northern highway, we have access to telecom services. It is not just northern highways. We can get 30 kilometres outside of Ottawa and have service cut off. How do they explain a first-world country where 30 kilometres outside of the nation's capital we can have our cellphone die out? That is the lack of vision in the last 15 years that we have had under Conservative and Liberal governments, and we are going to change that. It will begin by taking on the telecom giants and making sure we have accessible, fair service at a fair price for Canadians.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I said many times today, Conservatives want to see more money in the wallets and back pockets of Canadians so that they can spend on important things for their families, save for their children's education, etc.

The NDP members who have risen today continue to fail to actually say what their spectrum policy will be. The auction process for spectrum is actually charged to the companies, which then have to charge Canadians to be able to facilitate and pay for that spectrum. With a price cap, the motion before us would kneecap many of the

small, regional operators that have been able to carve out a niche right across this country. Again, on the spectrum, do the NDP members actually have any ideas, or are they just saying they are going to reform it; and who will pay for it?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, we always know that the Conservatives are going to stand up suddenly for the little guy when it means defending their big friends. They had 10 years on the spectrum auction. They continued to refuse to move forward with a vision that would actually reinvest—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola that he had an opportunity to ask a question or make comments and nobody interrupted him during that time. I would ask him to hold onto his thoughts and allow the member to speak, whether he likes the answer or not, and then he may have an opportunity to ask another question or make another comment.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

• (1645)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I do not hold it against my friend. I know that he is frustrated. It must be terrible to stand up day after day and pretend that his party is defending the little guy when it is coming into the House with a record like Stephen Harper's on the spectrum auction, which took all those billions of dollars that could have been reinvested. However, the Conservatives do not reinvest. When there were billions of dollars from a spectrum auction that could have been invested in the economy, what did they do? They gave it in tax cuts to the rich. They then turned around and asked themselves how they were going to pay for things if they could not do price gouging of senior citizens. That is the Conservative economic model in a nutshell.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am interested in my colleague's thoughts in regard to the 2017 budget, which saw a substantial decrease in costs for low-income families. We were able to achieve that with a number of private companies. They were looking at \$10 a month. Could the member share what his thoughts are with respect to that?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, certainly the ability to give low-income families a fair price is very important. It raises the question of why other families do not get a fair price. If the government can do it for low-income families, why can it not do it for seniors?

The problem with the government is that it has allowed the price gouging to go on for years. We are paying \$70 a month, when people in Australia are paying \$24 a month. It is affecting students. It is affecting seniors. It is affecting businesses. It is a lag on the development of a data-driven economy.

Business of Supply

If we can do this in a very limited way for a very small number of people, because only a small number of people were eligible for that, why is it not possible to have a proper data plan in place to ensure that everyone has access in the digital age?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I go back to the spectrum policy. The reason there are spectrum auctions is that there is only so much spectrum available, and an auction is a very efficient way for government to allocate it based on what people are willing to pay for it.

The member has not given a single thing the NDP would propose to do differently. I would like to hear one or two original ideas of what it would do differently in a spectrum auction. I would like him to admit that the NDP is just putting forward things it has no intention of getting serious about. It is just marketing for electoral gain.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, again, the issue is that he is trying to avoid the question of price gouging, which the Conservatives support. The problem with the spectrum auction is that if it goes for what people are willing to pay for it, as he says, then of course the big players are going to win, and the big players have won year after year after year, and then they come and whine to us and tell us that we have to pay.

Earlier he was talking about the little players and indigenous people. Conservatives always bring indigenous people in suddenly when they are trying to defend the big boys. If the Conservative idea of a spectrum auction is that those who have the most money can pay, that is a failed process.

What we would say is that a spectrum auction has to always include rural, indigenous and new players, who would have a guarantee to get access to it so that we could get some competition, which is something the Liberals and the Conservatives have never allowed in this telecom market.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, The Environment.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and talk, even about issues that are brought to the floor by my New Democrat friends.

The NDP speakers have talked about the five big things they will do to try to lower prices. There is one in particular I want to reference, which is “abolishing data caps for broadband Internet and mandating that companies create unlimited data plans at affordable rates for wireless services”.

I was in the Manitoba legislature when we had the great debate about the privatization of the Manitoba telephone system. It was a very heated discussion. I remember one day wearing an army helmet

into the chamber, and it was photographed. They called it the war of words. We had MLAs who were walking over and making threatening gestures to the government of the day. The Manitoba legislature was in a bit of an uproar back then.

The New Democrats opposed it going into the next election, saying that they would buy back the Manitoba telephone system. They even had emergency debates on buying back the Manitoba telephone system. New Democrats argued that rural Manitoba would be shafted and that the prices for telephone services would skyrocket. I must say that I enjoyed that debate. I argued with many of the different points. In fact, the record will show that I did not support the privatization of the Manitoba telephone system.

However, once the NDP were in government in the province, 15 years later, it did not do anything about the Manitoba telephone system, not a thing, even though New Democrats told Manitobans that they would do quite the opposite.

That is why, when I look at the NDP's five points for action, I am inclined to agree, and it is not often that I agree with the Conservatives across the way, that this is an election gimmick by the NDP. What New Democrats are trying to tell Canadians is that they would tell our private providers that they would have to expand and that they would have to give unlimited Internet. It would not be an option. They would mandate that they do it. New Democrats would also mandate what the price would be.

The only other thing I am a little surprised the New Democrats have not said is that their intention would be to nationalize. If they were to nationalize the sector, then they would be able to act on all five points they are presenting. I noticed a couple of the New Democrats smile at that gesture. Maybe that is what their real intent would be. At the end of the day, they need to be a little more transparent in terms of what New Democrats could actually accomplish. In the motion, it says that they want to reduce bills by \$10.

For the 2017 budget, through the connecting families initiative, the Government of Canada, through negotiations and discussions with more than a dozen carriers, agreed that we need to get families connected to the Internet with access to cellular plans. That meant a guarantee of \$10 to get that plan. We have seen thousands of families, in all different regions of our country, take advantage of that. It is tied to the Canada child benefit program.

● (1650)

We are recognizing how important it is for individuals to have access to cellular and Internet services. As opposed to talking about it, there was a budget initiative to put Internet into the homes of some of the poorest people in Canada. What did New Democrats do? They voted against that budget. On the one hand, they talk about reducing the rate for Internet usage and cellphone rates, but when it came time to support it, where were the comments of the NDP in that regard?

Business of Supply

When I stood and posed a question, one NDP member's response was that their job was not to compliment the government. I can assure that member and other members from the New Democratic Party, almost without exception, that they are very good at not recognizing good things that take place. There are a lot of wonderful policy ideas this government has put in budget initiatives that New Democrats continuously vote against. They talk about—

• (1655)

Mr. Peter Julian: You do not implement them. Where is the pharmacare? Where is the affordable housing? Where is anything?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the member for New Westminster—Burnaby that he will definitely have an opportunity to ask questions or comment. He does not have to put out a fire anywhere. I would ask him not to yell and to hold onto his thoughts so that he does not forget them when it is time for questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this is another initiative that my New Democratic friends decided to vote against. In our very first budget in 2016, \$500 million were committed to expanding Internet access. It was supposed to be completed by 2021. The NDP voted against that. Those dollars are connecting well over 500 communities in all areas of Canada, yet they voted against that initiative.

On the one hand, the New Democrats say they want to reduce it by \$10 whereas in many areas our government reduced it by \$60 for thousands of families. They talk about wanting to see more expansion into rural communities, yet they voted against a budget that would allow that expansion to take place.

I would challenge my New Democratic friends to review some of their comments on the record, even the member who spoke just before me.

In response to a question, the member said that providers did nothing for indigenous communities. A few months ago Bell Let's Talk donated \$100,000 to the Bear Clan in the north end of Winnipeg. For those who are not familiar with the Bear Clan, it is a fantastic organization that has developed into an extended family. It gets residents in the north end of Winnipeg off the streets, residents who are some of the most challenging, some who are addicted to crack. The Bear Clan gets these individuals engaged so they can become part of a broader family. Bell Let's Talk recognized the value of this organization.

The Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre is an outstanding organization, a world-class organization, that reaches into not only the community of north Winnipeg, but into many different areas. It is making a real difference in our indigenous community and beyond. Substantial dollars flowed to that organization.

The NDP is so preoccupied in trying to come across as the champions of some cause that it will throw anything and everyone under the bus.

I would agree that there are things the government can and should do to ensure there is healthy competition, that we do what we can to

ensure, through that competition, we have reasonable cell and Internet access in Canada. That is critically important.

We need to recognize that Canadian wireless subscribers today enjoy the fastest average mobile download connection fees among all G7 countries, plus Australia, with twice the average download speed of the United States. This is the state of mobile network experience based on May 2019. Canadian wireless networks are now the second fastest in the world, 152% faster than the global average.

I am not here to defend the providers as much as I am to challenge the NDP to recognize that not all providers are bad people.

I cannot recall if I met with the organizations. I suspect the NDP might want to do a freedom of information request just to find out how many times I might have. In the last number of years, I might have met once or twice for a five or 10 minute exchange. I do not have lobbyists breaking down my door. Who own these companies? Chances are they are union members and pensioners. These are larger corporations.

• (1700)

I made reference to Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata. Unifor teamed up with Bell on one occasion to provide over \$100,000, recognizing it could work with providers.

We could have debated many things today. I am surprised the NDP chose this topic. I would have thought the New Democrats might have wanted to talk about the national pharmacare program. In the last couple of years, they have finally come on board, raising that issue after we put things in place that could lead to a national pharmacare program.

If the NDP members were true to their colours and were social democrats who were trying to see social improvement on a bigger scale, I would have thought that would have been more important. After all, this is their last opposition day between now and the next election. Instead, they have taken a consumer idea on cellphones. After all, we all have cellular telephones, so no doubt it is very popular to say let us reduce cellphone rates. This government has done that for thousands of people, far more than what the New Democrats are suggesting today. We did that a couple of years ago.

Mr. Ken McDonald: They voted against it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: As my colleague from Avalon reminded me, the New Democrats voted against that.

When we look at connecting for families, the government announced that initiative in 2017 as part of innovations and skills. That helped bridge the digital divide for Canadian families that might have struggled to afford access to home Internet. Again, 14 Internet providers are voluntarily participating in the initiative by offering Internet service for \$10 per month to eligible families that currently receive the maximum Canada child benefit. The program is being rolled out and close to 20,000 families are benefiting from the \$10 a month Internet service. I believe well over 20,000 computers were ordered through the computers for school program.

Business of Supply

I made reference at the beginning of my speech to MTS and when it was privatized in the province of Manitoba. One of the initiatives that this government authorized Innovation, Science and Economic Development in May 2016, through a GIC, denied Bell's petition to overturn the CRTC's decision to extend wholesale regulation to fibre home Internet services. This decision supported increased retail competition for higher speed Internet services. Average broadband and Internet prices offered by smaller service providers relying on wholesale regulations are up to 35% lower than those of the larger companies.

I think of the Innovation, Science and Economic Development fund. This affects the province of Manitoba, where the ISCD approved the transfer of the MTS spectrum licences to Bell and Xplornet Communications Inc. As part of the deal, Bell committed to spending \$1 billion over the next five years to expand wire and wireless broadband networks to Manitoba. The deal also allowed Xplornet to expand into the mobile wireless market for the very first time.

That is a significant commitment. That commitment will see many communities having enhanced service for Internet. That is an initiative by working with MTS and Bell Canada, along with listening to other stakeholders. Manitobans will be better as a direct result of that.

• (1705)

Whether it is for the Province of Manitoba or that initial \$500 million allocated to ensure rural communities would get enhanced services over the coming years, this government is clearly demonstrating tangible actions.

I have been listening to the debate on spectrum and the revenues generated. My Conservative friend is somewhat right. When we talk about the revenue that has been generated through spectrum because of the demand for it, it makes sense to auction it. That is how people get their best price, unless of course one's intention is to nationalize. If that is what the intention of the New Democratic Party is then it should be honest with Canadians and make that statement. If it wants to forgo the billions of dollars in revenue and nationalize, then it should say that.

The revenues that were generated and came into Ottawa, no doubt have been spent on a wide variety of things like health care or other types of social services. It would be incredible to try to track every dollar. I suspect most of it, although I do not know it for a fact, came in the form of general revenue. We have general revenue come in and government money goes out.

When I think of that spectrum auction and the money coming in, that is where I agree with my New Democratic friends. The Stephen Harper Conservative Party did not serve Canadians well by not supporting Canada's infrastructure. Had it supported Canada's infrastructure in the same manner that we have as a government, we would have a much healthier competitive climate for our providers today. It would have had more rural Canadians or rural communities engaged. I agree that the Conservatives were bad on that. Through our budgetary measures, we have taken a number of initiatives to ensure our rural communities are more connected through Internet services than ever before.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, in this debate, the member has made a number of points about the government introducing programming. The connect to innovate program, should be called the "connect to announce". It announces so much but does not fund anything.

The minister's own office said this in response to an Order Paper question about improving community Internet connectivity through backbone infrastructure. It said that with regard to a first nations community in the Fraser, the Sts'ailes in B.C., \$132,000 were announced and zero dollars were funded. On connect to innovate projects in Newfoundland and Labrador, over \$24 million and zero dollars were funded. On connect to innovate projects in Nova Scotia, over \$17 million were announced and zero have come through. On the Fort Severn and Peawanuk satellite backbone project in Ontario, again, \$5 million-plus were announced and zero dollars have gone through. Last, on the Little Red River backbone project in Alberta, over \$4 million were announced and zero dollars have gone through.

Why is the government so bad on delivering infrastructure such as roads, bridges and everything that it has to get even worse when it comes to funding these things through connect to innovate?

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, this is a great opportunity for me to highlight that one of Stephen Harper's greatest flaws was not recognizing how important it was to ensure rural Canada had the opportunity to connect. Many of my Atlantic caucus colleagues could tell us that through the program the member opposite just referenced, communities in rural areas were able to connect as a direct result of a federal initiative.

People in rural Canada know that for the first time in many years, under this administration, there is a government that is not only prepared to talk about this issue, but is also prepared to put forward money to ensure that change actually takes place. The program expires in 2021, and over the next number of years, more and more rural communities will become connected.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do not see what the government has to brag about, given that we know 63% of rural regions do not have access to high-speed Internet. This has been a source of frustration for years. Internet service is becoming a must for farmers, students and all rural business owners. Economies depend on it.

Fourteen municipalities in Salaberry—Suroît have written to us to say that the situation is untenable. High-speed Internet is available in the village cores, but further out in the country, service is intermittent, inaccessible or too slow. In Franklin, an Internet connection costs \$90, and the big companies are under no obligation to serve rural residents.

In the 2019 budget, the government promises to invest millions of dollars until 2030, but it fails to require the big companies to serve small rural regions. Furthermore, co-ops like Coop CSUR get no regulatory assistance from the CRTC to deliver their services. Co-ops are motivated not by profit, but by a desire to help people. However, no one is helping them. The government has been aware of this situation for years, but it is not doing a single thing to fix it.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is just not true. In my comments, I made reference to Bell MTS in my home province of Manitoba. Under this government, we were able to ensure that Bell will spend \$1 billion in the province of Manitoba alone. We had a budget measure in 2016 that committed over half a billion dollars of government tax money toward ensuring that more and more rural communities get connected. I believe it is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 600 to 900 rural communities.

The problem with members of the New Democratic Party is if we say we will do something, they will say it is not enough and that we have to do more. If we were to leave this up to the NDP, it would want a tower every 10 kilometres and would make that happen somehow.

NDP members need to enter the real world and recognize the contrast. They should compare the 10 years under Stephen Harper, during which there was virtually no investment, to the three and half years under this administration, during which hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested.

This government gets it. Accessibility to the Internet is absolutely critical, and we are ensuring that more and more communities are being hooked up to it.

• (1715)

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's response. His answer was an important one. There are examples all across Canada. After a decade of Conservative darkness, my riding finally saw the light in 2016. As of next year, 98% of households in my riding will have high-speed Internet access.

I would like my colleague to tell us once again how our government's program has benefited his region of Winnipeg and Manitoba. I think this program is making a real difference in the lives of his constituents.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in two ways it has had a very profound positive impact for the residents of Winnipeg North and, indeed, for the province of Manitoba.

The connecting families initiative allowed for tens of thousands of residents across Canada to get access to the Internet for \$10 a month. That is far less than even what the NDP could possibly imagine. However, having awoken New Democrats to that fact, they will probably suggest that it should be \$5 a month. At the end of the day, that is one of the government initiatives that has made a big difference.

The other thing I will reinforce are the hundreds of millions of dollars in our very first budget, in which we made a statement saying that we want rural Canadians connected to the Internet. The government put money where its mouth is and we have seen tangible results. Whether it is in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, the Prairies, B.C. or the north, we have seen tangible results. That is why

I am quite happy with the way this government is dealing with rural access to the Internet.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am reminded of Shakespeare, much sound and fury signifying nothing. The member opposite gave a completely meaningless speech, attacking the New Democrats, but not offering any solutions at all.

He has not replied to the critical question that we have been raising all day of why it costs Canadians, in the one example we gave, \$75 per month to get two gigabytes of data. It costs \$75 per month in Canada and in all of the other examples we cited, including France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Australia, it is around \$20 to \$25.

His constituents know they are paying \$50 a month too much, and yet the Liberals have proposed nothing, except slapping each other on the back, to what is the most egregious price gouging of consumers and families who are already hard hit. As we know, half of Canadian families are \$200 away from insolvency in any given month under the Liberal government. It is the highest level of family debt that we have ever experienced in our history and in the history of any industrialized country. The family debt level is crippling Canadians and yet the Liberals offer nothing to push back against what is the most egregious price gouging of Canadians.

Why do the Liberals not have anything to offer? Why do they not have any answers? After three and a half years in power, why is this price gouging continuing?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the best way to respond is by once again highlighting the connecting families initiative. Although I do not know the hard number, it is enabling about 20,000 families across Canada to access the Internet for \$10 a month. That is very significant. That is tangible.

Having said that, when we brought in that initiative, New Democrats voted no. They opposed it. I would ask the member opposite to explain to Canadians why they opposed that \$10 fee. They voted against the budget, and not one of them, from what I can recall, stood and qualified it by saying he or she was going to vote against the budget, but liked the \$10 fee for access to the Internet, not one of them. They all voted against it.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the people of Sherbrooke to speak to an issue that is very important to me and to them. Today, we are talking about competitive pricing for telecommunications services, such as the Internet, cellphone services and data on our cellphones and tablets.

Business of Supply

In 2019, these are essential services for most Canadians. People cannot do without them today. In fact, the government is increasingly asking Canadians to interact with it via the Internet, to submit forms or make contact, for example. Everyone therefore understands the importance of the Internet in people's daily lives and the importance of having affordable access to it. The service must be reliable, easy to access and competitively priced.

The people of Sherbrooke and all Canadians feel that telecommunications companies are taking advantage of them. They basically feel as though they are being robbed, and I know that is a strong word. Canadians are well aware that access to such services is much cheaper, faster and of better quality in many other countries, including the United States, our closest neighbours. Customers in those countries are paying less for the same services.

I will not repeat all the figures my colleagues have referred to today. My NDP colleagues have mentioned the price difference many times, and I know the people of Sherbrooke are well aware of it. All Canadians know that we are getting fleeced by telecom companies, and that is why the government needs to do something. We have waited long enough and have been giving these companies a free pass to rob our fellow citizens. The government needs to step in.

We are having a bit of a philosophical and ideological debate on the issue of government intervention in this area. We already know that the government is intervening on one aspect of the problem: releasing spectrum, which allows companies to reach consumers through the airwaves. The government already plays a key role. It holds auctions so that those big corporations can obtain shares of the spectrum in order to reach consumers.

Today, we are asking that the government play an even bigger role. We want the government to put an end to the highway robbery being committed by telecom companies. The government must be firm and tell them that we have waited long enough.

The Liberals will say that we need to let the market do its work and that market forces will correct the situation. As companies become freer they are more competitive. This means their prices will be more competitive, since the companies that want to stand out will lower their prices. These companies will reach more consumers and will therefore be successful. Laws and market forces make the difference and allow companies to offer prices comparable to other countries'.

We have been waiting many years for the market to do its work and ease consumers' pain, but it seems that the market forces have only made the situation worse. Canada is trapped with just a handful of telecom giants that abuse Canadians and consumers because they have an oligopoly, not to say monopoly. Sometimes, it seems that they set prices to steal even more from consumers.

•(1725)

It is time for the government to put its foot down and say enough is enough. Obviously, market forces do not work when it comes to this sector. The government must intervene to ensure that Canadians have access to this essential service and that this service is high-quality, fast and available to all citizens at affordable prices.

Today we are calling on the government to be more active on this file. It has to stop patting itself on the back and start doing more than just talk. It claims that good things have been done over the years, when the situation actually got worse.

We hear members across the way say that they have priorities, three in particular, and that affordability is one of them. They mention it in nearly every one of their speeches. However, not a single Liberal has managed to convince me that prices have improved over the past few years. On the contrary, we can see that prices have gone up over the years and that Canadians are not getting their money's worth.

I commend my colleague from Windsor West, who worked on drafting this motion. I commend him for all the research he did to make this proposal based on five points, which I will quickly outline:

The motion proposes a price cap. I repeat that the government needs to put its foot down and stop allowing companies to steal from Canadians. A price cap would be a good first step from the government to stop this highway robbery.

The motion then suggests that the government abolish data caps. All Canadians, including our viewers from Sherbrooke, know that data caps make consumers anxious. They are always worried about potentially using too much data, because as soon as they go over the maximum limit by a few bytes, their bills can get quite high. A number of people watching us, and even some of us here in the House, have been surprised by the exorbitant cost of a single gigabyte, which can reach dozens of dollars in extra fees. However, this is an essential service that we should all have access to. The government must therefore abolish the data caps often found in contracts, whether the contract is capped at two gigabytes, five gigabytes or more.

The motion also suggests that we eliminate egregious sales and services practices through a consumers' bill of rights. As we saw with airline passengers' rights, the government did something by establishing the supposed protection for consumers. It could do the same thing for telecommunications and provide even better protections for consumers than what is currently available.

As I was saying earlier, the government has an important role to play in the spectrum auction. We should revisit this structure to prevent the government from pocketing billions of dollars from these auctions without necessarily reinvesting this money in digital infrastructure to improve accessibility and availability in rural and remote communities.

Finally, the government should also direct the CRTC to cancel its broadband implementation policy. This policy does not work for indigenous and remote communities, which will be saddled with substandard services, unlike communities that are predominately located in urban areas.

Internet and telecommunications services are creating a divide between communities and between the standards they are entitled to.

Business of Supply

•(1730)

Now more than ever, we must take action. The NDP is proposing to do just that and save Canadians up to \$600 a year on their cellphone and Internet services.

I hope that we will have the support of members of the House of Commons to finally stand up to the telecoms and tell them that we refuse to continue to be victims of highway robbery.

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the minister's new directive means the CRTC must put Internet and mobile phone service consumers at the forefront of all its decisions. We want more competition, and it is working. In regions with competition, prices are up to 32% lower.

I would also like to remind my colleague that we created the connecting families initiative to improve access. We are working with 14 companies to give families access to Internet packages for \$10. These are the kind of concrete measures that work. My colleague may be well-intentioned, but it does worry me that New Democrats voted against these measures. It is so disappointing. Yes, we still have work to do, but we already have a very detailed plan that is working well. Unfortunately, despite their lofty rhetoric, New Democrats decided to vote against these measures.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I am a little disappointed. I used to have a lot of respect for my colleague and I still do, but not as much now. As the Liberals often do, my colleague referred to votes on certain budget measures, but the truth is that we had to vote on the budget as a whole in a single vote. My colleague is therefore being intellectually dishonest by singling out one of those measures and saying we voted against all of them. Like us, he is surely capable of making a distinction between the two. He is smart enough to realize that sometimes we have to oppose an entire budget, even if we would have liked to support one particular measure.

My colleague may try to mislead Canadians, but they are not stupid. They know that a budget is more than a single measure. I will take no lectures from him. I could criticize the budget, but I would be here all day.

As for the CRTC directive, it does nothing to solve the problem, because competition is practically non-existent. There are only a few big players in the market, which is a serious problem. The measures that have been taken do not promote competition or foster new competitors. New competitors cannot enter the market because it favours the big players, which exploit the system and will do whatever it takes to keep it going. When the market is dominated by a few players, prices are very high, and this directive will do nothing to fix that problem.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his very informative speech and for calling out Liberal members when they are being disingenuous about omnibus budget implementation bills.

These days, in 2019, rural communities are extremely underserved. With all due respect to my colleague opposite, 14 municipalities in my riding have written us to say how hard it is

for them to get high-speed Internet. Sometimes it is impossible. That is what Bianka Dupaul, director of Coop CSUR, told us. That co-op was born out of a need for Internet access in a rural region and the fact that corporations did not want to provide services in areas with sparse populations.

Thanks to Coop CSUR, 100 kilometres of fibre-optic cable was deployed in four municipalities in my riding. However, CRTC rules, which always favour corporations, make it very hard for Coop CSUR and other co-ops to have access to aerial infrastructure. Since that infrastructure is owned by the corporations it is hard for the smaller co-ops to access it. They have to negotiate with the corporations. The costs are exorbitant and the wait times for accessing the infrastructure are endless. As a result, the small co-ops cannot get off the ground, even though they do not seek to make a profit.

How could today's motion help small co-ops like Coop CSUR, which is run by Bianka Dupaul?

•(1735)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work. She knows her riding well and does a great job of representing her constituents.

The short answer is that we need to revisit the auction structure, as we said in our motion. That is a very important aspect that highlights the fact that large urban centres are well served in an oligopolistic market, but the same is not true for rural and remote areas. These companies have no interest in or respect for such areas because they will not make any money by providing them with services. That is a serious problem. The government sometimes has to step in to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality basic services in Canada.

[*English*]

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great appreciation for my colleague, the hon. member for Windsor West, for bringing this motion to the House today.

As members know, I have the honour of representing the people of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, which includes the entirety of northern Saskatchewan. My riding is about the same size as the nation of Poland, and people come from all walks of life. People live in bigger cities like Meadow Lake; they farm products like canola or grain and work in small businesses. On the east side of my riding, where I just had the opportunity to attend the high school graduation in Pelican Narrows, the story is very much the same, where people work hard to raise their families, practise their Cree traditions and protect the environment. In the far north, in communities like Fond Du Lac and Black Lake, communities gather together for feasts and celebrations while working in the resource industry.

Business of Supply

However, what is true everywhere I go, whether it is Waterhen Lake First Nation, Hatchet Lake, Cumberland House or La Ronge, is that people want to be connected, just like everyone else in Canada. People in my riding want to use the Internet to connect with their friends and families, to connect with the world to know what is happening and to gain better access to education so that they can carry new skills into the working world.

Having a better connected north would mean that the north is able to attract new talent in doctors, new investments for companies, new jobs for our youth. Being better connected means that we can show the rest of Canada what makes us great. We can show the homegrown talent of jiggers in Île-à-la-Crosse, share photos of the beautiful Saskatchewan River delta, or sell our bead work and crafts so that a little part of the north can be present somewhere else.

Being better connected also means better support from the RCMP and community safety officers who could more quickly respond to dangerous situations. It means better ways of calling for ambulances in an emergency or contacting a neighbour for a cup of tea or a loved one who has gone into the city.

In fact, it may even be easier for people to contact their member of Parliament. In my office, far more people reach out to me through Facebook than by email or mail. For these reasons, I must support this motion to guarantee that northerners have the same level of service as many others in Canada at a much more affordable rate.

What I particularly like about this motion is how it recognizes the substandard service that communities across my riding are receiving. In my province, there are only two major Internet service providers in a province that has a dedicated Crown corporation that exists to ensure that everyone in the province can have service on their cellphone or Internet in their home. Many in my riding still do not get reception in their house or have come to expect long periods of time when their Internet does not work. With unreliable cellphone and Internet service, northerners are still paying significantly high bills each and every month.

I recently heard from several of my constituents over the past few weeks about their Internet and cellphone service. For many of them, the unreliability of the service affects them the most. Towns and villages in my riding are very spread out, and I often spend hours on the road driving between community visits. In between major population centres, there is virtually no cellular service, and along the highways, service is spotty and causes major anxiety for people who travel those roads every day.

I recently drove from Creighton to Pelican Narrows and for the two and a half hours of driving in the rain and mud, we did not have any cellular service and there were no gas stations if we needed help. Also, two of my constituents, Lyle and Muriel Sundbo, live in Candle Lake and they do not get any cellular service for 20 kilometres between their home and Prince Albert, where I am told many people go to buy their groceries or to visit their doctor. North of where the Sundbos live, there is no cell service at all.

While we speak a lot about sharing photos on Facebook or checking our emails, we cannot undermine just how essential being connected to the Internet or getting reception on a cellphone is. The world is moving faster than ever. Even though our small towns take

pride in their charm and how unlike the big cities we are, that does not mean we do not need the services of the modern world.

● (1740)

Our northern communities are very quickly being left behind because of big corporations and governments that are unwilling or unable to see what our communities have to offer. It is not just the north that is suffering as a consequence. When the Internet has become an essential service in Canada, it is completely unacceptable that northerners have to settle for less or accept nothing at all.

What have we seen from consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments? Why is there such an urgent need to change the conversation about access to these essential services for northerners? So far, the answer from the Harper government and the current Liberal government has been that the market will decide a price, and access will be provided based on supply and demand.

Essentially, if there is enough demand in the north for better Internet and there is a profit to be made, my constituents will see better services. Without a doubt, the demand is there for better and cheaper service. What is not there is the profit, so companies will not invest the capital needed to build better cellphone towers or invest in Internet infrastructure. When they do, the rates that are charged to northerners are so high that many northerners cannot afford the services and all they are told is that it is the cost of doing business.

To address this, the government announced its intention to use the infrastructure bank to provide a minimal level of high-speed Internet for all Canadians including northerners. However, the government's plan once again relies on the goodwill and significant investment from the private sector in order to adequately fund better services. The Liberals' plan is to provide tax breaks to giant telecom companies to invest in infrastructure, but there is no guarantee that those investments will be made in rural or remote areas.

Budget 2019 also promised \$1.7 billion over 13 years to go toward investment in telecom infrastructure to give Canadians better access to the Internet. However, the government's own estimate is that it would cost \$6 billion to provide every Canadian with a broadband connection. From experience, I know that when services are underfunded, it tends to be the people in northern Saskatchewan and the people in rural and remote areas who are left behind by the Liberals and the Conservatives.

The status quo is to invest in northern communities so that Internet speeds of 50 megabits per second are the new normal, and that normal will be in place by 2026. In other places in Canada, like Ottawa, major telecom companies are offering service plans of 100 to 5,500 megabits per second. In many homes, speeds up to one gigabit per second are now available.

Business of Supply

Seven years from now, northern Saskatchewan will still be at a level of service lower than what is available today, while service will only continue to get faster and better for people in more populated areas. People in my riding will always be playing catch-up to the technology of urban centres, but they will continue paying as if they already have the best service.

It does not have to be this way. We can do better. We in government can call for better consumer protections by ending predatory sales practices. We can invest in infrastructure to provide our communities with services at internationally recognized levels. By doing so, we can create jobs for northerners, who are always willing to work hard to better their community. We can set price caps to ensure affordability because price gouging is immoral and does not lead to the investments we expect.

Northern Saskatchewan is looking for better service, and we have the ability to help so many families and workers in the north. The NDP, through this motion, has shown we have the will to help northerners because it is time to treat the north with the respect it deserves.

• (1745)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats have talked about instituting a price cap. I wonder if the member is in a position where she could provide a sense of that to Canadians who might be following the debate. When the New Democrats say they are going to put in a price cap, do they have a number in mind, or is their intention to mislead people to get them to believe that the New Democrats are going to reduce the rate? Is there a number? Is it a percentage cut? What is the cap that the New Democrats are specifically looking at putting in place?

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite speaks about misleading Canadians. Every day, members in this House, including the member opposite, are continually misleading. Under the Liberals' plan, every Canadian, especially people in the north of provinces, do not have access to the \$10 per month service that he is talking about. The majority of communities in the northern part of provinces are excluded. Therefore, the Liberals are the ones who are misleading Canadians across Canada.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contribution to this debate today. There are a couple of inherent contradictions within the NDP motion today, and I would like to ask the member's opinion on this.

First of all, there are some criticisms about the CRTC \$750-million fund to ensure that remote communities can have access to connectivity. That money, that \$750 million, comes from Canadians. It is charged, obviously, by the industry and passed on to the CRTC. However, the member's party is talking about a price cap. The Auditor General was quite clear that tens of billions of dollars of investment would be required to have access to places like the territories or northern communities such as those in Saskatchewan or Manitoba.

How does the member propose to actually be able to pay for those things when she is advocating for a price cap, which would kneecap those activities?

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, on both sides of the House, the Liberals and the Conservatives had consecutive governments, going back and forth.

Both have shown where their priorities lie, with corporation—

An hon. member: Why can the member not answer the question?

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: I am answering this question. The NDP is the people's party. Both parties, when they were in government, have given millions and billions of dollars to corporations and to support big companies, but never to the Canadians who need the support.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. She is an extraordinary member of Parliament. Just a few months ago, all members of Parliament voted her the best local representative in the entire House of Commons. That is because of the good work she does every day on behalf of her constituents.

It is in that light that I would like to ask her a question. We have the Liberals and the Conservatives, who know full well about the massive price gouging that is taking place on Canadian consumers. It is not that they are ignorant of the facts. Total revenue per gigabyte in the big telecom companies is roughly 70 times higher than in other countries. The excess profits, the ripoffs that are taking place, Liberals and Conservatives have indicated today that they want to continue those with impunity. Rather than standing up for their constituents, they are standing up for the big telecom lobbyists, isolated in Ottawa. They do not understand.

We have these windfall massive profits in the most profitable sector in Canada, and in a similar vein, we have seen the same kind of windfall profits in the pharmaceutical sector. It is always the same justification, that we can rip off the public because some of the money will do some good at some point.

I would like to ask the member if her constituents buy the argument that government can give tens of billions of dollars to these big corporate lobbyists and that somehow, eventually, that will benefit Canadians, or does she believe that people in this House should be standing up on behalf of their constituents and putting in a price limit so that we do not see the excessive gouging that we have seen over the last few years?

• (1750)

Ms. Georgina Jolibois: Mr. Speaker, my constituents, like constituents across Canada, pay attention to the work we do here in the House of Commons, and they do not like how the government is spending billions of dollars on corporations, not on everyday Canadians.

Business of Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and member for Mississauga—Malton. I thank the minister for the work he has done on the Internet access file over the past three and a half years. For the first time in the history of Parliament, we have a minister responsible for rural economic development. It is essential for our government to continue the work we are doing in rural areas.

I am pleased to rise to speak to the NDP motion on the accessibility of broadband Internet services for all Canadians. My riding of Nickel Belt covers 30,000 square kilometres, so I understand the importance of the Internet in rural areas.

Our government also understands the importance of broadband service. All Canadians must participate in today's digital economy. Whether it is our children when they are doing their homework, our friends, family or businesses, it is important to ensure that all Canadians have access to the Internet so we can remain competitive exporters.

The Minister of Rural Economic Development and I travelled across the country. We heard from Canadians living in rural and remote communities. The Internet is the engine of future growth and development in rural regions.

[*English*]

We recognize that rural, remote and northern communities face unique challenges when it comes to connectivity, which is why we launched the connect to innovate program in 2016, to bring high-speed Internet to rural and remote communities all across Canada.

This program received more than 900 applications across the country, requesting \$4.4 billion of funding by the time the applications were closed. This oversubscription is a clear indication that the need exists in Canada for future investments in better connectivity. It is also an indication of the popularity of this program across the country.

This is why in budget 2019, we added top-up funding to the program connect to innovate. To date, a total of nearly \$560 million in connect to innovate funding has been announced for 175 projects in 11 provinces and territories. They all cover projects in the future looking at all provinces and territories.

Further, this funding has also leveraged the private sector, and this is important. The government's role in the Internet in rural Canada is to ensure that we find ways to leverage private sector funding and funding from the provincial level. The provinces need to get engaged with the private sector, the federal government and municipalities in order to make sure that we get everyone connected.

Together with our partners, we expect that the connect to innovate program will deliver a total of over \$1 billion of incremental investments in broadband projects, which is very significant. We have to talk about these investments. These projects will improve Internet connectivity to more than 900 communities and 190 indigenous communities. This is more than triple our original target of 300 communities.

These investments mean that about 1,100 anchor institutions in communities will benefit from new access to high-speed networks. This includes places like libraries, community event centres and band offices. These anchor institutions are key in communities to seek real improvements in connectivity when dealing with education, health and other needs in the community and the private sector. These investments are really important for growth in rural Canada and all across Canada.

Connectivity investments are impressive in the sheer scale of their geographic reach. Nearly 20,000 kilometres of fibre network has already been installed or is in the process of being installed. This is equivalent to the distance from St. John's to Vancouver through Whitehorse, Yellowknife, Labrador City and back to St. John's.

Further, individual Canadians will feel the impact of improvements in the services delivered to their homes. These projects will impact an estimated 380,000 homes. This is a huge investment in homes across the country.

Connect to innovate supports many of these great projects, and I would like to take a moment to highlight a few of them.

The Kativik Regional Government in Nunavik received \$62 million in connect to innovate funding for new and improved high-speed access to all of Nunavik's 14 Inuit communities. This project will impact 28 institutions, including schools and health centres.

Tamaani Internet performed a detailed marine survey of fibre routes for Nunavik communities for the first undersea fibre optic cable deployment in Arctic Canada. It is now implementing this project.

Also, in northern Ontario, the connect to innovate program invested \$39 million with five first nations communities. It is important to connect these communities. Looking at the importance of future mining development in the region with the Ring of Fire, this provides future economic development for these first nations communities.

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

As I mentioned, 190 indigenous communities are receiving support through investments made under the connect to innovate program. The indigenous communities themselves will manage these networks to make improvements throughout their communities.

The connect to innovate program has also had a very significant impact on rural Internet service providers. Not only will the connect to innovate investments help big Internet suppliers innovate, but one-third of these investments will go to small local suppliers who live and work in the small communities they serve.

Business of Supply

[English]

Even with the progress made to date, we recognize that we need to do more work. That is why we have made the commitment to set a national target for 90% of Canadian homes and businesses to have access to high-speed Internet with at least 50/10 megabits per second by 2021, and 95% by 2026. No matter where they live, from coast to coast to coast, all Canadians will be able to access high-speed Internet.

To attain this goal, in budget 2019 we also established a new universal broadband fund of \$1.7 billion, which will bring high-speed Internet to under-serviced communities. We are working on the parameters of this new fund, with more information to come over the next few weeks.

As previously mentioned, the new universal broadband fund will include a top-up to the connect to innovate program. It also includes funding to low-earth orbit satellites, next-generation satellites. That is significant and important, because we are looking at remote areas and the challenges we have with connecting Canadians all around.

[Translation]

The success of the connect to innovate program and the universal broadband fund demonstrate that our government has a high-speed Internet plan for people no matter where they live. It is important to look after the needs of rural communities across Canada.

We have a plan for the digital economy and we are working hard to carry it out.

• (1800)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. I am waiting for someone to offer some kind of solution rather than just empty rhetoric. The Liberals have been saying all day long that they have already solved the problem by promising to eventually do something.

People currently pay about \$75 a month for a plan that would cost between \$20 and \$25 in Italy, France, the U.K. or Australia. The Liberals have done absolutely nothing to put an end to the outsized influence that exists in this field. The big telecoms can charge extremely high prices for services that are identical in other countries.

Why have the Liberals done nothing to stop this abusive practice at the expense of consumers? Why do they not want Canadians to pay the same price as people in all other industrialized countries? Why have the Liberals not taken action?

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Speaker, we have taken action.

Since early 2016, the connect to innovate program has brought Internet service to 900 communities and 190 indigenous communities.

Not only did we take the necessary steps back in 2016, but in 2019 we added another \$1.7 billion to the funding. In addition, the Minister of Finance developed an accelerated fund for companies, to which online businesses already have access.

The NDP motion has nothing concrete to propose. We, however, have actually invested in the spectrum. We also have a long-term

plan for working with the provinces and the private sector to ensure that all Canadians are connected.

[English]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary mentioned the connect to innovate program. I have to say how disappointing that program is for the people in rural Ontario, particularly those in Perth—Wellington. I know of at least three small, independent Internet service providers that applied for that program in November 2016. Here we are in June 2019, and they still have not been told, one way or the other, whether they have been approved or denied. These small, independent telecoms are the ones leading the way in putting fibre to homes in rural communities, yet the current government has left them dangling for over two and a half years. Why is it that the Liberals like to talk a big game, but when it comes to supporting rural communities and broadband Internet, they deliver nothing to the rural communities in places like Perth—Wellington?

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Speaker, it is to the contrary. In 2012, the Conservative government cut the rural secretariat completely. We are not only adding a minister dedicated to rural development, but, as I indicated earlier, the connect to innovate program had 4.4 billion dollars' worth of proposals and we had a fund of \$500 million. Because it was oversubscribed, we were able to get additional funds in budget 2019. Therefore, we are making a difference. We have now added \$1.7 billion to the universal broadband fund, looking to the future and the long term. We are working with the private sector and the provinces to ensure that, together, we get all Canadians connected.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite keeps repeating that there are new investments in budget 2019, but has he really read the budget 2019 announcements? There is no requirement for big companies to serve rural areas, which means that rural areas do not have high-speed Internet access. Sixty-three per cent of rural municipalities do not have this service. This is a problem, which is why we moved this motion today to address it.

Mr. Marc Serré: Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we set aside funding for the frequency band spectrum, and 44% of this amount is for rural areas. That is a large amount. This is the first time the federal government has made such investments.

The member does not have to believe me. She can talk to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which supports our plan. The federation advocated for us to continue the investments that we made in 2016 and that we will continue to make. We must continue to work for Canadians to ensure that every Canadian is connected to the Internet.

Business of Supply

•(1805)

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty exciting to get this opportunity to talk about a subject matter that is very important to Canadians from coast to coast to coast. One of the things our government takes pride in is the fact that we understand the importance of driving down prices for Internet and also driving down prices for cellphone use. Affordability has been a key priority for our government. I want to highlight how we have really addressed this issue over the past four years.

The key part of our strategy is competition. We fundamentally believe that if there is more competition, particularly in the different regions across the country, that will help drive down prices. Where there is more competition, the prices are 33% lower for consumers. That is what has been moving our agenda forward.

I want to highlight three particular areas that I think are really important for the debate on this opposition day motion that the NDP has presented. First of all, I want to talk about how we have better quality networks compared to Australia, India and other jurisdictions highlighted by the members opposite. I also want to talk about the members' concerns around coverage and particularly how we can really focus on broader coverage to really deal with that digital divide, the urban-rural split that we often talk about. Last, I want to highlight the measures we have taken to help reduce prices for Canadians. We have done quite a bit but we have much more to do. I will speak to exactly what that plan looks like.

I want to start off with quality. This is really important because it really speaks to issues that Canadians have raised particularly when it comes to customer sales practices and what they are experiencing. We recognize that there were sales tactics employed by telecommunication companies that were aggressive and not appropriate. That is why I asked the CRTC to investigate and look at these high-pressure sales tactics. It was a proactive measure that we as a government took. We said to the CRTC that this is an issue that is really irritating Canadians. I said that Canadians have written to me about it and I have heard about it from Canadians in town hall conversations that I have had and that we need to really look at this issue.

The CRTC examined the issue and found that there were high-pressure sales tactics and there was evidence of such behaviour. What does this mean? This means there will be a code of conduct that the CRTC will have put in place to really look at how to make sure we deal with these issues going forward.

We heard Canadians. We took action. The CRTC did its work and now it is coming forward with a mandatory code of conduct for the Internet to make sure that consumers are protected. I can tell colleagues right now that this is one example of how we are dealing with the issue of quality.

The other issue I want to talk about which I think is very important is the deployment of spectrum. This too has come up in conversations today and I have heard different members speak to this issue. We have put forward a very clear path when it comes to spectrum, the right spectrum available at the right time to make sure that we get the desired outcomes. We have a very aggressive plan.

We have four such auctions, one for every year, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

We just completed the auction for the 600 megahertz. We have put a process in place for the 3,500 megahertz by 2020. In 2021, we will be coming forward with a millimetre wave auction as well, which is a very valuable spectrum. In the fourth year, we have highlighted 3,800 megahertz. All that important spectrum is for rural and remote communities. It also is very, very important for rolling out 5G.

We all recognize that 5G comes up in the news quite a bit. It has such enormous potential. 5G technology and 5G spectrum in particular are critical for Canada because of the Internet of things, because of smart cities, smart farms and all the data that is generated to create economic benefits for Canadians. Also, 5G is important to make sure that our rural communities continue to get access to the best quality spectrum and the best quality Internet and cell service as well. We are very confident that Canada will continue to play a key leadership role when it comes to the deployment and rolling out of 5G as well. I want to highlight the work we have done around spectrum as well.

I also want to talk about another issue that was mentioned which was around broader coverage. As highlighted by my colleagues, I am very proud of a program which was rolled out just a few years ago.

•(1810)

[Translation]

The connect to innovate program will create all kinds of opportunities for people, especially those in rural communities. It is absolutely essential. That is why we introduced the program. We are investing about \$500 million and the private sector is investing \$500 million, for a total of \$1 billion.

That adds up to a lot of investments all over Canada, especially in rural regions.

[English]

This program has yielded enormously positive benefits for Canadians. There are roughly 900 communities under this program that would have access to high-speed Internet, that backbone fibre infrastructure which is so critical. Of those, I want to highlight that there will be roughly 168 indigenous communities that will benefit from this investment as well.

We are very proud of the connect to innovate program. What is really interesting is that it is a public-private partnership. The government stepped up with \$500 million, as did the private sector with \$500 million. This \$1-billion investment will go a long way, but we have more to do. That is why in the most recent budget, which I was surprised members opposite voted against, there were over six billion dollars' worth of investments toward high-speed Internet connectivity for rural and remote communities. Let me highlight some of those areas.

Business of Supply

The infrastructure bank will step up in a big way to support these projects. There is the universal broadband investment of \$1.7 billion. There is also CRTC funding that starting to be deployed, which I am surprised members opposite want to stop. That money is going to be targeted at rural and remote communities. This complements the accelerated capital cost allowance investment that we highlighted which has now strengthened the business case for many of the telecommunication providers to invest in rural and remote communities.

When all is said and done, when it comes to coverage, this is really positive news, particularly the point raised by my colleague a few moments ago around low Earth orbit satellites. We made significant investments in this technology. For the really remote communities where it is difficult to make the business case for fibre, we are going to have low Earth orbit satellites to deal with the latency issue and the quality as well.

The last point I want to make on the three issues that I highlighted, better quality, broader coverage and lower prices, is our focus on pricing. As I mentioned, this year we rolled out 600 megahertz and we set aside 43% for regional players. That means more competition which means lower prices. I highlighted that at the beginning of remarks. In regions where there is more competition, prices are 33% lower. This is really important to us and we are very proud of that.

Pricing is not only an issue in rural communities; it is also a challenge in urban communities. There is a socio-economic challenge as well when it comes to the digital divide. Many families cannot afford high-speed Internet in urban communities, so we worked with industry, and industry stepped up in a big way. It said it would put forward a \$10-a-month plan called connecting families, which provides high-speed Internet access to families under the Canada child benefit program. What is really exciting is that 20,000 families have benefited from this \$10-a-month high-speed Internet connectivity plan. This speaks to what we have done around pricing.

It also complements the Wi-Fi MVNO decision we put forward to the CRTC, which ultimately resulted in the CRTC working with new low-cost data plans that benefit consumers, and goes to one of the earlier decisions we made. We said we wanted more competition. When Bell said it was going to add fibre to homes, we supported the decision to allow more Internet service providers access to that fibre, which again means more competition and lower prices.

As I said, we have done a lot, but we have a lot more to do. This speaks to the CRTC policy directive that we proposed. This is a directive that focuses on competition, affordability and consumer interest. This is really about making sure that consumers are at the heart of our decision-making process. This policy directive will put continued pressure on the telecommunications sector to reduce prices. At the same time, we have made incredible investments in our telecommunications sector, some \$12 billion. We have some of the best world-class networks. I am confident that we will continue to build incredibly strong networks at more affordable prices.

Our plan is working. As I said, we have some of the best networks. We have improved coverage and prices are starting to go down. We have more to do, but clearly, we have laid the foundations for success and will continue to implement our agenda.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his remarks. I have to give him credit for participating in debate in the House, unlike other ministers who cannot be bothered to show up and talk about issues that matter to Canadians.

That said, the minister seemed to be saying that everything is fine and that Canadians have nothing to worry about because they are in good hands and have access to quality, affordable services. Canadians beg to differ. They do not feel they have access to quality services at competitive prices.

Will the minister at least be honest with Canadians and tell them that prices have not gone down over the past few years? I would be surprised if he could do that, unless he can give us the numbers to prove that his plan is working and that prices really have gone down in Canada. I invite him to update Canadians on the cost of telecommunications services and whether they have gone up or down during his term and in recent years.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question.

Unfortunately, I disagree with my colleague. We have been very clear about the fact that prices must continue to decline.

[*English*]

We have this in top-tier bands and in lower-tier bands. We have seen prices decline in certain segments of the market. Clearly, we need to see it across the board.

That is why I have made it very clear to the telecommunications sector that we are going to use all of the policy tools in our tool box to address issues around affordability and pricing. This speaks to some of the points I have highlighted about having a more competitive environment, which will bring down prices.

We have made progress and we have seen progress, but we know more needs to be done. This speaks to the CRTC's policy directive. It is the first time it has been changed since 2006. It gives clear direction to the CRTC to focus on the consumer to drive down prices and look at affordability.

I am confident we are headed in the right direction. We have seen positive developments in certain pricing segments, the top tier and bottom tier, but more needs to be done. We are confident our plan will work.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the minister announced at the telecom summit that he was going to be clawing back and repurposing a large amount of the 3,500 megahertz band under options one and two. I appreciate that he provided a modified version of option two.

Business of Supply

The minister was not clear in question period, so I still have a question for him. How many rural Canadians will have their service cut off or their regional operator stop growing? I would like to hear the government's numbers as to how many Canadians the minister estimates will be affected by this clawback and repurposing scheme, which has never been done before.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, we have received overwhelmingly positive feedback for the repurposing of the 3,500 megahertz. Clearly people recognize this is a valuable spectrum that is absolutely essential for the deployment of 5G. 5G is critical to urban communities and rural communities alike.

We are confident that the set-aside and the amounts that carry over will be sufficient to provide good-quality service to rural communities. As we deploy the 3,500 megahertz, we will make sure we have a level playing field so that individuals with the spectrum and those auctioning it off, both of whom will participate in the auction, deploy 5G at the same time.

When it comes to repurposing, I can say with confidence that this will continue to benefit rural and remote communities right across the country.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our NDP opposition day motion exemplifies the progress we expect governments to make on behalf of Canadians. In today's connected world, having access to a phone and high-speed Internet is no longer an option; it is a necessity. Despite being essential, broadband access and wireless service are far from being affordable or reliable in Canada. The Internet is increasingly the world. It permeates nearly every aspect of our personal and business lives.

For small businesses and entrepreneurs, reliable access to broadband Internet can be the difference between success and bankruptcy. For teachers, parents and students, these services impact the quality of our kids' education, and even access to post-secondary studies. For health care providers and social services, reliable connections can help save people's lives. For low-income people seeking jobs, access to the Internet is crucial and can make the difference between obtaining employment or not.

It is not only the economically disadvantaged who have little or no access to the Internet. It is also citizens and businesses in remote and rural areas. Without access to the Internet, a business might miss important opportunities to reach new customers and employees.

Here is an example of some of what rural communities are experiencing right now. Let us look at Dubreuilville, in northern Ontario, in the riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, which brought its concerns to the attention of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development on several occasions.

The situation in that township is quite dire. Even though people pay high Internet fees, not only is service slow and spotty but the connection is so congested that even those paying for high-speed service are at times receiving no service at all. Additionally, those who are already connected and living in the community who wish to transfer their current service when they move within the community are experiencing the same problems as new residents. Bell advises them that there is no capacity in the system to accommodate them.

Without appropriate connectivity, the promise of the Internet and the digital economy is muted in places where it could be of most use to level the geographic playing field.

Unfortunately, the problems faced by Dubreuilville are not uncommon. There are small communities across Canada hoping for reliable, quality, high-speed service that can support their growth and provide the same opportunities urban centres receive. Without this, the transformative powers of modern technology are largely unavailable, which hinders their ability to attract newcomers and businesses and also impacts their efforts to diversify their economies.

In my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh, people do not realize that there are a lot of people who have no Internet service or who lack high-speed service in the former Sandwich South area of the town of Tecumseh in the city of Windsor. It is shocking to many people that we still have pockets where there is no service for people to access a government website, download a document or an application or apply for a passport. There are a lot of things that create a barrier to democratic services, and it is concerning.

Among OECD countries and other developed economies, Canadians pay some of the highest prices for mobile wireless and broadband subscriptions in the world. Consumers are being forced to pay at least \$20 above the average monthly prices in the OECD. Similar countries, such as Australia, are paying two times less than Canada for the same plans. This hurts our economy, and it hurts Canadians.

While Canadians are paying skyrocketing prices, the profits of the big five telecoms in 2017 totalled \$7.49 billion, and their profit margins have reached an astonishing 38.3%. High prices and the outsourcing of jobs outside Canada are the main causes of these massive profits.

● (1820)

Canadian telecom companies make more revenue per gigabyte of data than almost any other company in the world. In 2018, the total revenue per gigabyte in Canada was roughly 70 times higher than it was in India and 23 times higher than it was in Finland. Canadian companies made 35 times what Indian companies made for the same data usage in 2017. As a result, Canada has lower data usage than almost any other country in the world. Furthermore, even though Australia has larger geographical challenges than Canada, it invested more per capita on telecommunications services between the years 2005 and 2015 and offers faster network connection speeds, while all its plans are cheaper than those available in Canada.

Business of Supply

While they continue to make billions in profits, quick research shows that Bell, Rogers and Telus also received close to \$50 million in subsidies and more than \$700 million in contracts from the current Liberals.

For decades, Liberal and Conservative governments have relied on market forces and supposed competition to determine what Canadians pay for their cellphones and Internet bills every month. That is wrong. They have made a few aesthetic changes here and there, but nothing that would significantly help Canadians afford these services. The Liberal government continues to put the profits of these rich telecommunications companies ahead of people's wallets and continues to put private interests ahead of the public interest.

Canadians deserve a government that has the courage to stand up to the telecommunications companies and that will use every tool available to make life more affordable for people. I know from conversations with my constituents that people are sick and tired of having to live in a country where large corporations and financial institutions get to call the shots.

We were brought up to believe that we live in a democracy, yet this belief is increasingly difficult to square with our lived reality. In the real world, democracy and the will of the people take a back seat to the prerogatives of business and finance. In the real world, trade agreements negotiated in secret lock in rights for large corporations and investors that make it difficult, if not impossible, for governments to pursue policies to improve the lives of their citizens. That is why, during times such as this, Canadians need to elect a government that prioritizes the needs of real people.

On the issue being discussed today, only the NDP has the courage to stand up to protect the wallets of Canadians and improve the services people rely on. Just to reiterate, through our opposition day motion today, the NDP would introduce a price cap, until the industry becomes competitive, to make sure that all Canadians save money on their bills. For each service and plan, a price cap based on average OECD rates would be put in place. This measure would slash telecommunications bills an average of \$10 per month. I know that several members in the House today have been intrigued with

how we would do that, so I am glad to get that explanation on the record.

● (1825)

We would also implement measures to ensure that the market becomes competitive. Every company would be required to have a basic plan for wireless and broadband that met the needs of Canadians and was comparable with the lower prices available in other countries in the OECD. Data caps for broadband Internet would be abolished, and companies would be mandated to create unlimited data plans at affordable rates for wireless service, as exists elsewhere in the world.

New Democrats would also put an end to the egregious and outrageous sales and services practices of the telecom companies by making a bill of rights for telecom consumers to protect Canadians. One would think, given all the horror stories regularly published in the media about the big telecoms using compliance methods and high-pressure sales tactics to fleece Canadians, especially our seniors, that the government would have acted by now and that some sort of legislation would have been passed or some penalty levied to discourage these practices. However, as the complaints mount, there has been no action.

On June 3, 2019, the CRTC announced a \$750-million fund. It is the goal of that fund to achieve 90% coverage of the universal service objective. It is our goal to make sure that it undertakes that. The problem with this fund is that it is completely inadequate to achieve the goal of 100% of Canadians having access to high-speed broadband. The policy would actually leave 10% of the population with the delayed hope of a promise to receive broadband, with no plan, no deadline and no funding to achieve it.

● (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, June 11, 2019, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[For continuation of proceedings, see part B]

CONTENTS

Monday, June 10, 2019

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ending the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Act

Bill S-203, Third reading	28821
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	28821
Mr. McDonald	28822
Mr. Nicholson	28823
Mr. Johns	28824
Mr. Calkins	28825
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	28827
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed) ..	28828

Suspension of Sitting

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:52 a.m.) ..	28828
---	-------

Sitting Resumed

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)	28828
--------------------------------------	-------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Telecommunications

Mr. Julian	28828
Motion	28828
Mr. Albas	28829
Mr. Lamoureux	28830
Ms. Trudel	28830
Mr. Serré	28831
Mr. Albas	28832
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia) ..	28832
Mr. Masse (Windsor West)	28833
Mr. Albas	28833
Mr. Ruimy	28834
Mr. Masse (Windsor West)	28835
Mr. Barrett	28836
Mr. Albas	28836
Mr. Masse (Windsor West)	28839
Mr. Longfield	28839
Mr. Arnold	28840
Ms. Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	28840
Mr. Lamoureux	28841
Mr. Albas	28842
Mr. Masse (Windsor West)	28842
Mr. Weir	28843
Mr. Longfield	28844
Mr. Albas	28844

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Catalonia

Mr. Thériault	28844
---------------------	-------

Government Policies

Ms. Lapointe	28844
--------------------	-------

Water Quality

Mr. Paul-Hus	28844
--------------------	-------

Islamic Foundation of Toronto

Mr. Chen	28845
----------------	-------

Member for Kootenay—Columbia

Mr. Stetski	28845
-------------------	-------

Flooding in Nipissing—Timiskaming

Mr. Rota	28845
----------------	-------

Hunsdeep Rangar

Mr. Poilievre	28845
---------------------	-------

Stellar Gala

Mr. Ayoub	28845
-----------------	-------

Host of Jeopardy

Mr. Lefebvre	28846
--------------------	-------

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Barrett	28846
-------------------	-------

Award for Teaching Excellence

Ms. Ratansi	28846
-------------------	-------

2019 General Election

Mr. Hébert	28846
------------------	-------

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Brassard	28847
--------------------	-------

30th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery

Mr. Leslie	28847
------------------	-------

The Environment

Mr. MacGregor	28847
---------------------	-------

Government Policies

Ms. Rempel	28847
------------------	-------

Employment

Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28848
---------------------------------	-------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Carbon Pricing

Ms. Bergen	28848
Mr. Sohi	28848
Ms. Bergen	28848
Mr. Sohi	28848
Ms. Bergen	28848
Mr. Sohi	28848

Finance

Mr. Rayes	28848
Mr. Lametti	28849
Mr. Rayes	28849
Mr. Lametti	28849
Mr. Singh	28849
Mr. Duclos	28849

Telecommunications

Mr. Singh	28849
Ms. Hajdu	28849

Government Priorities

Mr. Singh	28849
Mrs. Lebouthillier	28849

Telecommunications

Mr. Singh	28850
Ms. Hajdu	28850

Finance

Mr. Martel	28850
Ms. O'Connell	28850
Mr. Martel	28850
Mr. Lightbound	28850

Carbon Pricing

Mr. Poilievre	28850
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28850
Mr. Poilievre	28850
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28851

Finance

Mr. Poilievre	28851
Ms. O'Connell	28851
Mr. Poilievre	28851
Ms. O'Connell	28851

Telecommunications

Ms. Trudel	28851
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	28851
Mr. Masse (Windsor West)	28851
Mrs. Jordan	28852

Natural Resources

Mr. Schmale	28852
Mr. Sohi	28852
Mr. Barlow	28852
Mr. Sohi	28852
Mrs. Stubbs	28852
Mr. Sohi	28852
Mrs. Stubbs	28852
Mr. Sohi	28853

The Environment

Mr. Dusseault	28853
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28853

Government Priorities

Mr. Julian	28853
Ms. O'Connell	28853

The Environment

Mr. Rogers	28853
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28853

Democratic Institutions

Mrs. Kusie	28854
Ms. Gould	28854
Mr. Gourde	28854
Ms. Gould	28854
Mr. Kent	28854
Ms. Gould	28854
Mr. Kent	28854
Ms. Gould	28854

Human Rights

Ms. Hardcastle	28855
Ms. Hajdu	28855

Employment Insurance

Ms. Brosseau	28855
Mr. Duclos	28855

The Environment

Mr. Godin	28855
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28855

Auditor General of Canada

Mr. Kelly	28855
Ms. Murray	28855
Mr. Kelly	28855
Ms. Murray	28856

Status of Women

Ms. Khalid	28856
Ms. Monsef	28856

Foreign Affairs

Mr. Chong	28856
Mr. Oliphant	28856

Public Safety

Mr. Dubé	28856
Mrs. McCrimmon	28856

Infrastructure

Mr. Paradis	28857
Mr. Mendicino	28857

Natural Resources

Mr. Bezan	28857
Mr. Sohi	28857

Canadian Heritage

Mr. Fortin	28857
Mr. Rodriguez	28857
Ms. Pauzé	28857
Mr. Rodriguez	28857

Democratic Institutions

Mr. Bernier	28857
Ms. Gould	28858

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act**

Bill C-88. Motion for concurrence	28858
Motion agreed to	28859

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**Parliamentary Budget Officer**

The Speaker	28859
-------------------	-------

Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner

The Speaker	28859
-------------------	-------

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lamoureux	28859
---------------------	-------

Crown-Indigenous Relations

Mr. Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	28859
--	-------

Committees of the House**Health**

Mr. Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	28859
Ms. Gladu	28859

Procedure and House Affairs

Mr. Bagnell	28860
-------------------	-------

Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. May (Cambridge)	28860
---------------------------	-------

Competition Act

Mr. Albas	28860
Bill C-455. Introduction and first reading	28860
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	28860

Business of Supply

Ms. Brosseau	28860
Motion	28860
(Motion agreed to)	28860

Petitions**Impaired Driving**

Mrs. Wagantall	28860
----------------------	-------

Physician-Assisted Dying

Mrs. Wagantall	28861
----------------------	-------

Sex Selection

Mrs. Wagantall	28861
----------------------	-------

The Environment

Mr. Julian	28861
------------------	-------

Sudan

Mr. Bittle	28861
------------------	-------

Vision Care

Mrs. Hughes	28861
-------------------	-------

Equalization

Ms. Rempel	28861
------------------	-------

Climate Change

Mr. Gerretsen	28862
---------------------	-------

Lac-Mégantic

Ms. Pauzé	28862
-----------------	-------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Afghan Minority Communities

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Religious Freedom

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Health

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Afghan Minority Communities

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Genuis	28862
------------------	-------

Fresh Water

Ms. Ramsey	28862
------------------	-------

The Environment

Mr. Paradis	28863
-------------------	-------

Palliative Care

Mrs. Wong	28863
-----------------	-------

Forced Migration

Mr. Breton	28863
------------------	-------

Agriculture

Mr. Tilson	28863
------------------	-------

Human Organ Trafficking

Mr. Reid	28863
----------------	-------

Cannabis

Mr. Reid	28863
----------------	-------

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux	28863
---------------------	-------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**Business of Supply****Opposition Motion—Telecommunications**

Motion	28864
Mr. Longfield	28864
Mr. Albas	28865
Mr. Angus	28865
Mr. Nicholson	28866
Mr. Julian	28867
Mr. Scarpaleggia	28868
Mr. Albas	28868
Ms. Ramsey	28868
Mr. Albas	28870
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia) ..	28870
Mr. Angus	28871
Mr. Albas	28872
Mr. Lamoureux	28872
Mr. Lamoureux	28873
Mr. Albas	28875
Ms. Quach	28875
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia) ..	28876
Mr. Julian	28876
Mr. Dusseault	28876
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia) ..	28878
Ms. Quach	28878
Ms. Jolibois	28878
Mr. Lamoureux	28880
Mr. Albas	28880
Mr. Julian	28880
Mr. Serré	28881
Mr. Julian	28882
Mr. Nater	28882
Ms. Quach	28882
Mr. Bains	28883
Mr. Dusseault	28884
Mr. Albas	28884
Ms. Hardcastle	28885
Division deemed demanded and deferred	28886

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, June 10, 2019
(Part B)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 10, 2019

[Continuation of proceedings from Part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CUSTOMS TARIFF

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to second reading stage of Bill C-101, an act to amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act, I move:

That debate be not further adjourned.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[Translation]

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

[English]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not an insignificant bill. This is a bill that has leapfrogged over a whole bunch of legislation that has been on the books for quite some time and was introduced as a topic not more than two weeks ago. This legislation would significantly affect workers and companies in the steel industry after a time when we have already experienced punishing steel and aluminum tariffs.

For the Liberals to rush to put something forward, something that involves a very complex issue and will have a significant impact, is just another excuse for them not to do their homework and not allow the House to explore and debate the details and nature of the bill.

By removing the two-year moratorium on implementing the safeguards, we would not be giving companies time to prepare, yet we cannot even have a debate about that. By not arguing what the safeguards are going to be and surprising everyone with them, we do not have the opportunity in the House of Commons to have a debate about them.

The bill does not take into account regional disparities and how Newfoundland, Quebec and B.C. will be affected by this legislation, yet we in the House cannot have a debate about that.

The bill also does not look at what the definition of “surge” above average and historical content is going to be.

If the House is here to ensure that significant legislation is fully and openly debated, we need to have the time and ability to have that conversation. Closure, particularly on legislation that has not even been discussed over a three-year period, is abhorrent. It is not what this Parliament is here to do. It significantly jeopardizes the ability to execute on this bill and ensures that we will not get the right solution for this country.

I would like to understand exactly what the government is doing in this respect by shutting us down, preventing us from having a debate and jeopardizing our steel industry in Canada.

• (1835)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respectfully disagree with my colleague in her assessment of our approach to this issue. We have been very clear when it comes to the steel sector, in particular, that we want to support this sector. This is such a critical part of our economy. The steel sector employs 23,000 Canadians from across the country in 15 different mills and it contributes \$4.2 billion to our GDP.

That is exactly why we are in the House having this conversation, presenting this bill and making sure that workers recognize that we have their backs. This is nothing new. We have been very supportive of the steel sector in recent years, particularly with the challenges we have seen with the section 232 unfair and unjustified tariffs that were imposed. We were very clear in our response to that and we have supported the industry through significant measures, particularly measures that support our small and medium-sized businesses as well.

We have been very clear that this legislation, Bill C-101, is about providing more flexibility. It is going to stabilize Canada's steel market and it is going to further protect the workers. We are trying to provide that predictability for workers in the steel sector who want to know that the government has their back.

S. O. 57

Frankly, this is not an issue that we need to be partisan on. This is one issue where we can be united, just the way Canadians saw us when we negotiated the new NAFTA. It was all hands on deck. Everyone was working together. Canadians have that same level of expectation when it comes to this legislation as well. Let us not make this partisan. Let us not make this personal. Let us focus on a very important industry. Let us focus on the jobs on hand and make sure we stabilize this market. In light of the surges that may come up, we need to have the flexibility and the tools to defend our sector and defend our workers.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on to any further questions, I would like to remind the hon. members that there are quite a few members who want to ask questions, so if they can be as concise possible, hopefully we will get an equally concise answer from the minister.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am saddened by this figure of more than 70. I think it is the 71st time in this Parliament that the government is invoking closure.

On the substance of the bill, it is the NDP that has been pressing for years for the government to take action. Finally, with just a few days left in the parliamentary session, it has taken action but is refusing to collaborate with the opposition, which is unfortunate, because we were the ones pushing for these measures in the first place. We want to see permanent measures in place, but the government chose, instead of collaboration, a very inappropriate approach to basically ram closure through for the 71st time in this Parliament.

We have seen a lot of broken promises from the Liberals such as on a new electoral system, on pharmacare and on the environment. Instead they are trying to foist a pipeline on British Columbians. Those are broken promises that I think Canadians will remember. It really saddens me, this broken promise about refusing to collaborate with opposition parties, even when it is the opposition party, in this case the NDP, that was pushing steadfastly for years for these measures to be taken in the first place.

Why, instead of invoking closure for the 71st time, which reminds us so much of the Harper government, did the Liberals not collaborate with the opposition? The Harper government was just as bad, of course. Why did they not sit down with the opposition and allow for the kinds of improvements that could have been made to the bill? Why did they not do that?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his passion and, more importantly, his commitment to supporting workers. I am glad he recognizes that the specific bill we are proposing and the changes we are proposing are going to provide flexibility to steel workers right across the country. This is really important because it complements the \$2 billion support package we put forward when we were dealing with the initial unfair and unjustified tariffs by the Americans.

When they imposed those tariffs, we responded dollar for dollar, but above and beyond that, we also said we are going to support industry within Canada. That included support from Export

Development Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada and the strategic innovation fund. All this was combined for \$2 billion worth of support. I would like to take this opportunity to provide a quick update to the House on the benefits that companies have received from this support to deal with these very difficult times.

Through EDC we have put forward \$151 million in support of numerous companies across the country to help them with their export financing. BDC has deployed \$364 million of its funds to support businesses that were dealing with cashflow issues, which needed the additional capital to be able to deal with the unfair, unjustified tariffs imposed under section 232; and we also have made three significant announcements under the strategic innovation fund, totalling \$120 million. All said and done, that is over \$700 million that directly impacted small and medium-sized businesses and supported the workers in the steel sector right across the country.

• (1840)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is very disturbing. In my community, there is a big steel recycler, Gerda Ameristeel. The minister knows how important the auto sector is, as well as certainty with regard to prices and inputs.

He talked about these illegal tariffs. The minister was at committee and we found out that the Liberals actually knew that Mr. Trump was going to be using a tariff strategy for steel and aluminum a year before he put these tariffs in place, and the current government did absolutely nothing about it, though there were things put forward.

We have talked about the importance of debate as opposed to closure. I would like to ask the minister about a certain number: \$2 billion. The Liberals have collected a huge amount in tariffs from the steel and aluminum community, but they really have not disbursed very much of it. The minister is quite aware that the regional challenges in Ontario are quite different from those in British Columbia. I wonder if the minister could address the \$2 billion and how the government is going to utilize that to support the areas of the country that are going to be disproportionately affected by moving forward on this bill.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I understand how important the automotive sector is. That is why our government made changes to the strategic innovation fund, which previously was the automotive innovation fund, and made it into a grant program. The objective was to make sure that industry understood very clearly that we were there to support it. Because of our programs, policies and approach to the automotive sector, we have seen more than 11,000 jobs created in the first three years of our mandate, versus 20,000 jobs lost under the Harper government before the recession even hit. That is our track record when it comes to the automotive sector, and we will continue to defend that sector.

S. O. 57

With respect to the question about the \$2 billion that the member opposite raised, clearly a significant amount has gone back toward remissions. I have also highlighted the support package that we put forward for industry through EDC, BDC and SIF. These are different programs and initiatives from Export Development Canada, the Business Development Bank of Canada and the strategic innovation fund. We have deployed \$700 million of that money directly to Canadian businesses right across the country. We have supported not only the large producers but also the supply chain and the small and medium-sized businesses through these efforts, and we will continue to do so. That is why we want to move ahead with this bill: to provide us with additional flexibility to protect these Canadian jobs.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand here today as someone who is very supportive of our steel industry, in particular, and our specialty products. I am very proud of the work we do in Windsor—Tecumseh to support a variety of industries using specialty products. Having the experts in that area, we know we need a legislative environment that has their backs.

I am very disappointed that at the time one of my NDP colleagues rose in the House in April to expedite this issue, that was not the time the Liberals chose to seize this and allow us to have a debate in the House and the proper discourse. It creates an avenue for all Canadians to get behind the industry and understand the ways we need to develop the national strategies that New Democrats have been calling for. I am really disappointed that we do not have the opportunity to do this.

What has taken so long? We pushed for this and had a voice vote in the House back in April. What has taken so long to act on this? We have really shortchanged Canadians on a really important discussion on this.

• (1845)

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that we have taken action. We responded dollar for dollar to the unjustified tariffs that were imposed by the Americans, we retaliated in a very clear and concise manner, and we also provided significant support. The measures we are talking about today will be temporary measures for two years, once adopted. This again provides us with the flexibility we need to deal with surges and make sure we have significant capacity in Canada to deal with domestic and North American needs, as well as international needs. This is about supporting workers and the sector.

We are very confident that our plan is supported not only by the workers but by industry, both large manufacturers and producers, as well as small and medium-sized businesses that are part of the supply chain. They recognize that this government has played an active role through new smart industrial policy to continue to have not only a strong economy but an economy that has generated over a million jobs since 2015. We have a record unemployment rate of 5.4%, so clearly our policies and programs are working, but we recognize we must do more, and that is what this bill proposes. It would provide us with the additional tools we need to protect Canadian workers.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being from Newfoundland and Labrador, I know first-hand how important it is when industries shut down, whether it be the mining industry in

Labrador when it is in trouble or the pulp and paper industry in central Newfoundland or on the west coast of Newfoundland. In 1992, the then fisheries minister put a moratorium on the northern cod fishery, which was the biggest layoff in Canadian history at the time, and probably still is.

Could the minister please explain why it is so important to get this done now, so we can continue on with the work we have to do?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Avalon for his friendship, his leadership and his convictions when it comes to really fighting for his community.

We have had numerous conversations where he has made it very clear that economic development, particularly in different regions around Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as in his community, is absolutely essential. That is why our government has made significant investments in our resource development agencies. We have actually invested \$1.3 billion in all our resource development agencies, including ACOA. This is really important because all 32 members, regardless of their political persuasion, made it very clear that we needed to provide more investments in Atlantic Canada.

The previous Harper government made significant cuts; we made significant investments. This is really essential to supporting our workers and really highlights the different tools we are using, as demonstrated in this legislation as well, to support our communities, workers and industries.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question has to do with the interesting timing of this bill. It came forward suddenly in a big rush two weeks ago, just after the steel tariffs were lifted and the government sacrificed our ability to put strategic tariffs on the U.S. in any future deal. I have a concern because, in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, there are very large projects that are up to seven years long and involve a lot of steel purchases. This bill would give the government the ability to interfere in the steel free market.

Would the minister admit that this is just a virtual signal to steel workers, who know that the Liberals dropped the ball on the USMCA when the tariffs were put in place and that they might be reinstated in the future?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, again, I respectfully disagree with my colleague, whose assessment of the situation is inaccurate. People understand very clearly that we are there to defend workers. That is why we renegotiated a new NAFTA, a new NAFTA that provides predictability, stability and market access into the United States and into Mexico. This is exactly what businesses wanted in Sarnia. This is exactly what businesses wanted right across the country.

S. O. 57

As well, we made an important decision with our lobbying efforts and the advocacy and the leadership of the Prime Minister to get these unjustified tariffs removed from section 232 that were imposed on our steel and aluminum sectors. It was a huge win for Canada, and that demonstrates again that this file is very important.

I strongly suggest that we can play politics on a lot of issues, but when it comes to NAFTA and the section 232 tariffs, it is a great opportunity for all of us to work on a united front. I implore all members in this House to support this legislation.

• (1850)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be specific, and I hope the minister will provide some clarity for my constituents. I hear from businesses in my own riding that are concerned and impacted because they are importers of steel. It is a common story in western Canada, where companies are importing steel. They are not able to buy steel within Canada because they see it as cost prohibitive, or there are limits of supply or whatever their concerns are.

Also, they have concerns about some of the administration of safeguards. For example, I have heard that permit applications can essentially only happen a few days before the shipment arrives, which makes it very difficult for companies to plan in advance whether they are going to get permits. Also, I have heard of cases where the application for a permit requires them to send a fax to a number in Ontario. These are real practical difficulties that western Canadian businesses have. There is a possibility of higher costs as a result of these safeguards but also a lack of predictability.

What would the minister say to producers who have contacted me in my riding who are concerned about the impacts on their business because they rely on, and need to rely on, imported steel?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, it is a very astute observation, when it comes to the integrated supply chain we have, that we need to recognize the different sources of steel. However, when it comes to Saskatchewan in particular, the member opposite knows full well that our government has been very clear in supporting that province, that region, when it comes to steel production. For example, EVRAZ receives significant investments. It received \$40 million from the government, for a total investment of \$112 million for its project.

That not only supports the employees at EVRAZ, but it supports a lot of the indirect businesses and their workers, including the supply chain to which the member opposite alludes. We want to make sure we have a strong domestic supply, we want to make sure we deal with surges and we want to make sure we provide predictability to businesses as well. That is exactly what this bill would allow us to do. It would give us the tools we need to have the flexibility to deal with these challenging times to make sure that businesses right across the country, particularly in Saskatchewan, understand that we have their backs.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the importance of the debate. The bill seeks to amend and basically change the current process. Right now, we have the CITT, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, that looks at the integrated supply chains, international markets and surges and falls. It has a full process that, the minister must fully

admit, is far more fair to all those concerned than the simple discretion of the Minister of Finance.

Right now there is a rights-based process that also has evidence-based hearings. It hears and collects evidence and then makes a judgment. The minister is suggesting that we put the power in the hands of the minister to simply say that he or she will hear new concerns after there was that process.

Does the minister not believe, first, that this undermines the CITT and our commitment as a country toward a trade rule-based order? Second, is the minister not concerned about rushing the bill through without having a discussion about what are reasonable limits for a minister of the Crown to have? This would not just be applied to steel, but would be applied to other industries as well.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, the fundamental point is about ensuring businesses understand that we have their backs and that we are looking at every conceivable tool. I discussed the retaliatory measures that we put in place when the initial tariffs were imposed by the Americans. I talked about a \$2-billion support package, where \$700 million have already been deployed to businesses right across the country.

This legislation is a temporary measure for two years, once adopted. It will give us the tools we need to protect our steelworkers from unfairly subsidized steel flooding the market. This is the problem we are trying to address. We need to be flexible, we need to be nimble and we need to act in a timely manner. That is why we are proposing these changes.

We have had this conversation in the House and in the committee. We have been talking about this with people in the industry for months. This is not a new issue. It demonstrates that our government is taking action and we continue to defend industry and, more important, defend our workers.

I want to apologize to my colleague beforehand. I was under the assumption he was talking about Saskatchewan, but he was actually referring to his home province of Alberta. I want to stand corrected on that as well.

• (1855)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have really felt the headwinds against trade. Canada, as a trading nation, looks to opportunities to have the high standard of living and prosperity that comes with trade. At the same time, with these headwinds, we feel a lot of uncertainty. Business leaders in my province feel this uncertainty.

How would the bill bring some certainty to the issues around steel and aluminum tariffs and for this industry, so Canadians know they can move into the summer season with confidence that there will be less uncertainty in trade with these commodities?

S. O. 57

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, the fundamental issue is that as a government, we have been very clear when it comes to trade. We negotiated and finalized the free trade agreement with Europe. We renegotiated a new NAFTA with our American and Mexican counterparts. We also finalized CPTPP. That gives Canadian businesses, particularly smaller businesses, access to 1.5 billion consumers.

In order to keep that trade regime moving forward, we also need to have tools to deal with any potential measures taken by other jurisdictions to somehow impact our industry and our workers in a negative fashion. That is why we are moving forward with the legislation. It would allow us that flexibility. It is a temporary measure, but it is one more tool in our tool box to demonstrate very clearly to business leaders and to workers that we have their backs.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the minister said earlier that the government wanted to be nimble and quick, but he did not answer the question I raised earlier. The NDP has been pressing for years for the government to take measures. The government has now been in power for almost four years, but it has not acted at all in a timely manner and has not acted nimbly. Now it is pushing, for the 71st time, a motion of closure.

There is no doubt that members support the bill overall, but the bill could have been improved by putting in place permanent safeguards. There has been absolutely no effort or collaboration at all from the government side. Instead, the Liberals are bringing in closure, when they could have sat down with the opposition parties to improve the bill. We could have put protections in place for steel workers and firms right across the country.

I come back to the question I asked earlier, which really has not been answered by the minister. The NDP supports the bill, but why did the government not collaborate? Why did the government not keep the commitments of 2015? It said that we would have a new Parliament without the old Stephen Harper approach of ramming through omnibus legislation and using closure. Instead, we have a government that has used closure more often proportionally than the Stephen Harper Conservatives did.

This is one case in which closure was completely unnecessary. Had there been collaboration, we could have made better legislation. Why did the government not, in any way, shape or form, try to collaborate with opposition parties like it promised in the 2015 election?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, again, I respectfully disagree with my colleague. We have been working very closely with workers, unions, industry and with parliamentarians in committee and in the House of Commons. This is not a new issue, as the member has highlighted. We have been collaborating with our colleagues across party lines.

We have said that it is important for the Canadian economy and that we must work together. We have to find a way forward. We need to demonstrate very clearly that we have the tools necessary to deal with challenges regarding surges in steel imports into Canada that may come up. How do we protect capacity in Canada? How do we provide predictability for businesses? How do we ensure we continue to have a strong integrated North American market with our American and Mexican counterparts?

We took measures with the \$2-billion support package, which I highlighted. We also brought in safeguards that ultimately went to the CITT. Two of them were for surges and the other five were not.

We are in a position that we need the legislation to allow us the ability to protect our work. That is exactly what we have done, and it is exactly what we will continue to do.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister highlighted the measures that our government has taken in recent months, such as ratifying NAFTA and getting the tariffs lifted.

Before the tariffs were lifted, we implemented a program, an important initiative, to ensure that companies could take advantage of incentives and measures to help them invest in their business. I was fortunate enough to visit Saint-Martin-de-Beauce on Friday on behalf of the minister to announce a \$2-million investment. The entrepreneurs who were there had a smile on their faces. They were particularly impressed with the work we have done to support them.

I wonder if the minister could tell us about the kind of investments we made in other regions of Canada that have helped entrepreneurs and businesses in our ridings to continue to develop despite the tariffs that were imposed—and which, of course, were lifted recently.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his question.

It is absolutely essential to invest across Canada, particularly in the regions. I remember my visit to Saint-Martin-de-Beauce. We invested a lot of money in that region.

[*English*]

I also want to take this opportunity to note that we have made significant investments not only in Quebec, but right across the country, particularly in Fort Saskatchewan, where 2,000 jobs were secured and 175 new jobs were created through a \$49-million strategic innovation fund investment. It allowed us to invest in the heartland petrochemical complex, which was an Inter Pipeline investment.

[*Translation*]

We are making investments in Quebec, Alberta and across the country.

[*English*]

We will continue to invest in communities and ensure they have the capacity, the tools and the ability to maintain a sustainable business model for years to come.

S. O. 57

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

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.

● (1940)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 1346)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hutchings

Iacono	Joly
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Zahid — 159	

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Arnold	Barlow
Barrett	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Brassard	Brosseau
Calkins	Cannings
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Clarke
Cooper	Davidson
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Egliniski
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fortin	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Johns	Jolibois
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kusie	Lake
Lloyd	Lukiwski
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)

Government Orders

McColeman
Motz
Nicholson
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Rayes
Rempel
Saroya
Shields
Sopuck
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Wagantall
Webber
Yurdiga

McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater
Obhrai
Pauzé
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Schmale
Shiely
Sorenson
Stubbs
Thériault
Trudel
Viersen
Warkentin
Wong
Zimmer — 92

PAIRED

Members

Goldsmith-Jones

Kmiec — 2

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from June 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-101, An Act to amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Abbotsford has five and a half minutes left from his original speech.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak again to Bill C-101, which is effectively a story of failed foreign policy, a story of failed Liberal trade policy and a story of abandonment of our western industries and our manufacturers.

This bill, in short, is really reflective of the Prime Minister's failure to recognize how important the relationship between Canada and the United States is. That relationship is with our largest trading partner. Our bilateral trade is somewhere in the order of \$850 billion a year.

What happened was that, for a number of years, the United States has been asking Canada to address a serious trade challenge. That trade challenge is the issue of steel and aluminum imports coming into North America, coming into Canada, effectively being dumped in Canada by countries that sell it at prices that are below the actual cost. It is about illegal imports of steel coming through Canada and then being transshipped into the United States.

The challenge here is that, even though the United States was asking Canada to implement some legislation that would address this very serious trade challenge, our Prime Minister did not listen. He thought that Donald Trump was bluffing, and he did not do anything about it.

A year ago, our American cousins became frustrated and said that if Canadians were not going to listen to their concerns, they were simply going to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum. That is exactly

what happened. It took over a year for this Prime Minister to actually take that message seriously.

Today, we are debating the legislation that should have come forward over a year ago. We did not have to go through this period when the United States was imposing tariffs under the guise of national security concerns. We can just imagine Canada, one of the most trusted partners of the United States, security partner, trade partner, foreign policy partner, and the United States becoming so frustrated that it said it would have to use section 232, the national security exemption, to impose these tariffs on Canadians. It might be illegal at the World Trade Organization, but the U.S. was going to do it anyway because it was so frustrated with Canada's intransigence.

That has to be laid at the feet of the Prime Minister. It is symptomatic of a broader malaise in Canada's trade agenda and policy that started back in 2015. Canadians have a right to ask what the playing field was like back in 2015 when the Conservatives left government and the Liberals came in.

Over the preceding 10 years—

• (1945)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since my colleague started his speech, we have been hearing a lot of noise. If some conversations could be taken outside the chamber, that would be best. Could the conversations be calmed down?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do agree with the member for Edmonton Manning that there is still a lot of noise in the chamber, and there was also some heckling. I would just ask those who have thoughts, instead of talking about them out loud, to hold on to them. There will be a period for questions and comments coming up.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, thank you for your consideration. There was a lot of heckling coming from over there. They have very thin skins over there because they do not want to hear the truth about their reckless trade policy.

What did 2015 look like? The Conservative government under Stephen Harper had just completed free trade agreements with 46 different countries around the world: trade agreements with the European Union, with the Trans-Pacific Partnership partners, with South Korea, with Jordan, with Peru, with Colombia and with Ukraine. We also modernized trade agreements with countries like Chile and Israel. We had the most aggressive, successful trade agenda this country had ever seen.

For 2015, the tableau had been set. Our diplomatic relationships and trade relationships around the world were as good as they had ever been. We then had a Liberal government come in. Here we are four years later, and what does that agenda look like? Can our Prime Minister travel to China and talk about trade policy? He absolutely cannot. The Prime Minister went to the Philippines and he embarrassed the president of the Philippines in his own country when our Prime Minister was the president's guest at the East Asia Summit.

It has been a disaster of a trade policy. We can think about India. We can think about the tweet about Saudi Arabia—

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The time is up.

I just want to remind members again that if they have questions and comments they should wait until it is time for questions and comments. They should not be yelling, shouting and heckling.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one thing I can certainly say about the member for Abbotsford is that he can string quite a line together, but not with much fact.

The facts of the matter are that pretty nearly all during the Harper years we had huge trade deficits. The member talked about the TPP. It was this government that had to complete the negotiations because the Conservatives could not. He talked about the 46 different trade—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The same goes for what I just indicated to all the members in the House. Whether it is the government side or the opposition side, there needs to be respect on both sides.

Perhaps the member for Malpeque could wrap up and ask the question so we can get the answer.

● (1950)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, the member talked about the 46 different trade agreements the Conservatives signed. We did some research when the Conservatives were still in government. Do members know how much trade that really amounted to? It was four and a half days' trade with the United States. They are just numbers on the table. They are not really effective agreements. Four and a half days' trade with the United States was all the Conservatives negotiated.

Why does the member for Abbotsford not admit that the Prime Minister and the international trade minister completed the deals that the Conservatives could not complete? They also stood up to Donald Trump the way he should be stood up to.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, that is funny. The member started off by saying the Liberals completed the agreements. He then said the agreements are not effective. We are talking about the largest consumer market in the world, the European Union, negotiated under the former Conservative government of Stephen Harper. It is the second-largest trade agreement we would have with any other trading partner in the world, the U.S. being number one. The one thing he said that is truthful is that the United States is our largest trading partner and our bilateral trade is some \$850 billion.

However, the second-largest consumer market in the world is the European Union, a well-heeled market under which trade is growing. There are huge opportunities for Canadians to now penetrate that market and drive economic growth and prosperity here at home.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals seem to be having fun this evening and not taking this seriously, but I want to come back to Bill C-101.

We are talking about workers who are being affected and who are facing an uncertain future because of the Liberals' inaction. If the Liberals had taken action when they should have, we would not be here talking about this right now.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks. In his opinion, how did we get to this point? Why did the government throw thousands of people into uncertainty by failing to take action?

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. I am a former steelworker. As a UBC student, I worked summers at Wrights Canadian Ropes, a steel mill. I earned my way through university. It is absolutely critical that we understand the needs of Canadian workers, that we implement policy in a timely way.

What happened here is that the concerns of the United States were not listened to. We had a Prime Minister who thought he could bluff the United States and pretend that we are going to go on our merry way and not worry about surges and about dumping. Then the United States said to Canada, "Okay, you are not listening to us. Even though you are a security partner of ours, we are going to trigger section 232, impose very harmful steel and aluminum tariffs that are going to impact steelworkers across the country and many other workers."

This includes industries in my hometown of Abbotsford, like Mayne Coatings that uses extruded aluminum to manufacture what is called longboard. It made a \$100-million investment in Abbotsford and suddenly, overnight, it was told the Prime Minister was not paying attention or being respectful to the Americans and tariffs were being imposed on exports into the United States.

That is what happened. It has been devastating for many companies across Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Members want to ask questions, so I do want to go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Abbotsford talking a good game, but he failed to deliver on CETA and failed to deliver on the TPP. Speaking of steelworkers, what does he have against the Canadian Steel Producers Association, or the mayor of Sault Ste. Marie who sent his leader a letter asking him to pass this bill right now? What does he have against Canadian steelworkers?

● (1955)

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, that is quite something. Liberals are standing in the House claiming the high ground on trade, but everyone who knows anything about trade knows that the previous Conservative government under Stephen Harper was the most successful government when it came to opening up new doors for trade all over the world.

Government Orders

There has been a lot of gamesmanship going on across the way with the Liberals. They know that their time as a government is coming to an end. On October 21 there will be a reckoning coming when they will have to account for their failed trade policies, for breaking promises on balanced budgets and on electoral reform. They are going to have to account for mismanaging the relationship with first nations, the provinces and territories. Their time is coming on October 21. Watch for it.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hear the Liberals and it has been a litany of disasters on the trade file.

Two weeks after the Prime Minister was elected, he was in Manila and U.S. President Barack Obama said that Canada—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell had an opportunity to ask a question and if he has another question, he might want to hold his comments until then so that we can hear what the hon. member for Oshawa is asking.

The hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I want to quote the most progressive president in United States history, Barack Obama, who said at the APEC summit just two weeks after the Prime Minister was elected, that Canada and the United States would both soon be signatories to the TPP. The 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership was signed October 5, and it was one of the topics they were discussing.

I would like my colleague to talk about this. If the Prime Minister had signed the original agreement, which was also the renegotiation of NAFTA, that would have been 13 or 14 months before Mr. Trump was even in office. The deal could have been done, but he could not get that deal done because Australia, New Zealand, Japan and all of the Asian members were upset at Canada.

Could the member please comment on the incompetence that started almost from day one with the government?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, as a former trade minister involved in the negotiation of the TPP, I can tell members that I was aghast, and all of my Conservative colleagues were aghast, at what happened in Vietnam. The 11 remaining partners of the TPP had completed negotiations and they all agreed that they were going to meet the next morning to sign the TPP, finalize everything and have a formal announcement. They all got together the next morning, except that there were two chairs empty. Canada's trade minister was missing and Canada's Prime Minister was missing. They were missing in action. They did not show up.

It is among the most embarrassing trade moments that Canada has ever been responsible for. I can tell members that under the next Conservative government, that kind of embarrassment will never happen again.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge we have Extradex Aluminum. We also have Titanium Transportation, which transports metal and steel across the province of Ontario into the United States. Both of these companies have been impacted by the tariffs that were put in place, which are gone now, and both companies are very happy with the deal we received.

Bill C-101 is supported by the mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, who put out a statement today in a letter. It is the same thing with the mayor of Hamilton. Why does the party opposite not join in and actually say that this is good for Canadian workers, that it is good for Canadian industry? The Canadian Steel Producers Association is on board and says that this is good for all Canadian workers directly and indirectly employed by the steel industry.

The tariffs are removed. We do not want any import surges or dumping going on in the Canadian market. It is the right thing to do. It is something I believe the party opposite advocated for in prior months. Why the hypocrisy?

● (2000)

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, let me get this right. What I hear the member say is that the government screwed up because it did not listen to the United States. For a year we had tariffs slapped against us because of the government's incompetence, but now we should be thankful that tariffs are gone.

Mayne Coatings, an industry in my riding, made that \$100-million investment. There are many other companies in my community alone that were furious at the Prime Minister for his neglect of his responsibilities on trade and for disregarding the concerns the Americans had on dumping and surges. It is only now, at the very last minute as this Parliament is expiring, that we see this legislation coming forward. It is too little, too late.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 8 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 of the bill now before the House.

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

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

Government Orders

● (2025)

[English]

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

(Division No. 1347)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Alleslev
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Barrett
Benzen	Bergen
Bezan	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Cooper	Davidson
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kusie
Lake	Lloyd
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz	Nater
Nicholson	Obhrai
Paul-Hus	Poillievre
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saroya	Schmale
Shields	Shiple
Sopuck	Sorenson
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Van Kesteren	Viersen
Wagantall	Warkentin
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 76

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beaulieu	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Bratina
Breton	Brosseau
Cannings	Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Chen
Choquette	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)

Fraser (Central Nova)	Fuhr
Gameau	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hehr
Hogg	Holland
Housefather	Hutchings
Iacono	Jolibois
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Khalid	Khera
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Pauzé	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Picard	Plamondon
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Trudel	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Whalen	Wrzesnewskyj
Yip	Young
Zahid — 173	

PAIRED

Members

Goldsmith-Jones

Kmiec — 2

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

Government Orders

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

MACKENZIE VALLEY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (for the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade) moved that Bill C-88, An Act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know our friends to the south consider us to be the north, but it is a real pleasure today to speak about the actual north. That said, We, the North.

I am thankful for this opportunity to speak once again before the House on Bill C-88.

To begin, I want to acknowledge that we meet here today on the traditional territory of the Algonquin people.

I am appearing before this House on behalf of my hon. colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade. Our thoughts and well wishes are with him during this difficult time. I know we all wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to having him back in the role that he did so well, advocating for northerners and northern issues.

Bill C-88 proposes to amend both the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act.

In terms of the MVRMA, the bill was focused on repealing the previous government's decision, through Bill C-15, to arbitrarily merge four land and water boards in the Mackenzie Valley into one superboard. This decision violated constitutionally protected indigenous land claim and self-government agreements. The bill also seeks to reintroduce a number of positive changes introduced by the previous government through Bill C-15, which have not been implemented because of a court-imposed injunction focused on stopping the imposition of this so-called superboard.

The MVRMA includes four land and water boards in the Mackenzie Valley, which are central to comprehensive land claim and self-government agreements of several local indigenous governments and organizations. It creates an integrated co-management regime for lands and waters in the Mackenzie Valley and provides legal certainty for resource development investors in the area.

As this House will recall, Bill C-15 was passed by the previous government in 2014. Among other changes, it merged the Mackenzie Valley land and water boards into one single entity. The legislation was immediately challenged in court, alleging among other things that it violated indigenous land claim and self-government agreements.

In early 2015, the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories granted an injunction that suspended the proposed board restructuring, along with other positive regulatory amendments included in Bill C-15. Rather than improving the regulatory process for the

Mackenzie Valley and enhancing legal certainty for proponents and investors, among others, the previous government's approach landed these MVRMA regulatory reforms in Bill C-15 into court.

Our government believes that a sustainably developed resource sector is essential to the success of the Canadian economy and, if we get it right, will serve as an important foundation and example for future economic and job growth. Unlocking this economic potential must be contingent on environmental sustainability and on impacted indigenous communities being engaged as equal partners. The current situation is untenable as it creates legal uncertainty, and the positive regulatory changes are now tied up in court.

In November 2015, discussions with indigenous organizations and governments in the Northwest Territories began about the government moving forward with legislative amendments to resolve this matter. Bill C-88 has been developed through consultation with indigenous governments and organizations, most notably the Government of the Northwest Territories, industry and resource co-management boards. This bill will resolve the litigation regarding the restructuring of the boards and reintroduces the positive policy elements of Bill C-15 that are currently prevented from coming into force by the said injunction. It will re-establish trust with indigenous partners in the Northwest Territories, respect their constitutionally protected land claim and self-government agreements and restore legal certainty for responsible resource development.

● (2030)

As David Wright, legal council for the Gwich'in Tribal Council, stated before the indigenous and northern affairs committee:

[T]he consultation process on Bill C-88 has actually helped restore some of the trust between Canada and the [Gwich'in Tribal Council]. That trust would be eroded by any further delay, or at worst, failure to pass this bill in a timely manner.

The Tlicho government and the Government of the Northwest Territories have also clearly expressed their support for the passage of this bill, stating that the negative implications of the status quo are significant.

In terms of the CPRA, Bill C-88 proposes to provide new criteria for the Governor in Council to prohibit existing exploration licence-holders and significant discovery licence-holders from carrying out any oil and gas activities in the case of the national interest. It would also freeze the terms of the existing licences in the Arctic offshore for the duration of any such prohibition. This is exceedingly important for industry.

Government Orders

The term “national interest” refers to a country's national goals and ambitions, whether economic, military or cultural, and it is not a new legislative concept. There are numerous references to the national interest in Canadian legislation and specifically in this case in northern legislation. For example, the term appears in section 51 of the Yukon Act and in section 57 of the Northwest Territories Act. The decision to move forward with a moratorium on new Arctic offshore oil and gas licences in federal waters was a risk-based decision in light of the potential devastating effects of a spill and limited current science about drilling in that area.

It is important to remember that at that time there was no active drilling occurring in the Beaufort Sea and no realistic plans to initiate drilling in the short or medium term. It was announced in conjunction with a five-year science-based review as well as a consultation on the details of that review. Territories, indigenous and northern communities, our partners in the science-based review process and others, including industry, are being actively consulted. The outcome of the review process will inform next steps in the Arctic offshore.

Freezing the terms of the impacted existing licences in the Arctic offshore was a key priority expressed by industry. We heard that in our discussions regarding the implementation of the moratorium. The proposed amendments to both the MVRMA and the CPRA are essential to ensuring the responsible, sustainable and fair development regime in the Northwest Territories and the Arctic. That is why I urge this House to pass Bill C-88. I look forward to questions from the members.

• (2035)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government members like to talk about consultation and how they have worked very closely. We know that the Prime Minister was in New York when he announced the original moratorium on drilling in the Beaufort Sea. He gave 20 minutes' notice to the premiers and very limited notice to the indigenous communities that would be impacted by that decision. Is my colleague's idea of consultation a 20-minute phone call from the Prime Minister when he is in New York, to say he is going to impose a moratorium?

Mr. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, it is no small irony that the Conservative Party is now the champion of consultations. However, I understand the good faith of the question being posed.

What we need to understand and what Canadians, particularly northerners, appreciate is that the area is exceedingly fragile. People knew it, and we needed to take swift and prompt action. We know this on the west coast as well, where we have heard from proponents that there need to be bans. There are shenanigans in the Senate looking to overturn a number of laws that are key to our environmental legislation. I will leave that aside for now, but it is important for this House to note it, since the members who are blocking it are members of the Conservative caucus.

We have consulted. Northerners, particularly indigenous groups, are overwhelmingly supportive of this new process, which includes moving forward on more regional boards that were consulted on development and which impact our review and our feedback. We will listen to them. Some of the reports we heard previously were

manufactured by the previous government, and it torqued its own conclusions.

We aim to do meaningful—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have other opportunities to add to that. I just want to make sure we get the questions in that we should be getting within the time limit.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech. He mentioned the fact that people in the north are anxious to see this legislation move forward quickly, and yet his own government has taken an inordinate amount of time preparing it.

We knew that this legislation was necessary before the last election. The negotiations and the consultation started then. From my information, they were finished in July 2017, and yet it was 18 months before this legislation was tabled only just before Christmas. Here we are in June of 2019, just days away from the end of this Parliament, and they are saying we have to hurry up.

I just want to ask the member why suddenly there is a rush when we should have had this finished long ago.

• (2040)

Mr. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the support of the member opposite for moving this forward in a timely fashion. We did take the time to consult and get the important review that made it such that the prior bill that was introduced in the House by the previous government was messed up. The superboards were a disaster and caused court cases and injunctions that prevented some positive aspects of it to move forward.

Yes, the business of this House does take time, particularly when it touches indigenous issues where we need to do that consultation prior to putting the bill in place. That is what we have done. We have done it in a conscientious and timely fashion. Again, as I mentioned in closing proposals to this House, I do urge this House to move quickly on it.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by commending the member for the Northwest Territories for the work that he has done in working with the territorial government to really advance this legislation. I recognize that the previous government took some positive steps forward but brought in the concept of the superboards that were not well received. I, as well, have met with the territorial government, which would like to see this legislation advance.

I would appreciate it if the member could once again remind this House of the importance of this legislation, why it should move forward and what it is that would actually provide certainty to the energy sector. This legislation should move forward so that it could actually become law and help advance the territorial Government of the Northwest Territories, just as the member for the Northwest Territories has been championing and trying to advance.

Government Orders

Mr. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, I will make this a quick answer because, hopefully, the member for the Northwest Territories will also ask a question. He has been indispensable in ensuring this is moved forward in a timely fashion.

We do these things in the national interest to protect not only an essential part of Canada but indeed the entire world. We do so in consultation with the people who are up there, whether it is the Government of the Northwest Territories, industry or indigenous partners, but we need to take the time to listen to them. Once we listen to them, get their expertise and implement that into a package of laws that make sense, even ones that were proposed by the previous government, then these are things that allow industry to have what they expect, which is predictability in the process, a process where they will make an application knowing that an injunction will not come forward because it is constitutional. That is just a very, very simple example of it.

However, this predictability with all the partners involved allows these great projects, if and when they are put forward, to do so in a timely fashion where the government is actually, once it has done its job, out of the way and allowing people to get such good jobs.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, I find it absolutely ironic that the Liberal House leader suggested that we are sort of blocking this bill. This is actually the first speech at third reading. This is a government that has had four years to bring this important piece of legislation to the table. As my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay said, when does their lack of planning become our emergency? It is appropriate for us to debate it at third reading. That is what we are doing.

I would like to ask the member this. Why in the final week of Parliament is it only at this stage when they could have introduced it years ago?

Mr. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, quite clearly, if they are willing to mail in the next three weeks, we are not prepared to do so. The next three weeks are very important. There are plenty of bills—

An hon. member: You have mailed in the last four years.

Mr. Marc Miller: Perhaps the member has been mailing it in for the last four years, but we have not. We have been trying to push forward the business of government despite fierce opposition. That is the opposition's job; we get it. Any bill presented before Parliament at this stage should be given serious consideration. This is an important stage, and members are free to debate it all they want. Simply put, we will give it the consideration it is due. If they care about the north, they will support the bill.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's government supported the private member's bill put forward by my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, which asked the government to put the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into every appropriate piece of legislation that the government was going to produce, and here we have the most appropriate piece of legislation. This legislation is about resource development and about indigenous peoples.

We are here because of the lack of consultation. This legislation screams out to have the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples included in it, and yet it is not. I am wondering if the member might comment on that.

● (2045)

Mr. Marc Miller: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his fierce advocacy for indigenous peoples, and particularly the swift adoption of his colleague's private member's bill on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am dismayed and disgusted that it is stuck in the other House in what amounts to bad faith from certain members on the other side. They are members of the Conservative caucus. It is incumbent upon members of the caucus in the House of Commons to push their colleagues to make sure that the bill goes through in a swift and timely manner. Indigenous peoples across Canada are waiting for this to come through, and it is an essential act of reconciliation.

This bill incorporates a number of elements, including the consultation review that indigenous people have been looking for. Many of the commentators on the bill have specifically underlined how it does in fact conform with the relevant provisions of UNDRIP.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to resuming debate, there seems to be a bit of confusion again about how those who are asking questions and making comments are selected.

Members may recall that on November 3, 2016, the following statement was made:

As Chair occupants, we recognize that the time for questions and comments is often the most valuable time for an exchange between members. In accordance with the procedures and practices, we will do our best to ensure that time is generally afforded to the members of the parties who are not associated with the member who has just spoken but not to the exclusion of that party....

That is the way we will do it. We will also be attentive to members who are particularly present during the day and paying attention to the debate to ensure that as many members as possible can participate....

I was going to recognize the member earlier. However, there was an agreement made that the government House leader was going to get up and ask that question. The hon. member for Northwest Territories could certainly have the first question that will be posed once the opposition does its speech.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House to speak to this particular bill. Unfortunately, Bill C-88 is another anti-energy policy from the Liberal government, which is driving energy investment out of Canada, costing Canadian workers their jobs and increasing poverty rates in the north. Like Bill C-69 before it, Bill C-88 politicizes oil and gas extraction by expanding the powers of the cabinet to block economic development and adds to the increasing levels of red tape that proponents must face before they can get shovels in the ground.

Government Orders

Further, Bill C-88 reveals a full rejection of calls from elected territorial leaders for increased control of their natural resources. I am deeply concerned that with Bill C-88, the Liberals would entrench into law their ability to continue to arbitrarily and without consultation block oil and gas projects. As witnesses noted in the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, again we see the Liberal government putting together very different pieces of legislation. Before taking office, they promised to table only legislation that stands alone, and they have run away from that promise altogether.

The former Conservative government viewed the north as a key driver of economic activity for decades to come. Other Arctic nations, including China and Russia, are exploring possibilities. The Liberals, meanwhile, are arbitrarily creating more barriers to economic development in Canada's north, with the Liberal government's top-down and ever-paternalistic action to do nothing to reduce poverty in remote and northern regions of Canada. Northerners face the unique challenges of living in the north with fortitude and resilience. They want jobs and economic opportunities for their families, and they deserve a government that has their back.

Bill C-88 is another one in the long list of failed Liberal environmental policies. There are Bill C-69, which will further throttle natural resource development; Bill C-68, the new fisheries act, which will add another layer of complications to all Canadian economic development; Bill C-48, the tanker ban; as well as Bill C-55, the marine protected areas law. Added together, it is a complete dog's breakfast of anti-development legislation.

The natural resource industries are extremely important in this country. Indeed, I am very honoured and proud to represent a natural resource constituency. What do the natural resources consist of in this country? They are energy, forestry, agriculture, mining, commercial fishing, hunting, fishing, trapping and so on. In my riding of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, all of these activities take place in various regions, in all 66,000 square kilometres of my riding, and it sickens and angers me how the workers in the natural resource industries and the people in the communities are continually being attacked by the government, whether it is anti-firearms legislation, Bill C-69 or Bill C-68. All of these pieces of legislation collectively add up to a complete throttling of rural communities.

I listened with great humour to the parliamentary secretary's comments about the Mackenzie Valley. I cut my teeth as a young fisheries biologist doing environmental impact work in the Mackenzie Valley. I was there in 1971, 1972, 1975 and again in the 1980s. While I would certainly never claim to know as much about the Mackenzie Valley as does the hon. member for Northwest Territories, my experience as a biologist has been unique.

Back in the 1970s, when the first environmental impact assessment work was done in the Mackenzie Valley, I was part of teams of biologists who sampled every single waterway in the Mackenzie Valley where the pipeline would cross. We assessed fish and wildlife habitats up and down the valley, and I am one of the few people in this country, apart from the residents of the Mackenzie Valley itself, who have seen, experienced, photographed and measured essentially all of the environmental amenities and characteristics that the Mackenzie Valley has. In addition, I have

also visited most communities. It was quite a while ago; nevertheless, I do not think a lot has changed.

The implication from the parliamentary secretary is that absolutely nothing has been done in the Mackenzie Valley, nothing at all. The work started in the 1970s, with the aforementioned environmental impact assessment that was done and that I was a part of. Those were the years of the Berger commission. The shameful Berger commission held hearing after hearing. That was a time when natural gas and energy prices were fairly high, so much so that Thomas Berger recommended that the project be shelved, which it was, after hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on exploration activities and with much community involvement. I was there. I saw it. I was part of it.

● (2050)

In the 1990s, it was done all over again. The same streams that we sampled in the 1970s were looked at, the same wildlife habitat, the same environmental characteristics were all measured and, again, the same conclusion was reached: no development.

The late 1990s were a time when natural gas prices were something like \$15 per 1,000 cubic feet. It made the pipeline economical. Well, along came fracking, and the price of natural gas went down to \$3 per 1,000 cubic feet, and in the mid-2000s, the pipeline project was shelved in perpetuity, leaving these communities consigned to poverty.

The Mackenzie Valley is a unique and wonderful place. The soils are rich and the trees are big. It is indeed an anomaly in the north. One does not have to go too far east of the Mackenzie Valley to hit the tundra. There have been experimental farms in the Mackenzie Valley. There was one at Fort Simpson when I was living there. Again, the agricultural and forestry potential is absolutely enormous.

The parliamentary secretary talks about the fragility of the Mackenzie Valley. I doubt he has seen it. All of the world's environments need to be treated with care. However, does he realize that there have been oil wells in Norman Wells since the Second World War? Does he realize that, in 1980, a pipeline was built from Norway House to Zama Lake, Alberta? All of these developments were done without any fanfare, and Norman Wells, producing some of the finest crude oil in the world, has been operating for decades now with little or no environmental impact. People who do not know what they are talking about and do not know about the environment are making laws that consign people in these communities to poverty in perpetuity, and that is absolutely shameful.

In terms of indigenous communities and resource development, one need only look at the Agnico Eagle gold mine at Baker Lake. I hate to break it to my friends opposite, who so object to resource development, but the employment rate in Baker Lake is 100%, thanks to that mining operation.

Government Orders

During the testimony for Bill C-69, I asked Pierre Gratton, the head of The Mining Association of Canada, about the social conditions in communities that operate in the diamond mining area. These are his words, not mine, but I am paraphrasing. He talked about the increase in education levels. Literacy went up; job training went up; and the social conditions improved.

The current government is consigning Canada's north and Canada's northern communities to poverty in perpetuity, and I hope it is happy about it, because I certainly am not. It is shameful what it is doing.

In my time as a biologist, I have seen the evolution of environmental policy, starting in the 1970s. I was not there, but I remember the first Earth Day in 1970, which Maurice Strong organized. Back in the mid-1980s, the Brundtland commission came out with "Our Common Future", which talked about the concept of sustainable development. Gro Harlem Brundtland was very clear on the concept of sustainable development. She said clearly that sustainable development is not an environment concept; it is a development concept, and it is development in harmony with the environment. However, the current government has seen fit to break that particular compact with the people.

In the 2000s, of course, I also saw the rise of climate science and environmental policy. It is an evolution I have been very fortunate to witness, but what I see now, from the Liberals especially, is that they are phony environmentalists, most of them, apart from the member for Northwest Territories, whom I have an enormous amount of respect for. They talk a good game about the environment, but they do not know anything about it. They have never been there. They have never studied it. They do not measure it, and they have no concept of what goes on.

There are two paths in terms of environmental policy. One is with the Liberals and the NDP. For them, environmental policy is all about process, consultation and nothing else. Strategies without results are meaningless. On this side of the House, Conservative environmental policy is focused on real and measurable environmental results. It is no accident that former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney was named the greenest prime minister in Canadian history: the acid rain treaty, the Montreal Protocol, the green plan, the pulp and paper effluent regulations. My own previous prime minister, Stephen Harper, connected with that particular legacy.

• (2055)

The track record of Conservative governments is by far the best in terms of measurable results. Environmental assessments should be all about what effect a project would have on the environment, how we mitigate it and how we ensure the project moves ahead with all the attendant benefits that it will develop?

What is really interesting is that those on the Liberal left think modern society is the problem. Those of us on the Conservative side of the House say modern society is the answer.

A group of academics coined an index called the "environmental benefits index". Basically, it is a graph comparing country income, per capita income in any given country, and environmental quality. It is very clear, if we look at measurable environmental indicators, such

as water quality, air quality, amount of protected land, conservation agriculture, the fewest species at risk and on and on, that the wealthy countries have the best environments.

Which party delivers economic growth, economic development through trade, creating a business climate for economic growth? That is only the Conservatives. That is why, under Conservative governments, if one looks at the actual measurable environmental characteristics of Canada, for example, indeed all of the developed nations of the world, they are vastly superior to countries that are run under the stultifying control of excess governments.

We can look, for example, at the Sudbury miracle. What happened there? A few decades ago, a moonscape was around Sudbury. Investments were made in sulfur dioxide removal. Now the forests have all come back. There are still jobs there. The forest and the environment have come back. That is what happens when we have Conservative-style environmentalism. We actually get results.

Let us get back to the Mackenzie Valley. When we were doing our assessments in the Mackenzie Valley, we had aerial photographs. This was back in the days before GPS or any of that kind of stuff. We sat down with aerial photographs in our laps, big huge rolls. We were in the helicopter, following this black line through the Mackenzie Valley. The GEO chemist beside me would take notes, the hydrologist would take notes, and then the helicopters would land in various stream crossing areas, where we knew the pipeline would cross.

All of us scientific types, hopped out and did our various work, such such wildlife habitat and fisheries habitat assessments. I would set my little nets in the pools and see what was there. I have to confess something, I was actually paid to fish back in those days. It is something that a young biologist very much appreciated.

This was back in 1975, the care with which the pipeline was planned, the soil types were measured, the depth of the permafrost was looked at, all that kind of stuff. Even back then, in the dark ages of 1975, we knew darn well that that pipeline could be built and delivered in an environmentally sound way. Indeed, my friend, the natural resources critic would know how many kilometres of pipeline there are in the country, about 30,000 kilometres of pipeline, give or take. However, nobody knows where they are, because they are all cited according to our best environmental practices.

It always bugs me when I hear members opposite, or the NDP members, talk about cleaning up our economy, going green, clean tech and so on. I have a dirty little secret to share with them. All industries in Canada are already clean.

Let me give an example of that. Brian Mulroney, the Conservative PM in 1989, implemented the pulp and paper effluent regulations. They mandated the construction of a waste water treatment plant at every pulp and paper facility. What was once a toxic effluent now became an effluent that people could actually drink. Industry after industry across the country follows those exact same guidelines.

Government Orders

● (2100)

Before I became an MP, I had this pleasure through environmental assessment in the oil sands. I lived at the Denman camp, part of the Kearl project. It is a human tragedy what the Liberals are doing. I had a chance to mix, mingle and make friends with people all across the country of all ages, of all education levels, from tractor drivers to hydrogeochemists and everything in between. They were all fulfilling their dream, making a very good living, helping their families, paying their way through school, buying that first house. The Liberals are destroying that for the families of those good people who work in the oil sands. That is something I will never forgive. It is simply not true that our industries are not clean. They are the cleanest in the world.

Here we are importing oil from Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, leaving aside the social conditions in those countries. We know there are simply no environmental standards in those countries. The government and the NDP willingly import that kind of oil, yet block the exports of Canadian oil and gas whether it is from the Arctic or the west coast.

What is also interesting is that there are national security implications to this as well. I remember meeting with the ambassador from Slovakia. That country is dependent on Russian gas. It would only be too happy to buy energy from us. The implications of what the Liberals and NDP are doing to stop Canada's resource development goes far beyond our country. Indeed they go far beyond Alberta. Again, Canadians from all walks of life have worked in the oil sands.

Getting back to the bill for the Mackenzie Valley, it truly saddens me when I think about the communities of the Mackenzie Valley, which are ably represented by the member for Northwest Territories. It really saddens me to see what is perhaps going on there, apart from where there is no resource development. I mentioned Baker Lake and the diamond mines. Where there is resource development, communities are thriving. Wages are high. Environmental quality is very high because all these industrial activities, all these installations are built with the highest environmental standards in mind.

People say that this industry did this badly or this industry is not doing it right. Every industry in the country operates under the terms and conditions of an environmental licence. I should know. I managed an environmental licence for a paper company. We had to do the appropriate monitoring of our industrial activity. I had to submit reports. We were checked on a regular basis.

If any industry in the country does not operate in an environmentally sound way, it is not the industry's fault; it is the government's fault. Either the terms and conditions of the environmental licence are not right, but the company is following these terms, or the government is not enforcing the rules.

I, for one, will stand and proudly defend all the Canadian industry. What we do in our country is right and proper and is a model for the world.

Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefore:

Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs for the purpose of reconsidering clauses 85 and 86, with a view to removing the ability for the federal cabinet to prohibit oil and gas activities on frontier lands based on "national interest".

● (2105)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Northwest Territories.

● (2110)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will leave Canadians to interpret and translate what the member has said.

I want to point out a couple of things that he failed to mention.

First, the Conservatives were in power for the 10 years, when these discussions were going on, and really did not do anything to help the economy. In fact, they left it in shambles.

The member also pointed out that the bill and the changes made would influence the activities in resource development in the Northwest Territories. I should remind him that it was his government that created the Mackenzie Valley resource management boards and negotiated, through land claim discussions and negotiations, to come to this arrangement. They they decided they wanted to change it.

I was in the indigenous affairs committee when the contractor who was hired by Minister Strahl to go out and consult was presented. He talked about the direction he received from the minister. He was not totally clear, but he was told to fold all the regional boards and set up one super board. He was also talked about the rounds of consultations he had in the Northwest Territories. From what other witnesses said, he had set up two rounds of consultations.

One was with the indigenous governments, where everybody who was in the room was against the changes that included doing away with a regional board system and bringing in a super board. In the second round of consultations, everybody showed up except the consultant who was hired by the Conservative government.

When I asked the consultant about the report he presented and how he recommended that this was what everybody wanted when everybody was against it. He claimed that people said one thing in public, but whispered something else in his ear.

I am very disappointed that the member views including indigenous people in the consultation and regulatory process as a hindrance. Why does he see the involvement of indigenous as an attack on industry, as were his words?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, as much as I respect my friend, what a stupid question. Of course indigenous people need to be involved in these consultations. To suggest otherwise to a member who has 15 first nations in his own riding is far beneath what I would expect from my friend. It is an ill-considered comment.

Government Orders

As I said earlier, while I certainly would never claim to have as much knowledge as he does about the Mackenzie Valley and the people who live there, my experiences living and working with the indigenous people in the Mackenzie Valley has been nothing but positive. I absolutely respect and revere their knowledge of the land and their desire to ensure it is conserved. I also respect and revere their desire for economic development to make their lives better, as well as for their families, their children and their communities.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members to use their judgment when using words that are a little harsh and may seem unparliamentary. I will not point out anything in particular, but I ask members to consider what they are going to say.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always entertaining to listen to the member. I think he and I are the only members in the House who self-identify as biologists. Beyond that, I think we have a lot of differences of opinion. I will leave it at that.

I have about 20 questions I would like to ask him. Right off the top, he said that this was energy-killing legislation, and then he went on to talk about the Conservative record on the environment. He talked a lot about Brian Mulroney. I noticed that he did not mention Stephen Harper once in terms of the environmental record of his government. I think a lot of people would say that it was quite a negative record.

He also talked about the results and track record of the Conservatives. Here we have legislation the Conservatives brought in that drastically affected the environmental impact assessments in the Northwest Territories. It got rid of the boards that were set up through land claims agreements. The Conservatives did the same thing in the Yukon, and that had to be fixed through Bill C-17 earlier.

The Conservative record is really one of gutting environmental legislation, and that was energy-killing legislation. It is what has brought us to this very polarized standstill in Canadian development.

Could the member comment on the Conservatives' track record with respect to getting energy and resource projects going while at the same time trying to gut the environmental regulations Canadians want?

• (2115)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for playing right into my hands. Should he wish to debate environmental policy, I will do it anytime, anyplace, anywhere.

I noticed that in his question, there was nothing about environmental results. It is all process oriented. Under the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program, 1,700 kilometres of streams were fixed and two million square metres of spawning habitat was restored. A record number of hectares became protected areas in this country. Under the national conservation plan, 800,000 hectares of valuable endangered species habitat was protected. The national conservation plan had measurable results. Sulfur dioxide emissions and nitrous oxide emissions were down and greenhouse gas emissions in general were down.

The NDP and the Liberals, I notice, never talk about results. It is all about environmental process.

I was on the fisheries committee when Bill C-68 was being debated. It was going to change the Fisheries Act, 2012. We asked witness after witness from the same class my hon. friend is from, the Ecojustice types, very pointed questions. We asked whether the changes made to the Fisheries Act, 2012 had any measurable effects on any fish population or community in this country. They kind of looked at their shoes and said that they really could not say, that they did not know and that there were really no effects.

This is about the environment, what is measurable and what progress is made. That is what environmental policy should be about.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy when my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa stands, especially when he fields questions from the government and the NDP. It is like they are taking a knife to a gunfight, given the level of knowledge the hon. member has.

I want to speak specifically about Governor in Council orders, which the member talked about in his speech. We are seeing a pattern of a consistent and concerted effort on the part of the government to put control of a lot of these natural resource projects into the hands of the executive branch of government and cabinet. I note specifically Bill C-69, Bill C-48, Bill C-86 and Bill C-55.

Could the member expand on that and the concern with respect to the impact this will have on our natural resources sector?

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, I have a perfect example to answer his question. Today the Minister of Natural Resources had the gall to stand and say, with a straight face, that he is denying a permit to allow Manitoba to deliver clean, green hydroelectricity to Minnesota, as though it were some spurious thing. It has been a five-year process with the National Energy Board. Having worked on transmission lines, I know that there are thousands of kilometres of transmission lines in this country. Once the transmission line hits the U.S. border, it is going about 100 kilometres or so.

To have that project stalled at the whim of a natural resources minister who really knows nothing about the file is nothing but shameful. It is also shameful that members of Parliament on the Liberal side are not protecting and defending the interests of Manitoba. Shame on them.

• (2120)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise tonight to speak to Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act.

Government Orders

As I said in my first speech on this bill, the overall position of the NDP is that northerners know best how to manage their own resources. We supported this bill at second reading and will support it again at the final vote, but we feel that there were some opportunities at committee to improve parts of it that were lost.

There is a lot of history to this bill and the measures taken over the years to bring more democracy to the north and to end the colonial style of government that has been in place since Confederation. It seems that with every step forward, there are a few steps back, and this bill is perhaps no exception.

This is a bit of an omnibus bill. It sets out to do two very different things. First, it would repeal parts of Bill C-15, the Northwest Territories Devolution Act, which was passed in the last parliament. Second, it would bring into force an announced moratorium on oil and gas exploration and development in offshore waters of the Canadian Arctic.

Bill C-15, passed in 2014, was also a bit of an omnibus bill in that it did two things. The bulk of that bill dealt with the devolution of powers from the federal government to the territorial government. The general public opinion in the north was that this was, as Martha Stewart would say, a good thing. However, the second part of Bill C-15 went back on that, eliminating four regional land and water boards and replacing them with a single superboard. The feeling was that this was not a good thing. Those four boards were originally created out of land claim agreements and negotiations with various first nations in the Mackenzie Valley area, and the new superboard significantly reduced the input those first nations would have on resource management decisions.

In passing, I will note that the previous Conservative government did similar things to the Yukon, so the present federal government had to remove contested reforms to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act litigated by Yukon first nations. This led to Bill C-17, which rescinded those contested reforms in 2017.

I will return to the Northwest Territories and a brief list of modern agreements and treaties. There are a few smaller ones I will not mention. The member for the Northwest Territories has told me that there are 10 more that are in the process of negotiation as well, but I will just mention four here.

First, the Inuvialuit agreement covers the northern part of the Mackenzie Delta, the Beaufort Sea and the Northwest Territories portion of the Arctic Archipelago. That region is outside the areas covered in the regional land and water boards covered in Bill C-88, but it does bear on the second part of the offshore and gas exploration part of this bill.

Second, the Gwich'in agreement covers the southern portion of the Mackenzie Delta and the northern part of the Mackenzie Mountains.

Third, the Sahtu Dene and Métis agreement covers the region around Great Bear Lake and the adjacent Mackenzie Mountains.

Fourth, the Tlicho Land Resources and Self-Government Agreement covers the area north of Great Slave Lake.

These agreements are modern-day treaties that create and confirm indigenous rights and are protected by section 35 of the Constitution. The Gwich'in, Sahtu and Tlicho agreements contain provisions for the creation of a system of co-management boards enacted by the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. On each of these boards, there are four members and a chair. Two of the four members are nominated or appointed by the Gwich'in, Sahtu or Tlicho so that they have an equal partnership in those decisions.

In parts of the Northwest Territories where there is no settled land claim, the main board created by the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board, is in operation. In the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency conducts environmental assessments.

This was all working well until the previous federal Conservative government came to power and was looking for ways to speed up resource development. It commissioned the McCrank report in 2007, which eventually put forward two options to streamline the assessment processes in the Northwest Territories, both of which would significantly affect the operations of the regional land and water boards. Option one was to eliminate the boards and replace them with a superboard. The McCrank report warned that this option would take a long time to implement, as it would necessitate renegotiation of the land claims affected and a lot more consultation on top of that. Option two would keep the boards but reduce their mandates. Again, there would be a lot of consultation needed but perhaps not a full renegotiation of the treaties.

● (2125)

In its habit of cutting corners and ignoring indigenous rights, the Harper government picked option one but dropped the pesky renegotiation and consultation requirement and then slipped that into Bill C-15, introduced in December 2013. Bill C-15 was primarily meant to implement the provisions in the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement. However, as I mentioned, it contained a kind of poison pill in the form of changes to the land and water co-management boards. The Harper bill eliminated the regional boards in favour of a single superboard consisting of ten members and a chair. These changes were widely and wildly unpopular in the Northwest Territories, and contrary to the wishes of northerners.

In committee, we heard from a number of witnesses about the negative effects of Bill C-15 and the legal battle it unleashed. I would like to quote, first, directly from the testimony of Chief Alfonz Nitsiza, of the Tlicho government. He testified:

Government Orders

The Wek'èezhii Land and Water Board [the Tlicho board] and other boards in the Northwest Territories would be replaced with a single super-board. Instead of appointing 50% of the board members, as our Tlicho agreement requires, the Tlicho Government would appoint only one out of 11 members on this super-board. The Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act amendments could allow decisions about Wek'èezhii to potentially be made by a panel of the super-board that could lack Tlicho Government appointees entirely. This was unacceptable to us. Tlicho were promised something different in their treaty from what was designed in the Northwest Territories Devolution Act. The treaty promise was broken with no good reason, so we went to the courts for justice.

The Tlicho Government immediately sought an injunction from the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories. That injunction was granted. It prevents the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act amendments from coming into force, and remains in effect to this day. You should also know that the underlying lawsuit also remains active, pending the results of this legislative process. The injunction will remain in effect until either a new law is passed [this one] or our lawsuit regarding the Northwest Territories Devolution Act runs its course.

The Gwich'in representative at committee, David Wright, also mentioned the damage that even this temporary dissolution of regional boards would do to regulatory capacity in the Northwest Territories. He said:

The injunction says the Tlicho, in particular, because they were the primary litigant in that case, would suffer irreparable harm if those amendments were brought into force, because what it would mean is that the Tlicho, Sahtu and Gwich'in land and water boards would be dismantled. Picture staff being sent packing, corporate memory and resources and capacity being disbanded, and the single Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board being created.

The irreparable harm is at that institutional bureaucratic capacity level, and it would take a lot to get that engine going again if the court result was ultimately favourable and was in line with the findings of Justice Shaner, I believe, in the injunction case.

In other words, depending on what level of court this stopped at, if the result was, yes, indeed, this is an unconstitutional set of amendments that go against land claim agreements, then you would have to restart these boards years from now, which would just be lost time and waste and uncertainty.

We also heard from Bob McLeod, the Premier of the Northwest Territories, regarding the need for the timely passage of Bill C-88. The premier said:

The Government of the Northwest Territories supports swift passage of Bill C-88. The implications of not proceeding with the bill within the lifetime of this government and retaining the status quo are significant. Amendments to the MVRMA have been on the books for five years, and we don't want any more uncertainty associated with our regulatory regime. Resource developers are contemplating investing in developing the Northwest Territories' rich natural resources, and everyone benefits from regulatory certainty.

Here we are with Bill C-88 before us. Part of this bill is what the Northwest Territories wants. It wants the devolution of powers. It wants to keep the regional boards.

However, there is a part 2. This is kind of a mini-omnibus bill. I will now go to the second part of Bill C-88, which deals with the Canada Petroleum Resources Act. This began in late 2016, when the Prime Minister was meeting with President Barack Obama and they both gave what was called the "United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement".

● (2130)

In that statement, President Obama said that the U.S. was designating the vast majority of U.S. waters in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas as indefinitely off limits to offshore oil and gas leasing. At the same time, it seemed that Canada felt obliged to designate all Canadian waters as indefinitely off limits to future offshore Arctic oil and gas licensing, to be reviewed every five years through a climate and marine science-based life-cycle assessment. The Prime Minister

made this decision without properly consulting any form of government in the north. He made a phone call to everybody 20 minutes before the fact. Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod reacted by issuing a red alert, calling for an urgent national debate on the future of the Northwest Territories and saying that the Prime Minister's announcement was the re-emergence of colonialism.

A year later, in October 2017, I spoke to Duane Smith, the board chair of Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. This was at the Generation Energy Forum meetings in Winnipeg. A year later, he was still hopping mad and very concerned about this issue. In 2016, he stated, "There was a total lack of consultation prior to the imposition of the moratorium. This and the subsequent changes to key legislation impacting our marine areas are actions inconsistent with the way the Crown is required to engage with its Indigenous counterparts."

These concerns were again heard loud and clear in committee testimony. Mervyn Gruben, the mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, said:

I just didn't want this to be seen again as another case of Ottawa throwing in this moratorium and showing us what to do—do as I say, you know. That's what I didn't like. I thought we were going to be...but there was no negotiation. You just do this. Ottawa says if you do this, you do that.

In response to the concerns of northerners, Canada began a consultation process and agreed in October 2018 to begin talks with the territorial governments and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation to reach a co-management and revenue-sharing agreement. Meanwhile, the current oil and gas development moratorium remains in place to be reviewed in 2021.

I would like to comment briefly on the rushed timelines faced by this bill. Here we are in June 2019 debating a bill that everybody knew was coming before the election in 2015. Consultations began on the Mackenzie Valley part of this bill right after the election and if my understanding is correct, the consultations were largely finished by the summer of 2017, yet this bill was not tabled until just before Christmas. It sat in limbo for 18 months. I can speculate that maybe it was a decision to bring the oil and gas moratorium into the legislation that caused this delay because it needed more consultation, but whatever it was, here we are staring the end of this Parliament in the face and risking the untimely death of this bill in the Senate. When legislation is literally being forced upon us by the courts, it behooves the government to move quickly, and that would have been to keep the two issues separate so the Mackenzie Valley act could proceed first.

Government Orders

I will mention a couple of ways Bill C-88 could have been easily improved. New Democrats brought amendments forward in committee, but were unsuccessful. New Democrats are disappointed that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is not mentioned at all in this bill, despite the fact that of all the bills before us in this Parliament, Bill C-88 seems to be the one most needing this reference. The bill deals specifically with resource development, precipitated by litigation put forth by indigenous peoples, pointing out, with good reason, that treaties have been broken, their views ignored and consultations not done.

The Liberal government supported the private member's bill of my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, on putting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into every appropriate legislation that the government produces, but there is no mention of that at all, nor the underlying concept of free, prior and informed consent in this bill. This was brought up in committee testimony as well.

In its brief, the Northwest Territories Chamber of Commerce argued that the final decision to prohibit certain works and activities in the national interest “needs to be approved by the Indigenous Nation of the prescribed area who are the stewards of the area but also rely on the land to provide economic independence” to their membership.

• (2135)

In its brief, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation said:

Further, while the Oceans Act and CPRA include non-derogation clauses, the requirement to consult with those who hold rights in marine areas is not clearly articulated. It is important to note that the imposition of the Moratorium by the Prime Minister was done without consultation with any Inuvialuit in contravention of the IFA [Inuvialuit Final Agreement] and with the framework established and the promises made under the Northwest Territories Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement.

The IRC added:

The proposed Section 12(1) introduces “national interest” as a further basis for “freezing” licenses indefinitely. The national interest criterion is problematic as it elevates the national priorities of the day vis-à-vis Inuvialuit priorities within our traditional territory.

David Wright of the Gwich'in suggested that if it could not be inserted into this bill, reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should at least be seriously considered when the Mackenzie Valley agreement itself is reviewed in the near future.

The second place that Bill C-88 could be improved is through a real commitment for intervenor funding in the review processes that the bill puts forward. While there is a separate funding source available for indigenous intervenor funding in the north, it is not enshrined in legislation and it is not available for non-indigenous groups.

Intervenor funding is included in Bill C-69 and it should be included in this bill as well. It is a critical part of any proper consultation.

To conclude, I will reiterate that the NDP will support the bill and hopes to see it move quickly to royal assent before Parliament is dissolved.

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening with some intent to the debate. We had a very

interesting set of remarks from the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa and then of course some questions from the member for Northwest Territories and then perhaps slightly back-handed support from the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay for the bill.

Many of us were elected in 2015 on the sense that people did not want a “father knows best” approach to government any longer. The top-down, unconstitutional approach is actually what was stalling our resource development and leading to so many injunctions against resource projects.

Perhaps I should not say this because they might actually do it, but until the Conservatives take a long hard look in the mirror and accept their failure on this file, they will stay on that side of the House for a long time.

Does the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay think that this bill would allow more resource development to happen in the north, or should we go back to the Harper form?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, the member for St. John's East is very attentive to resource issues across this country. I would just like to reiterate what he said. A lot of the failure to move forward on a lot of energy files, resource files over the last 10 years has been because the Conservative government was really trying to rush these through and by rushing them through, it cut corners. It did not do environmental assessments properly. It did not do consultation properly. That resulted in a lot of litigation in the courts on various issues.

Unfortunately, that has continued with the Liberal government. We have seen the same thing happen with the Trans Mountain expansion project, where the so-called consultation done by the Liberal government was completely inadequate and that put the project back for a year or so.

It seems that the rush to get these things through has resulted in very few actually getting through. Therefore, I would say that both the Liberals and the Conservatives are to blame in this regard.

The NDP is very much in favour of the first part of this bill. It would restore the four land and water management boards. It would do what indigenous peoples and the peoples of the Northwest Territories want and we are very much in favour of that.

• (2140)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay brought up what is truly the paradox of this bill. On the one hand, there is part 1 which the government says it has put forward due to some lack of consultation and some movements made by the former Conservative government. It has said many words about that. Then in part 2 of the bill, I would suggest the government has done more with less rationale in terms of lack of consultation, arbitrary moves, creating moratoriums, and a new concept of “in the national interest” by the Governor in Council, all with no consultation.

Government Orders

I would like my colleague to talk about the paradox of what the government has done. I also would appreciate his comments on the timelines and why, with only a week and a half left in this session, we are being told that we are stalling this bill which was not actually presented for debate until very recently.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I will start with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo's last question or comment about the timeliness of this bill. Again, I just reiterate that we are seeing this with a number of bills that should have, and probably could have, been tabled a year or two ago, but instead right now, at the very end of this Parliament, we are being asked to rush them through.

We only had one committee meeting on this bill to hear from witnesses. I think it deserved more than that. It was the same for Bill C-69. It was a very big omnibus bill. I think only 48 witnesses were heard at committee on that bill.

We therefore end up relying on the Senate for sober second thought. That says a lot about the lack of work that we are doing here in this House, but to do that work, we have to get these bills before us in a timely manner. I think it is unfortunate that is not happening.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the previous Conservative speaker talk about the Liberals and the NDP and our positions on various government bills in this Parliament.

I take real issue with some of his commentary on Bill C-68. I represent a coastal riding, which is heavily dependent on wild salmon for its economy. Members do not have to take my word for it. Our opinion on Bill C-68 was actually formed from people who have spent their entire lives working as fisheries biologists. There is unanimous support in my riding for that. It is a rural riding. I will not take any lessons from the Conservatives about C-68 and rural communities. I represent a rural community. It is on the coast. It is dealing with a resource of wild salmon that directly affects the people who live in my riding.

On Bill C-88, I think the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay clearly elaborated to the House the testimony that we heard at committee from the people who are most directly affected by this legislation. I listened with great interest to his comments, particularly about the timeline that this bill is facing and that one first nations group was saying that it was either going to go through the courts or rely on this piece of legislation.

Given the mess that is happening in the other place right now where we are going to have government bills coming back to the House with Senate amendments, some bills having had trouble, does the member realistically think that Bill C-88, with the time that is left is going to see royal assent or is the government going to actually have to entertain the thought of bringing the House back in the summer months? Is that how much importance the government is going to attach to this bill?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. My riding is in the British Columbia interior where issues are different. We do not have that direct attachment to the sea, and yet my constituents certainly told me during the last election that these environmental issues were very important and that things had to be done properly. They were

dismayed at the Conservatives' gutting of environmental legislation, including navigation protection and the Fisheries Act and the way the National Energy Board was conducting its hearings. Those were all things that got me energized in the last election. I am a little disappointed, to say the least, at the slow pace that the Liberal government has been taking to turn that around.

As to the timeline for this bill, what goes on in the Senate is fairly mysterious to me. I am not going to comment on how rapidly this bill may or may not pass through the Senate. I will just leave it at that.

● (2145)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in committee, we heard quite a few presentations, and most were favourable to Bill C-88.

We heard from the premier, stating that he was happy with the negotiations on oversight and management of the Beaufort Sea, and that things were going well. Along with Grand Chief George Mackenzie from the Tlicho government, they talked about how they needed to see this move forward through the legislative process and receive royal assent in this Parliament. The negative implications of the status quo would be significant. If the bill is not passed in this Parliament, rising in June, indigenous rights and other federal-territorial initiatives, such as the five-year review of devolution agreements would be compromised.

Does the member agree with the premier and the grand chief that the negative implications of the status quo are significant?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree that we need to pass this legislation quickly. The part that affects the Mackenzie Valley in particular is attached to a timeline of litigation. We are in an injunction situation right now.

If we do not pass this, that litigation will start up again and continue. If a new government is elected in the fall, it may well appeal this and we will be in this endless cycle of litigation. It is really incumbent on us to pass this quickly.

My comment to the member would be that if the government had tabled this legislation back in the fall of 2017, we could have been done with this legislation, and everybody would be working on other things. Instead, we are here in June 2019 facing the end of Parliament, and this is the result.

It has to be passed, and I hope it will.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also want to join the parliamentary secretary in wishing the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade a full recovery. I know that everyone in the House is thinking of him and wishing him a full recovery. We hope to see him back here in the fall after the election.

Government Orders

I am going to start my comments on Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, with some technical details. Anyone watching CPAC rather than the Raptors tonight will appreciate understanding what the debate is actually about. I will then go broader with my comments and more generally into terms of the current government's approach to the energy industry and, I am going to suggest, the natural resource industry, which is putting us into an incredibly difficult position.

The member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa in Manitoba talked about having the great privilege of spending a lot of time in the Mackenzie Valley. I suspect that there are not many people who have had that opportunity in their lifetime. Therefore, I think it may be a good thing for us all to put on our bucket list, travelling this beautiful country to see some of these beautiful places.

However, I want to talk about the Mackenzie Valley regulation management regime, which was enacted in 1998. It is called the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. It came into being 20 years after the Berger inquiry. It recommended a 10-year moratorium on development in the Mackenzie Valley in order to settle land claims and involve indigenous peoples in modern treaties that provide an integrated, co-managed land and water management regime delivered through a quasi-judicial process for the entire Mackenzie Valley.

The Northwest Territories, in its release, talks about it providing a progressive regulatory environment that integrates and sequences authorizations in one single process. It entrenches indigenous peoples rights and their governments' role and processes. It provides a way to mitigate environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts through conditions set by boards that represent the interests of all NWT residents.

The scope of the MVRMA lays out decisions and functions in a single piece of legislation for federal, territorial and indigenous governments. It eliminates the need for harmonization of substitution agreements and allows for life-of-project regulations from project inception, including conformity of proposals against the land-use plan, environmental screening and assessment to permitting site closure and remediation of major industrial sites. Decision-making is based on lines of evidence that consider science, traditional knowledge, economic impact and mitigation of environmental assessment, and socio-cultural impacts of the project and integration with other resource management legislation, notably the federal and territorial species at risk and broader social economic perspectives.

When we hear that sort of description of the process, I think there are many provinces in the country that perhaps could learn from it. Certainly the territories, in many ways, have moved forward with sort of a tripartite process for environmental assessments that we could all learn from.

As other speakers have noticed, the bill before us really has two parts, and I would say it is the paradox of two very different pieces of legislation that the Liberals have put together. One part is where they are moving back from some measures that we had put in place, which they actually voted for in the last Parliament. I would note that the Liberals voted for Bill C-15 in the last Parliament. They are very

critical now, but they certainly did stand up in support of Bill C-15 and now would make some corrections to it.

• (2150)

This is part A of the bill and it is an amendment to the act, Bill C-15, Northwest Territories Devolution Act in 2014. A major component of Bill C-15 was restructuring the three land and water boards in the Mackenzie Valley into one. After this was passed, there were concerns expressed by the Tlicho and Sahtu first nations who filed lawsuits against Canada. In 2015, there was an injunction. The first part is reversing some of the work that was done around the land and water boards.

It is interesting, as we are trying to understand why that change was put in place, that we did have Neil McCrank as a witness. He talked about the process, about the engagement. Contrary to what the member for Northwest Territories indicated, he clearly said he was not given any direction by the then aboriginal affairs minister, Chuck Strahl, but he was asked to engage and come up with what seemed to be a better process.

It was not that this idea of the amalgamation of the water boards came out of the blue; it came through a process of engagement. One thing he said, which was an important piece of information, was that he always contemplated that the land use plans needed to be done first, so that all the land use plans needed to be in place and then the water board would just be a very technical group to deal with the actual assessment, so very technical. What I had not realized is that the land use plans were not in place. However, there was rationale and consultation, but obviously there was also in the end some resistance to that particular section of the bill.

Perhaps a more concerning part of this piece of legislation is part 2 of Bill C-88, clauses 85 and 86. This expands the Liberals' five-year moratorium on oil and gas exploration in the Beaufort Sea. It amends the Canadian Petroleum Resources Act to allow the Governor in Council to issue orders, when in the national interest, to prohibit oil and gas activities and freeze the terms of existing licences to prevent them while the prohibition is in place.

What we have again is the Liberals politicizing the regulatory and environmental process for resource extraction in Canada's north by giving cabinet sweeping powers to stop projects on the basis of national interest. Who defines the national interest? I would suggest it might be Liberal interests in this case defining what is the national interest. It is certainly not national interests.

We have not been alone. We heard from my colleague from the NDP about the terrific concern when President Obama and our Prime Minister were in the United States, when 20 minutes before he was going to make an announcement, he phoned the premiers with 20 minutes' notice. This is not called engagement. It is not called consultation. It is not called discussion. It is called "We are doing this and, by the way, I am giving them 20 minutes' warning, so maybe they can react when the media calls them".

Government Orders

The premier from the Northwest Territories and many others were scathing in terms of this action by the Prime Minister. They indicated a red alert: the Liberal government of this country wants to turn the north into a park. It does not care about their economic opportunities. It does not care about their future. It sure does not care about engagement and consultations.

We have created in legislation the opportunity for 20-minute phone calls to come any time the government thinks it wants to make a change. With 20 minutes' notice, by the way, Liberals are going to do another moratorium in the national interest. Rightfully, it is absolutely incredible that they are responding to concerns from indigenous communities in part 1 and they are ignoring concerns in part 2, which again is the paradox of this.

● (2155)

I will go to the broader picture, which is what has become incredibly clear over the four years. The government wants to not only shut down our energy industry, it really gives very limited care to our natural resource industry. I will go through a number of measures.

The government is all about superclusters and giving Loblaw's fridges, but it does not understand and it does not care about our rural communities, our resource development and the enormous wealth and jobs it provides for the citizens.

Let us start with Bill C-48, the oil tanker moratorium. The Liberals talked about caring about consultations. How much consultation did they have with the 33 first nations that were represented by Eagle Spirit Energy? They want to build a pipeline in northern British Columbia. Now they cannot do that. There was no consultation. The Liberals arbitrarily said they would put in a moratorium on tankers carrying a specific product.

The Liberals pay no attention to the tankers going from Alaska, down the coast. They pay no attention to the tankers that are coming down the St. Lawrence Seaway, from Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. However, they have cut off an opportunity for communities in northern B.C., through the tanker moratorium, to prosper and have a future for their communities.

It is so bad that the Senate took an unprecedented step. Senators were given the opportunity to review the tanker moratorium. They were able to go out and talk to communities. The Senate committee members had an opportunity. Their advice to the government was, to forget it, to get rid of the bill as it was terrible, wrong and unfair. They said it should not move the bill forward.

Unfortunately, Liberal appointed senators are carrying the day. I understand there was great arm-twisting that went on between the government and its senators. I understand the Senate did not take the advice of the committee members who had the knowledge, who talked to the people, who quite frankly did an amazing analysis of what the issues were. The Senate just ignored the committee, and there was arm twisting. It fits with the Liberals' narrative that they do not care about resource development and want to shut down the oil sands.

The next project, energy east. All of a sudden, energy east was going to be—

● (2200)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if, unlike the last several minutes, we could talk about this bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): As mentioned in the past, I often allow hon. members to stray a bit and bring it back. I am sure the hon. member will be talking about the bill shortly, and it will be pertinent to the discussion today.

The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely talked about the bill. I went from the small picture of the bill and to the broader picture of the philosophy of the government. Obviously it all feeds back into what was a very arbitrary move in part 2 of Bill C-88.

With energy east, new things were imposed on the company that made it uncompetitive. All of a sudden, company representatives had to meet criteria around upstream and downstream emissions. They knew those same criteria were not being imposed on foreign imports. They knew they were putting good money after bad if they continued, so they walked away from the process.

As soon as the Liberals took office, they immediately cancelled northern gateway. The National Energy Board had approved it with conditions and the Liberals just cancelled it. Eventually, we got some very clear guidance from the courts around what needed to be done with indigenous consultation.

The next pipeline on the list was the Trans Mountain. Unfortunately, the Liberals did not bother to do what the courts had told them to do with the northern gateway decision. They were given a recipe and clear directions and they said they would follow that for the Trans Mountain pipeline.

The Liberals have put all their eggs into one basket. I know the Liberals have said they want to shut down the oil sands. They have done everything they can to do so. For some reason, they have decided they will support one pipeline, because they want to play both sides in this debate. They blew the consultation process. We thought they were doing it properly. They talked about how they were putting extra effort into it. However, we found out that the Liberals had not done proper consultations. They did not follow the guidance that was given in the northern gateway decision and they were put back to the drawing board.

Meanwhile, the Liberals bought the pipeline. From all accounts, they spent \$1 billion too much and then they could not build it.

I want to talk a bit about this pipeline. The Trans Mountain pipeline is going to be very important for my riding for a number of reasons, and I will also link this to the Liberals' lack of concern for natural resources.

Government Orders

We have the softwood lumber dispute, which has now been unsolved since the Liberals took office. I have a community on this pipeline route which has just lost one of its mills. The people in the community are saying to please ensure the Trans Mountain pipeline gets built. They know it will not be a long-term solution but it will see them through. They say that the 18 months of construction for the Trans Mountain pipeline will see them through an incredibly difficult time, from the shutdown of their mill, their forestry industry and loss of over 180 well-paying jobs. Certainly, the Liberals' lack of ability for the softwood industry to get that deal done has impacted that community. Now the people in the community are pleading to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built.

Here we have a bill, one for which the Liberals voted. In part A, they are making some changes to deal with the court issue. However, part B is really about the Liberals' anti-energy position, their anti-natural resources position, their desire to shut down the oil stands and their desire to shut down drilling in the Beaufort.

We all recognize we need to move toward a lighter carbon footprint. However, why should we be importing oil when the demand is there? Technology is going to take us there. Meanwhile, Canada needs to benefit from the opportunities we have. The government is totally uninterested and unwilling to do so.

• (2205)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the member. She mentioned there were two aspects to this legislation, but there are three. First, it would repeal the restructuring of the superboard. Second, regulatory items negotiated with the Conservative government of the day, which we consider positive, are included. Third, changes are proposed to the Canadian Petroleum Resources Act.

I was very pleased to hear the hon. member talk about the need to listen to people who were impacted. In 2014, the consultant who was hired heard many presentations in the first round of discussions, during which indigenous governments and the Government of the Northwest Territories sat in the same room. All governments there indicated they did not support the changes. There was not one word of support at that time. However, the consultant still chose to recommend that changes be made in three different sections of the bill.

Bill C-88 is an important bill. It is now supported by the Government of the Northwest Territories, which has provided written support. The Tlicho government, the Gwich'in government and the Sahtu government support it. All the impacted indigenous governments, along with the Government of the Northwest Territories, support it.

Now that the member has been reassured that governments in the Northwest Territories support Bill C-88 and that it is positive, will she vote to support it?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I have to talk about the paradox of the bill. Part 1 has two parts to it. Part 2 has received no consultation. The Governor in Council can impose moratoriums in the national interest. Doing things this way has never happened in our energy industry.

The Liberal government is, without consultation, embedding moratorium measures in legislation, providing governments the ability to be arbitrary in future decisions. Part 2 is fundamentally wrong, in my opinion.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understood, through committee work, that certain first nations opposed certain parts of the bill. Could the hon. member get into more details on that so we can have a greater understanding of it?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, part 2 of the bill would allow the government, in a very arbitrary way, to take action based on a "national interest" that would only be defined by it, affecting not only indigenous communities in the area but certainly the premier. Given his response when the moratorium happened, we can understand how appalled he was with the utter lack of engagement and consultation on the bill.

• (2210)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are primarily here because the previous Conservative government proposed a bill that undermined the constitutional protection of land claims. It is not the first time the Conservatives did this. Of course, they did it with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act, which we had to fix through Bill C-17. It occurred numerous times, and it is a symptom of a larger issue on which I would like the member to comment.

The Harper government decided to bypass the branch of the justice department, which does constitutional checks on bills. This is very expensive for the taxpayers of Canada, because they pay for that branch of the justice department and its constitutional experts. Of course, these checks resulted in a number of Conservatives' bills being challenged and they lost most of those cases.

How does the member justify the Harper government's decision to bypass the constitutional checks of the Department of Justice?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely bizarre coming from that side of the House. The Liberals voted for Bill C-15 in the last Parliament; the NDP voted for it. Now they are suggesting that they voted for a bill that is not constitutional. That is quite bizarre.

We presented a bill that we thought would be helpful and would modernize and move things forward in the Northwest Territories. Obviously, there are some challenges that need to be dealt with, but, first of all, Liberals voted for this bill, and second, they threw in something that makes one wonder about the constitutionality of part 2 of this bill.

Government Orders

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is known for making promises and breaking them. I noticed that quite a number of members are also on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. Again, we see the Liberal government putting together a very different piece of legislation. The hon. member from the other side mentioned there are three parts to the whole thing.

Before taking office, the Liberals promised to table only legislation that stands alone and have now run away from that promise altogether. I would like my hon. colleague to comment on that part of the bill.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, certainly we have talked about the challenge of part 1 and part 2 being totally unconnected pieces of legislation, but I want to take it further. The government, in its budget implementation act, embedded massive changes and the separation of the department into Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, something it definitely promised it would never do. The government referred it to our committee, but the Liberal majority on the committee would not allow for witnesses and allowed for departmental officials only. It went back to the finance committee and we found out there were flaws in the bill that the government had to table amendments to. Who knows what is wrong with the budget implementation act.

We look at Bill S-3 and its sloppy drafting. When it came to us, the government said everything was great and that it would fix a legal problem. It turned out it was a total mess and it had to be taken back to the drawing board.

What is happening is that the Liberals are trying to force legislation through very rapidly at the end of a session, and who knows what flaws are embedded in this particular piece.

• (2215)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, effectively, what we are seeing is a systematic destruction of our natural resource industry by the Liberals. All these pieces of legislation that have come forward speak to that. In particular on this one, more broadly, when the east-west pipeline was cancelled, Premier Frank McKenna at the time said that we needed to have a national debate on whether Canada wants to be a carbon-producing country so we could all understand the implications of basically turning off the taps and what that would mean to this country in terms of equalization and the social fabric of this country. More broadly, do we need a national debate on this issue because of this incremental, systematic destruction of our natural resource sector?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, that was an incredibly important question. Every move the government has made, with one exception, is consistent with the Prime Minister's stated objective to phase out the oil sands and basically destroy Canada's energy sector.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Normally, I am even more pleased to rise in the House, but I want to point out that we are here sitting late in the session. At 10:15 in the evening, I am sure most other people are watching the Raptors game.

I want to point out that the Liberal government is rushing through a lot of legislation at the last minute. We have seen a bill today that was just introduced two weeks ago and that the government is moving closure on. The Liberals have moved closure on this bill in a big rush. They have woken up like a teenager at school and realized that the end of the session is upon them and they have not finished any of their assignments.

I am happy to be here and debate this legislation. I do not have any family or a spouse who would be an issue. However, a lot of members do have young families or spouses. We talk about this being a family-friendly Parliament. A lot of rhetoric often goes on by members on the other side, but we can see that the Liberals are using their powers as government to drive an agenda that is not family-friendly.

I would be remiss, as the shadow health minister, if I did not point out that these late sessions that go until midnight are not good from a sleep perspective. There are a number of more aged members of Parliament. It is not good for them either.

While it is worthwhile debating Bill C-88, the government should have done more careful planning so as to avoid coming to the end of the session and realizing that none of its legislation was passed.

I do not want to be accused of not being relevant tonight, so I will tell the House in advance what I am going to speak about so members will understand where I am going with this whole thing.

First, I am going to talk about what the bill would do and what it proposes to do, and then I will discuss my concerns about the bill. Then, I want to talk a bit about how the bill aligns overall to indigenous reconciliation in Canada, which is on the minds of all Canadians and I am sure is important.

Then, I will speak a bit about how the bill aligns to natural resource sector development. The natural resource sector is a huge part of Canada's GDP and our economic growth. It is an important industry, so every time we make a change to something that will impact that industry, it is important to look at how it will align to the overall plan. We have a strategy for the north. It is important to look at this bill and how it will align to our northern strategy. Does it fit in? Are there any concerns there?

The bill actually has three parts. The first part would amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, from 1998, to reverse provisions that would have consolidated the Mackenzie Valley land and water boards into one.

Government Orders

These provisions were introduced by the former Conservative government within Bill C-15, the Northwest Territories Devolution Act. By way of history, we know that a major component of Bill C-15, where this originated, was the restructuring of the four land and water boards from the Mackenzie Valley into one. Following its passage in 2014, the Tlicho government and the Sahtu Secretariat filed lawsuits against Canada, arguing that the restructuring violated their land claim agreements.

In February 2015, the Northwest Territories Supreme Court issued an injunction preventing the board restructuring provisions from coming into force until a decision on the case was issued. The Liberals paused that legal battle shortly after forming government, and it remains an unresolved issue.

To try to consolidate the land and water boards into one seems to be, in my view, an efficiency, but again, it is important to consult and understand what the people who have the land claims are thinking.

For the government to leave it so late in the session, when there is a lawsuit that pertains to this, is troubling. When we rise from this Parliament, there will be an election, and whatever government is elected will not be able to get back to this matter in a timely way. That is unfortunate.

● (2220)

The second part of the bill would amend the Canada Petroleum Resources Act to allow the Governor in Council to issue orders, when in the national interest, to prohibit oil and gas activities, and it would freeze the terms of existing licences to prevent them from expiring during a moratorium. There are a lot of vague terms there. What is the national interest? How is that determined, and who determines that? I assume it is the Liberal cabinet, and I am not sure it would be necessarily unbiased in its definition. What are oil and gas activities? There is a bit of vagueness in the second part of the bill.

The third part of the bill, as we heard earlier, talks about the regulatory items that were brought forward from the previous Conservative bill, which I have heard members on the opposite side say were actually good. It is not surprising, because the Conservative government has, in the past, done a very good job with respect to regulations that have brought us forward in terms of emission reductions and a number of other items. I do not have much objection to the regulatory items. I agree the Conservative government brought them forward, and they are fine as they are.

Let me go to concerns about the bill. In addition to the litigation cycle that is hanging over this bill, I am concerned with the number of powers the government would have to politically interfere in the development of our natural resources as a result of this bill. We have seen lots of political interference by the government.

Today, I participated in a debate on Bill C-101, a bill about the government politically interfering in the steel market. We have the USMCA agreement with the U.S. and, as members know, there were tariffs on steel for nearly a year that were very punishing to our businesses. In order to get rid of those tariffs, the Liberal government traded away our ability to strategically put tariffs in place on the U.S., which, ironically, is how we got rid of the tariffs on steel in the first place.

It is troubling to me, having the knowledge that the U.S. may again put tariffs on steel, which it is not prohibited from doing under the agreement that has been signed, that the government would immediately virtue-signal to the steel industry that it is doing something. It came forward with a bill two weeks ago, with the dying days of Parliament before us, trying to rush it through in order to make it seem as though it is doing something, when, in fact, it is trying to politically interfere in the free market for steel.

That is not the first time, as I mentioned. There is a pattern of behaviour that I want to talk a bit about. We saw with Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill, that this bill would hugely interfere in projects that are proposed to be built in Canada. It would give the environment minister powers to, for any reason, at any time, reset the process and start the clock again, to veto the process. That is a huge amount of power, and it causes great uncertainty. Those looking to invest and do large projects in Canada are not going to want to invest billions of dollars, knowing that at the whim of the environment minister, projects may die on the vine.

I will talk a bit about the reason the government brings these bills forward and the reaction in the indigenous community. Part of the bill would allow the government to put a moratorium on oil and gas development. I heard in some of the speeches earlier the comment that just before Christmas 2016, the Prime Minister travelled to Washington, D.C. to make an announcement with then U.S. president Barack Obama, even though there had been no consultation with northerners, despite consistent rhetoric about consulting with Canada's indigenous peoples prior to decision-making. The Prime Minister's Office made this decision and, with 20 minutes' notice, elected leaders in Canada's north were made aware of the announcement. Some of the comments that followed from the community are probably worthy of note.

● (2225)

Wally Schumann, who is the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment and the Minister of Infrastructure for the Northwest Territories, said:

I guess we can be very frank because we're in front of the committee.

When it first came out, we never got very much notice on the whole issue of the moratorium and the potential that was in the Beaufort Sea. There were millions and millions, if not billions, of dollars in bid deposits and land leases up there. That took away any hope we had of developing the Beaufort Sea.

The mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, Mervyn Gruben, said:

I agree the Liberals should be helping us. They shut down our offshore gasification and put a moratorium right across the whole freaking Arctic without even consulting us. They never said a word to us.

The Hon. Jackie Jacobson stated:

It's so easy to sit down here and make judgments on people and lives that are 3,500 clicks away, and make decisions on our behalf, especially with that moratorium on the Beaufort. That should be taken away, lifted, please and thank you. That is going to open up and give jobs to our people—training and all the stuff we're wishing for.

Government Orders

Mervyn Gruben further said, “We’re proud people who like to work for a living.” He spoke of the increasing reliance on social assistance.

Here again we see that the people who are living there are looking for that economic development they so badly need, but the current government, without any consultation whatsoever, shut it down and put a moratorium in place. Clearly, that is not acceptable.

The pattern of reversing what Conservatives have proposed or put in place is not new to this House. I would say that it has been done on a number of bills. I will pick a small sampling to back up the point.

We had a housing first program that was lifting people out of homelessness. Of the people on that program, 73% ended up going into stable housing. When the Liberal government came in, it decided it was going to have its national housing strategy, but instead of keeping something that was working, it tossed the baby out with the bathwater on that one.

I would say the same was true regarding a bill in the previous government, Bill C-24, which suggested that if people had become a Canadian citizen and gone off to fight against Canada, their citizenship would be revoked. We see that we are in a situation now with people who have been involved in terrorism trying to come back and the government is struggling to get the evidentiary proof to file charges. That would be another example.

One of the first bills the Liberals passed in this Parliament was to remove the financial transparency and accountability for the first nations people on the funding they receive.

Therefore, there is a previous pattern of behaviour of the Liberal government reversing things the Conservatives did when those things were not necessarily bad things.

With respect to the themes we are talking about today, I have expressed some concerns about the bill, but I want to talk about how this bill aligns to indigenous reconciliation, because there has been a lot of rhetoric in the current government about lining up to indigenous reconciliation and consulting with indigenous people. I would say that it is forever consulting but never listening.

If we think about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, early in the mandate of the government it unanimously adopted all 94, and where has the action on those gone? Crickets.

We have seen the mess of the inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women has been, with the number of people who have resigned en route and the fact that many indigenous people feel they were not allowed to participate. Here we are four years down the road, with \$98 million or something like that having been spent, and no action.

Many indigenous people felt the tanker ban, Bill C-48, would be bad for them, especially those who were trying to get the Eagle Spirit pipeline built. They were saying this was going to deprive them of an opportunity to have the kind of economic development they need, the same kind of economic opportunity that we see in Bill C-88, which the people there are looking for. Now we have this moratorium on the Beaufort Sea.

Another issue we need to consider when looking at Bill C-88 is how it fits into our northern strategy. If we think about the needs of people who are living in the north, we know there are a number of issues. We know that there is a food insecurity issue in the north. Will this help with that issue? When the government is depriving people of economic development, I am not sure that it is helping that situation.

• (2230)

In terms of the broadband problem, the government has had four years to address the issue. I know I have an inventor in my riding, and I put ideas forward to the innovation minister that for less than \$20 million, I have somebody who knows how to put that kind of broadband Internet access across the north, with satellite balloons that are solar powered, incidentally, but to no avail.

The health care in the north has huge issues, from dental hygiene to tuberculosis and just even access to care. There are those things and the sovereignty issues. We have sovereignty in the north, but we have Russia and China really starting to pay a lot of attention to that area. We need to have a plan for how we are going to defend that area, along with the natural resources that are there and what we need to do to protect those. I do not see any plan or any discussion about how this fits into that northern strategy. I think that is something that needs to be looked at.

Another thing that is really affecting the northern area is climate change. We are seeing a thawing of the permafrost. As an engineer who used to work in construction, I am paying close attention to some of the horrendous things that are happening, in terms of roads that are developing huge crevices as the permafrost shifts and buildings that are collapsing after months of construction because the foundations are no longer solid. There really does not seem to be a strategy for how we are going to make sure that, in the north, we are setting them up for success, that we are protecting the assets that are in place. These are places where, if people cannot get to them, any hope of economic development would be lost. There is something to be done there.

Many times this week we have heard that the government has a tax plan, not a climate plan. This is just one more thing that I would add to what needs to be part of a comprehensive climate plan, how we are going to address the results that we see as the climate shifts.

As we look to this bill, in the dying days of the 42nd Parliament, it looks to me, again, like something that may not even make it through in the remaining days that we have, and it may not have a good chance of being implemented. Certainly, with all of the things the government promised to do but never did, I reflect on the 42nd Parliament and I think, “What did the government really do?” The Canada child benefit and the legalization of marijuana, I will give it those two. Other than that, I am not really sure what has been accomplished.

As we look to the summary of Bill C-88, we have talked about what the bill does, some of the concerns of the political interference that exists and how people are not being listened to in the north. People want this economic development, and the government now has the power to shut them down and is using that power.

Government Orders

I do not think the actions being taken by the government align well with the overall theme of indigenous reconciliation. I feel this will be more fanning of the flame, when people in the north want this economic development and the government is standing in the way or is interfering in the ability of the people to support themselves. That will not go over well.

I also think it is part of a bigger rhetoric on the natural resources sector. We know that the carbon tax has been a huge problem for small businesses. In my riding I have a lot of refineries. Now the government has exempted all the large emitters, 90%, from the carbon tax, but it has also put on a clean fuel tax, which is costing billions of dollars. One refinery in my riding has just gone up for sale, and another one has said that if it does not get an exemption from those clean fuel taxes, it may be unsustainable as well.

The government has a clean pattern of undermining the natural resources sector. We know that it has killed all kinds of natural resource projects: energy east, the northern gateway, the Petronas LNG and, of course, the Trans Mountain pipeline has gone absolutely nowhere.

Until the government can come with a clear message about the natural resources plan and support for that plan, and support for people in the north who want that economic development and are looking for the government to support them and not interfere, then I think that Bill C-88 is not going to go a long way in achieving what is hoped.

• (2235)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I heard the member say that she agreed with the courts. I interpret that to mean that she views the creation of the superboard as something that, in hindsight, was wrong.

I would like the member to remind us how many regional boards the previous legislation, Bill C-15, was going to kill in anticipation of the creation of the superboard.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite sounds as if he was here in the previous Parliament and so would have more access to those details. I do not know exactly how many boards, but I do know, from an efficiency point of view, that if we could collect input on things that are related, like land and water, by a group of folks who are dedicated to that, it is always a cost savings and it usually results in some synergy. That said, it is important to listen to the voices of the people who are involved and get their opinion on it. If they are not in favour of coming together, then it is not going to be a harmonious institution. That is the way I see both sides of that.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated some of the member's comments. First of all, for her recognition of the permafrost thawing because of climate change, I thank her very much. The member asked what we were doing, and I have had a press conference where I announced some research money for exactly that, to deal with how that is affecting our highways. We also have a program for the adaptation of infrastructure. I thought it was very forward-thinking of the finance minister to put into our infrastructure plan that prevention and adaptation to climate change in infrastructure be eligible.

However, it was music to my ears to hear that concern for climate change. The indigenous affairs critic mentioned that she felt that

everyone knew that we need to cut greenhouse gases. Therefore, it was music to my ears when the member said that we need a comprehensive plan. I am curious as to what she thinks will be part of the Conservatives' comprehensive plan.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I would like the member know, with no spoiler alerts, that he is going to see a great plan come from the Conservatives on climate change in due time.

That said, on the permafrost issue, this is not something new. It is not something that has happened just this year. It was clear at the beginning of the mandate. I am not sure why the Liberal government has done nothing. There was no plan. I did not see a budget item in budget 2019 that addressed any of the infrastructure issues that are related to permafrost, which points again to the fact that the Liberals do not have a climate plan; they have a tax plan, and that is unfortunate.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the comments from the member for Sarnia—Lambton and how she drew the subject of health into it. However, the point of her speech that I really picked up on was where she talked about how the current government is reversing legislation and, in many cases, very important legislation that gave people who wanted to invest in this country a comfort in terms of what their process and regulations were going to be. One that comes to mind that she did not mention was Bill C-69 and navigable waters.

I used to be a municipal mayor and I remember the navigable waters act, which drove municipalities across the country crazy, because if there was just a tiny body of water that could float a canoe, we had to get permits through Transport Canada to do anything, such as minor road repairs. It was a very onerous piece of legislation. Unfortunately, the Liberals and the NDP painted it as an environmental nightmare that we had got rid of protection for waters. To be frank, in all the time after that piece of legislation was enacted, I am not aware of one issue of environmental concern that came about because of that particular change to the navigable waters act.

I wonder if the member could make some comments in terms of perhaps the difficulty of reversing legislation that protects the environment but ensures that people who want to move forward in this country can do so with comfort, knowing that they have reasonable regulations in place.

Government Orders

● (2240)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent work on this file and for her question. It is actually a very timely question, because I received a call today from the Township of Enniskillen in my riding, which is very concerned about Bill C-68 and the new definitions under Bill C-68 and Bill C-69 of what, in fact, will fall under this bureaucracy. We have a lot of farmer fields that get what I would call deep puddles. We have agricultural drainage ditches that used to be excluded from the definition but are no longer excluded, which will expose them to a huge amount of bureaucracy with respect to controlling fish habitat.

This is what happens when we do not go to the necessary detail level and take our time to really consult broadly and understand what the impacts would be when the legislation is implemented.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been to the north several times and have listened to seniors and to members of the organizations helping them. They are crying out for more resources. At the same time, they say that if the economic situation in the north can be improved, that is definitely a big driver. In our previous Conservative government, we viewed the north as a driving force for economic development as well.

Let us look at other nations, like China and Russia. They are both Arctic nations and they are now exploring a lot of opportunities for economic development.

Let us look at Canada and our Liberal government. Right now, the Liberals are arbitrarily hindering things and creating barriers to economic development in the north. I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure why the government has such a war on natural resources. Across the country, we see 100,000 jobs lost in the west in the oil and gas industry. We see that the softwood lumber sector has been without a deal since 2015. I remember the foreign affairs minister telling us it was a huge priority, yet here we are four years later, still with no deal and mills are closing across the country.

The fact remains that the Prime Minister is against fossil fuels. He has said multiple times that he wished he could shut down the oil sands and he was sorry he could not shut them down faster. This is just another example with this northern petroleum opportunity that the government is shutting down.

In Canada, our oil and gas sector is a huge benefit not just to us but from a climate change point of view, if we could get our oil and gas to either coast, we could sell it to many people in the developing world who are building coal plants. We could reduce their footprint by a factor of five. Would that not be a great thing?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member said it was important to have reconciliation with this bill, and the fact that the three first nations affected, the Sahtu, the Gwich'in and the Tlicho, are all in support of this bill. Therefore, I could hardly imagine that reconciliation would be voting against those three first nations. I hope that when the member says that she thinks it should be reconciliation, she means that she will vote for the bill, which is for all the first nations that this affects.

● (2245)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is a very important thing. One of the things I have observed is that the government may think there is reconciliation and agreement at a certain level with the different tribes that are participating, but in many cases it does not have the support of all the people. It is almost like ratifying a union agreement where everyone needs to get on board. It is clear from the comments that I have heard that not everybody is on board and either more consultation is needed, or listening to the existing commentary and opening up that moratorium would be good.

Ms. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Markham—Unionville.

I appreciate having the opportunity to speak to Bill C-88 at third reading stage.

This bill is divided into two parts, as we have heard. Part 1 amends the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act while part 2 amends the Canada Petroleum Resources Act. It is the second part of the bill that I will primarily be addressing in the time that I have today.

Simply put, this part of Bill C-88 makes a mockery of the government's claim to seriously consult with aboriginal and Inuit peoples. Furthermore, it proves yet again that the Liberal Party is no friend of the Canadian oil and gas sector.

Part 2 of Bill C-88 imposes a five-year moratorium on the development of offshore oil and gas projects in the Beaufort Sea. This is not surprising for anyone who has followed the government with even a modicum of attention. The Liberals have proven time and time again that they are opposed to Canada's energy sector. Whether it be the carbon tax or Bill C-48 banning tanker traffic off of British Columbia's northern coast or the 180-amendment, Frankenstein monster of a bill that is the "no more pipelines" Bill C-69, or the cancellation of the northern gateway and energy east pipelines, or the continued bungling of the Trans Mountain extension, we can always count on the Liberals to find a way to make life miserable for workers in our oil and gas sector.

At every opportunity, the Prime Minister has politicized the regulatory and environmental assessment processes. Bill C-88 follows this already established pattern. As a result, it is no wonder Canada has been bleeding foreign investment funds and suffered economic stagnation under the Prime Minister.

Bill C-88 is about more than just the Liberals' clear disdain for our natural resource sector. This bill exposes the Prime Minister's false claims of consultation.

Government Orders

Under the previous Conservative government, we made a concerted effort to devolve power to the territories to ensure that they had the decision-making powers they needed to develop their abundance of natural resources in a safe, secure and sustainable manner. I will not pretend that we got it right every step of the way but there was no doubt about our goal and our honest attempt to transfer power to the territorial level.

In one afternoon, the Prime Minister derailed years of progress by the territories toward full self-governance. At a glitzy press conference in Washington designed to garner praise from the international press, he announced that Canada would be placing a moratorium on offshore drilling in the north. This announcement came as quite the surprise to the governments of the territories. Some of them received less than an hour's notice that the Prime Minister was about to throw their economic futures out the window so he could get a nice write-up in *Vanity Fair*.

Minister Wally Schumann of the Northwest Territories described how they found out about the ban and the impact it will have on our north. He said:

When it first came out, we never got very much notice on the whole issue of the moratorium and the potential that was in the Beaufort Sea. There were millions and millions, if not billions, of dollars in bid deposits and land leases up there. That took away any hope we had of developing the Beaufort Sea.

Really, we should not be surprised. The Prime Minister has always believed in a paternalistic, "Ottawa knows best" relationship with the territories, provinces and indigenous peoples. Mayor Mervyn Gruben put it well when speaking at committee in Ottawa. He said:

It's so easy to sit down here and make judgments on people and lives that are 3,500 clicks away, and make decisions on our behalf, especially with that moratorium on the Beaufort. That should be taken away, lifted, please and thank you. That is going to open up and give jobs to our people—training and all the stuff we're wishing for.

The Prime Minister has decided the future for the north and he is using this bill to make that happen but he never stopped and asked what the people in the north want, and they do not want this.

● (2250)

Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod stated clearly how his government felt about the announcement. He said:

It feels like a step backward.

We spent a lot of time negotiating a devolution agreement and we thought the days were gone when we'd have unilateral decisions made about the North in some faraway place like Ottawa, and that northerners would be making the decisions about issues that affected northerners.

Then premier of Nunavut, Peter Taptuna, shared McLeod's frustrations. He said:

We do want to be getting to a state where we can make our own determination of our priorities, and the way to do that is gain meaningful revenue from resource development.

And at the same time, when one potential sources of revenue is taken off the table, it puts us back at practically Square 1 where Ottawa will make the decision for us.

In my role as shadow minister for transportation, I have had the chance to meet with companies and groups seeking to develop in the north to provide jobs and future prospects to Inuit and other northern Canadians. I heard one phrase repeated over and over again: one big park. Stakeholders told me over and over again that they feel the Liberals do not care about their economic development, but are only

interested in making northern Canada one big park even if that means ignoring the will of indigenous peoples.

As I prepared these remarks and delved into Bill C-88, I could not help but see the parallels between the top-down "Ottawa knows best" bill and Bill C-48, the Liberals' ideological oil tanker moratorium act. Bill C-48 is called the oil tanker moratorium act, but everyone knows it is an anti-pipeline bill designed to eliminate any possibility of a pipeline to tidewater through northern British Columbia.

The Prime Minister has a pattern of imposing his will on indigenous groups while still claiming to consult. Just like they did when banning northern development through Bill C-88, the Liberal government pushed ahead on Bill C-48 without consulting indigenous stakeholders.

When testifying at transport committee on Bill C-48, Gary Alexcee, hereditary chief of the Nisga'a Nation for the community of Gingolx, made the following comments about the Liberal government's consultation process:

With no consultation, the B.C. first nations groups being cut off economically with no opportunity to even sit down with the government to further negotiate Bill C-48.

In fact, Eagle Spirit Energy, a first nations owned energy company, is taking the government to court over Bill C-48 because of, among other reasons, the very lack of consultation. In cancelling the northern gateway pipeline, the Prime Minister ignored the input of over 30 first nations along the route who have revenue agreements in place. Again, this is the Liberals' "Ottawa knows best" mentality in practice, yet the Prime Minister continues to claim time and again to consult with indigenous stakeholders.

I oppose this Ottawa-centric anti-Canadian energy industry mentality and it is for that reason that I will be voting against Bill C-88.

● (2255)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-88 is intended to enhance the involvement of indigenous people in the regulatory process. When changes were brought forward by the Conservative government in 2014, everyone was against them, including industry. They were saying, "Do not change the process. This is a process they are familiar with. Everyone is used to it. Let us continue to use it."

However, the government of the day decided to get rid of the regional boards. It said that land and water boards were not needed. It wanted to have one superboard and it plowed ahead, even though everyone recommended against it.

When I hear the hon. member talk about disdain for industry by introducing this bill, it makes me wonder why she would say that when industry supports the bill. When she says that the bill is going to be detrimental to industry, she is forgetting that the bill is going to enhance the involvement of indigenous people. Is she saying industry is more important than the indigenous people of the north?

Government Orders

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question, although I will dispute his characterization of what I said in my speech. He is trying to confuse the issue, when, in fact, the issue that most indigenous communities have and that we have with this bill is part 2.

We have heard that indigenous peoples and communities were not consulted on this part of the bill. We know that part 2 would amend the Canada Petroleum Resources Act to allow the Governor in Council to issue orders, when in the national interest, to prohibit oil and gas activities and freeze the terms of existing licences to prevent them from expiring during a moratorium. Again, we have heard that indigenous communities were not consulted on this part of the legislation.

Further, this bill reveals a full rejection of calls from elected territorial leaders for increased control of their natural resources. We heard that. I am deeply concerned that with Bill C-88, the Liberals will continue to entrench into law their ability to continue to arbitrarily and without consultation block oil and gas projects.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are consistently trying to confuse as they ask questions tonight. I have described part 1 and part 2 as the paradox in this bill. Part 1 is about the consultation process and reflecting on what happened, and part 2 is about ignoring the appropriate consultation process.

With regard to part 2, I would like my colleague to talk about how it is consistent with almost every single piece of legislation the government introduces in Parliament in being anti-resource development and against support for our industry.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the very good work my colleague does as the shadow minister for indigenous and northern affairs and how well she keeps us informed about what is happening on the files she oversees on behalf of our Conservative caucus and on the work the committee is doing.

It is my understanding that with part 2, the Liberals are further politicizing the regulatory and environmental processes for resource extraction in Canada's north. They have consistently politicized these processes, as I shared in my earlier remarks. As the shadow minister for transportation, we heard testimony from witnesses on Bill C-48 and Bill C-69 who told us very clearly that first nations communities were not consulted when it came to the introduction of these bills. In fact, many of the changes being proposed in these bills were simply the result of direction that had been included in the mandate letters for these ministers. There was actually no evidence to support what the minister was proposing when it came to making those changes.

• (2300)

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Before I get into the details of the bill, it is important to look at the context of what has been happening over the past three years and what is starting to be a pattern of the Liberal government. The decisions it makes consistently increase red tape and bureaucracy and are mostly anti-resource development. This bill is no different.

I would like to talk about a few areas that show the context, which will then show that this follows a pattern that adds to what is becoming an increasing concern in the country, which is the ability to move our natural resources forward.

When the Prime Minister took office, there were three private companies willing to invest more than \$30 billion to build three nation-building pipelines that would have generated tens of thousands of jobs and billions in economic opportunities. The Prime Minister and his cabinet killed two of them and put the Trans Mountain expansion on life support. Bill C-69 would block all future pipelines.

In addition, the government has made a number of arbitrary decisions regarding natural resource development, with absolutely no consultation with those impacted. Today, we only need to look at what is happening in Alberta with the hundreds of thousands of job losses. Who has ever heard of a premier having to decrease the production of a needed resource throughout the country and the world because we simply cannot get resources to the market? This is because of the government's failure.

The northern gateway project was approved by the former government in June 2014. It had a number of conditions on it, just like the current Trans Mountain project does. In November 2015, just one month after being elected, the Prime Minister killed the project without any hesitation. It was subject to a court challenge. When we finally heard what came out of that court challenge, to be frank, it was nothing that could not be overcome. We could have dealt with that.

The court decision told the Prime Minister to engage in consultation in a more appropriate and balanced way. The court really gave what I would call a recipe for perhaps fixing some problems with the process. Did he wait for the court decision? No. He went out and killed it flat. With this approved pipeline, he did not wait for a court decision or wait to see how it could move forward. He decided that he did not want that one.

I think we are all pretty aware of the Trans Mountain pipeline as it has been moving along for many years. We know that many first nations support it and hope to see it go through, as they see enormous opportunities for their communities. Of course, others are against it.

What happened in this case? When the Liberals formed government, they decided they had to have an additional consultation process. However, did they follow the directions of the court in the northern gateway decision, in which the court was very clear about what the government had to do in order to do consultations properly? Apparently not.

When the court decision came down, we learned otherwise. To be frank, it was much to my surprise, because the Liberals talked about how well they were consulting and that they were putting this additional process in place. The court said that the Liberals did not do the job. What they did was send a note-taker and not a decision-maker.

Government Orders

• (2305)

The fact that the Liberals did not consult properly on the Trans Mountain pipeline is strictly on their laps, as they had very clear guidance from the northern gateway decision, and they did not do what they needed to do. They should be ashamed of themselves. Had they done a proper process, they likely would not have had to buy the pipeline, the pipeline would be under construction right now and we would be in a lot better place as a country. With respect to the Trans Mountain pipeline, the blame for where we are on that pipeline lies strictly on the laps of the Liberals.

I also want to note, in spite of what people say, that the courts have said that the process was okay, so it had nothing to do with environmental legislation by the previous government or with anything the Conservatives put in place. It was—

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I note that you just notified the member that he only had several minutes left. However, his entire speech has not made even the vaguest reference to Bill C-88. Hopefully, in the last couple of minutes, he will refer to the bill we are discussing.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon is aware, of course, that the rule of relevance is not strictly applied. However, I am confident that the member will focus on the bill as he goes forward.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberals' execution of a flawed process.

Energy east was another one. The former Liberal MP who is now the mayor of Montreal was very opposed to it. I am not sure of all the pieces that went into the Liberals' decision-making, but all of a sudden, the downstream and upstream emissions of energy east had to be measured. As people have rightfully asked, has that happened for the tankers coming down the St. Lawrence from Saudi Arabia and Venezuela? Did that happen with the bailout of Bombardier?

The Liberals created regulatory barriers. Trans Mountain hung on for a long time before it finally said it was a no go. I think energy east saw the writing on the wall, knowing that the government was not going to be its friend and create an environment in which to get work done. It could see the new rules coming into place, so it walked. What a double standard. Canadians who extract energy in an environmentally sound and environmentally friendly way have had standards applied to their ability to move oil through a pipeline that no other country in the world imposes on companies in terms of upstream and downstream emissions.

The final part of Bill C-88 is the drilling moratorium. It is perhaps the most troubling. It would allow the federal cabinet to prohibit oil and gas activities in the Northwest Territories or offshore of Nunavut if it were in the national interest. This is a much broader power than currently exists, which allows Canada to prohibit that activity only for safety or environmental reasons or for social problems of a serious nature.

As I have noted, Bill C-88 is another anti-energy policy from the Liberal government. It is driving investment out of Canada, costing Canadian workers their jobs and increasing poverty in the north. Like Bill C-69 before it, Bill C-88 would politicize oil and gas extraction by expanding the power of cabinet to block economic development, and it would increase red tape that proponents would

face before getting shovels in the ground. Further, Bill C-88 reveals a full rejection of calls from elected leaders in the territories for the independence they desire.

• (2310)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member about the changes brought forward in 2014 to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. The act was created through the negotiation of the land claim agreements, which are constitutionally protected. The Conservative government of the day decided to move forward and make changes, which were challenged.

Why did the Conservatives make these changes and expect them to stick, when they knew that they were breaching the Constitution?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, in 2014, the Liberals voted for it. However, all of a sudden, in 2015, there was a whole mind change on the political process and the reason was to gain more votes. This was the main reason they voted against it, and for the same reason energy east was cancelled, northern gateway was cancelled and TMX is still waiting for final approval.

We talk about the environment. If the Liberals were really concerned about the environment, where were they when eight million litres of sewage water was dumped into the St. Lawrence? What did they do? Did they ask questions of anybody about what was going on? It is just nitpicking here and there.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the member for being able to get away with spending nine minutes and 30 seconds of a 10-minute speech not talking about the bill at all. Therefore, because he only got to speak to the bill for 30 seconds, I am going to give him lots of time now to talk more about this particular bill, Bill C-88.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, let me refer to some comments by one of my favourite former Liberal MPs, Martha Hall Findlay. On Bill C-69, a number of former Liberals have been very open about their concern. Martha Hall Findlay is a very respected former MP who said that it is the “antithesis of what the regulatory reform effort hopes to achieve.” She also said, “But in its 392 pages, the word 'competitiveness' appears only twice. Neither the word 'economy' nor the phrase 'economic growth' appear at all.”

We have new environmental legislation that most people call the no-more-pipelines bill.

She went on to note that the bill would “create enormous uncertainty, more red tape and increased court challenges. And not only for the energy sector...every major infrastructure project in Canada for years to come.” This is from Martha Findlay, a former Liberal member of Parliament.

I do not know if members are starting to see a pattern. The Liberals have killed pipelines and put forward legislation preventing new pipelines from being built.

Government Orders

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Liberals on the opposite side question relevance, but I would suggest that every single point you made was relevant, and that is talking about how part 2 of Bill C-88 is consistent with their anti-energy policies.

Could you quickly mention some of the other legislation that they have introduced that is so detrimental?

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member to direct her comments to the Chair. Of course, when one says “you”, one is referring to the Chair. I do not think that is what the member intended.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Mr. Speaker, one of my favourite shows is *Ice Road Truckers*, which takes place up north. When I get home late at night, I can watch it. According to the show, people up north can pay \$38 for a jug of milk or a loaf of bread and \$50 to \$60 for a piece of meat. The cost of some things can be 50 or 60 times more than anywhere else. However, things such as extracting gas up north would create the opportunity for the northern people and would take them out of poverty.

• (2315)

[Translation]

NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the third reading stage of Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

[English]

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because the Conservatives do not want to see the legislation advance, I give notice that with respect to the third reading of Bill C-88, An Act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

This is legislation that the territorial government wants to see advance. Hopefully, the Conservatives will find a way.

THIRD READING

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-88, An Act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a couple of things are not lost on me this evening. First is the fact that the Raptors were down by three points with about six minutes left. That may have changed; I do not know. Maybe the page can provide an update on the latest score.

The other thing that is not lost on me is the fact that the government House leader just came down with the hammer again, effectively stopping debate on an issue that the members on this side of the House feel is important to speak about.

We heard the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo speak about this issue earlier tonight. The member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa spoke about this. I have been in this House most of the time during this debate, and that was one of the best assessments of this piece of legislation and the consequential impact it would have on our natural resource sector. I mentioned earlier, when the hon. member was speaking, that it was almost like taking a knife to a gun fight with respect to some of the questions that were coming, not just because of the member's experience working in the Mackenzie Valley as a biologist and understanding these issues, but because the knowledge the member has of our natural resource sector is just incredible.

The hammer comes down once again, and it comes down because there are nine days left in this session of Parliament, assuming we are not recalled in the summer for some other circumstance, and the government has completely mismanaged the legislative agenda of the House. The Liberals had an opportunity to bring this legislation forward far in advance of where we are this evening at 11:17 p.m. on June 10. Now that their backs are up against the wall, not just on this piece of legislation but on other pieces of legislation, the hammer drops tonight. They will no longer be debating this issue, in spite of its importance.

It is not just this piece of legislation that is a problem. It is an incremental, systematic destruction of our natural resource sector through other pieces of legislation. I will remind members of them: Bill C-69, Bill C-48, Bill C-86 and Bill C-55. All of these pieces of legislation are intended to effectively handcuff our natural resource sector and bring Alberta and Saskatchewan and the western producers and manufacturers of oil and gas in this country not just to their knees, but begging on their knees for the government to do what it needs to do and not destroy this important sector of our economy.

This sector is important for many reasons: not just for the transfer payments that it has provided so that various regions of Canada can prosper from the success of our natural resource sector, but also because the social fabric of this country is largely based on the revenues that are created from our natural resource industry. Every single Canadian depends on what our natural resource sector can provide: proper health care, proper social safety systems and the ability to look after the most vulnerable in our society, including indigenous communities, which have prospered in the past as a result of Canada's success. That success is not just economic. It is our success from an environmental standpoint, to make sure we get our product out of our country in an environmentally sustainable manner. It is sad that we are at this point.

Government Orders

Bill C-88, an act to amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, consists of two parts. Part 1 amends the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, which was initially passed under the Chrétien Liberals in 1998 and amended by the former Conservative government within Bill C-15, the Northwest Territories Devolution Act.

● (2320)

I will remind the House that a major component of Bill C-15 was the restructuring of the four land and water boards in the Mackenzie Valley into one. Following passage in 2014, the Tlicho government and the Sahtu Secretariat filed lawsuits against Canada, arguing that restructuring violated their land claim agreements.

In February 2015, the Northwest Territories Supreme Court issued an injunction preventing the board restructuring provisions from coming into force until a decision on the case was issued. The Liberals paused that legal battle shortly after forming government, and there is more to that.

More concerning about Bill C-88 is part 2, with respect to the Liberals five-year moratorium on oil and gas exploration.

Bill C-88, and particular part 2, is also quite concerning as is the five year moratorium on oil and gas exploration in the Beaufort Sea. The bill would amend the Canada Petroleum Resource Act to allow the Governor in Council to issue orders, when in the national interest, to prohibit oil and gas activities and freeze the terms of existing licenses to prevent them from expiring during that moratorium.

Again, as I said earlier, this is a consistent and systemic pattern of the Liberal government to want to control almost every aspect of our natural resource sector through Governor in Council orders. That would place the decision-making powers effectively in the hands of the minister and in the hands of the executive branch of government through cabinet order.

Think about this as an investor looking to invest in Canada. One of the things investors look for the most is certainty. They want to know that if they are going to park their money in the type of investments within our natural resource sector, that it is going to provide a profit, not a bad word, especially for those who are investing. They need to know whether there is actual certainty in the process itself.

After having invested all this money to investigate the potential of investing in Canada, all of a sudden it goes to cabinet or the minister and the minister decides again, like the government House leader did tonight, to bring down that hammer on the investment, saying the government is not going to approve this for whatever reason, mostly based on ideology. If I am planning on investing multi-billions of dollars into the Canadian resource sector, why would I do that?

It is not just that uncertainty it has created, but we also have a government that has clearly indicated to the investment community in the natural resource sector its intent, through its ideology, of flipping the switch.

The Prime Minister effectively stated as much in his travels around the world. When he spoke in Paris and said that he would

shut down the natural resource sector tomorrow if he could, did he think what he said would not travel back to Canada? That message was heard loud and clear not just in Canada, but in North America by those investors who were willing to look to Canada as a safe haven to invest and grow their businesses.

It is particularly troubling when the government says, as the Government House Leader did just 10 minutes ago, that it is going to shut down debate. It is important that voices in the House speak to that issue in particular. It is important that Canadians know what the incremental systemic plan is of the government to shut down our natural resource sector and effectively chase investment away.

● (2325)

Where is that investment going? Clearly, all of that money is going down to the United States. We saw that with Trans Mountain. The government bought the Trans Mountain pipeline. Where did that money go? It went back down to Houston to be reinvested into a more friendly environment for investment into natural resources. Arguably, the American economy is firing on all cylinders, being led by the natural resource sector. It is building pipelines like it has never built them before. It is building deep water ports like it has never built them before. All of this is to make sure it gets its products to global markets where the demand is great. That demand is going to continue, whether Canada and a Liberal government decide it is not going to participate in that or whether other competitors of Canada, like the United States, decide they are going to make sure they get their products to market. All of these incremental pieces of legislation that have come up, this one within the last nine days of Parliament, are intended and designed to shut down our natural resource sector.

Today, in an unprecedented move, premiers from six provinces signed a letter. I am not sure in the history of this country whether that has been done. There have been other issues of national importance where premiers have gathered together and discussed with the prime minister certain issues that were impacting them, but collectively, as a group, I am not certain whether that has been done. They sent a letter to the Prime Minister today, which is public. I want to read it into the record so that Canadians are clear on just how serious this issue is, not just on a regional level in Alberta and Saskatchewan, but now we are finding out with Manitoba regarding the hydro electric line that the government is getting in the way of, which is effectively a clean energy project. There is significant concern within the confederation, so much so that these six premiers wrote this letter today.

It states:

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing on behalf of the Governments of Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Collectively, our five provinces and territory represent 59 per cent of the Canadian population and 63 per cent of Canada's GDP. We are central to Canada's economy and prosperity, and it is of the utmost importance that you consider our concerns with bills C-69 and C-48.

Government Orders

Canadians across the country are unified in their concern about the economic impacts of the legislation such as it was proposed by the House of Commons. In this form, the damage it would do to the economy, jobs and investment will echo from one coast to the other. Provincial and territorial jurisdiction must be respected. Provinces and territories have clear and sole jurisdiction over the development of their non-renewable natural resources, forestry resources, and the generation and production of electricity. Bill C-69 upsets the balance struck by the constitutional division of powers by ignoring the exclusive provincial powers over projects relating to these resources. The federal government must recognize the exclusive role provinces and territories have over the management of our non-renewable natural resource development or risk creating a Constitutional crisis.

Bill C-69, as originally drafted, would make it virtually impossible to develop critical infrastructure, depriving Canada of much needed investment. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, between 2017 and 2018, the planned investment value of major resource sector projects in Canada plunged by \$100 billion....

That money is gone.

It continues:

[This is] an amount equivalent to 4.5 per cent of Canada's gross domestic product. To protect Canada's economic future, we, collectively, cannot afford to overlook the uncertainty and risk to future investment created by Bill C-69.

I would argue, incrementally, Bill C-88 as well.

It further states:

Our five provinces and territory stand united and strongly urge the government to accept Bill C-69 as amended by the Senate, in order to minimize the damage to the Canadian economy. We would encourage the Government of Canada and all members of the House of Commons to accept the full slate of amendments to the bill.

● (2330)

The Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment, and Natural Resources heard 38 days of testimony from 277 witnesses including indigenous communities, industry, Premiers, and independent experts. Based on that comprehensive testimony, the committee recommended significant amendments to the bill, which were accepted by the Senate as a whole. We urge you to respect that process, the committee's expertise, and the Senate's vote.

If the Senate's amendments are not respected, the bill should be rejected, as it will present insurmountable roadblocks for major infrastructure projects across the country and will further jeopardize jobs, growth and investor confidence.

Similarly, Bill C-48 [and again I would argue Bill C-88] threatens investor confidence, and the tanker moratorium discriminates against western Canadian crude products. We were very disappointed that the Senate did not accept the recommendation to the Senate Committee on Transport and Communications that the bill not be reported. We would urge the government to stop pressing for the passage of this bill which will have detrimental effects on national unity and for the Canadian economy as a whole.

Our governments are deeply concerned with the federal government's disregard, so far, of the concerns raised by our provinces and territory related to these bills. As it stands, the federal government appears indifferent to the economic hardships faced by provinces and territories. Immediate action to refine or eliminate these bills is needed to avoid further alienating provinces and territories and their citizens and focus on uniting the country in support of Canada's economic prosperity.

That was signed by six premiers and territorial leaders: the Hon. Doug Ford, the Hon. Blaine Higgs, the Hon. Brian Pallister, the Hon. Scott Moe, the Hon. Jason Kenney and the Hon. Bob McLeod, Premier of the Northwest Territories.

We need to focus on uniting the country in support of Canada's economic prosperity. That is what this is all about: making sure that Canada has economic prosperity in all sectors.

I know that the government is focused on new technologies, new innovation and green energy. We should all be focused on these things, but we have to take a parallel path. We cannot simply shut or blockade this path for the sake of moving down that path, a path that will require time, energy and significant investment if we are to

move to a green economy, if we are to move to the sustainable development of the government's ideology.

Unlike what the Prime Minister says, we cannot flip the switch on our natural resource sector. We have to continue to support it, and we have to continue to support it not just in an environmentally sustainable way. I would argue that Canada has always done that. Canada is a world leader in innovation and technology as it relates to energy extraction in this country and around the world. We have that capability.

Why are we implementing legislation and putting the power into the hands of a government and cabinet whose ideology does not conform with what most of Canada would like to see? That is that we continue to extract and use our natural resource sector and stop buying and relying on energy from other countries. There are millions of barrels being purchased from our greatest competitor, the United States, and from countries with despotic regimes, such as Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

We have the ability in this country to do what we need to do to ensure economic prosperity for all, prosperity for Canadians across this country, from Newfoundland to British Columbia to northern Canada and to indigenous communities in between. We have that capability.

I said it earlier and will again echo the words of Premier Frank McKenna. It is time we had a truly national debate about whether we want to be a carbon-producing country. In doing that, only then will we determine the risk and the reward of that decision.

● (2335)

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time tonight, and if you would indulge me, could you tell me how the Raptors are doing? I got an update, but I would like another update.

The Speaker: The hon. member will be interested to know that the information I have is that, with 29 seconds remaining, it is Golden State Warriors 106 and Toronto Raptors 105. I think we are all hoping that Toronto can pull it off in the next few seconds. We are listening to hear some good news from those in the lobbies who are able to watch it.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting to hear all that detail, most of it not about the bill at all. It was great to hear a letter about two other bills.

For a lot of his speech and the speech before, the Conservatives were able to go through nine minutes and 30 seconds of not talking about the bill, just talking about it for the last 30 seconds. In answers to all the questions, they did not talk about the bill. No wonder, to save the taxpayers' money, the government is going to shut this down so that people can get on to debating things where they actually have an opinion.

Government Orders

I would like to ask the member a question. What does he have against the governments of the Northwest Territories? The three first nations governments that would be affected and the Government of Northwest Territories are all in support of this bill. Is the member going to vote against all of those governments?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I respect the hon. member. He has been around here a long time. As to any suggestion that we do not support northern governments, duly elected governments, I do not show that type of contempt for our democratic institutions. We can differ on how we get to different places with respect to legislation and whether in fact we support that.

Again, I hope I relayed this well in my speech that this is not just about Bill C-88. It is this incremental, systematic destruction of our natural resource sector through many pieces of legislation. Over the course of years of the government, we have seen an unwillingness to listen to Canadians, an unwillingness to hear from those stakeholders and those Canadians who are directly impacted by these types of legislation.

Nobody has a problem listening to and respecting the will and the right of provincial and territorial leaders, but again, as I said earlier, there was a letter that was written today by six premiers in this country who have grave concerns over the direction that the government is taking with respect to policy and legislation in our natural resources sector.

• (2340)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the impact the moratorium had in the north. I just wonder, when the Conservatives are talking about the fiscal and economic impacts to the north that the moratorium has caused, if they have really looked at the history of what was being invested in the north.

In 2011, the whole program was cancelled. In 2012, there was \$7 million spent in the north, which benefited the north. In 2013, there was no program. In 2014, it was postponed. In 2015, it was postponed. I would suspect the member would agree that there was actually a natural moratorium happening because of the oil prices.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that there was an effect on the oil prices, but the other aspect that I would focus on is the fact that, in 2008, we went through a global recession.

Canada, through the former finance minister, Jim Flaherty, with broad support from the opposition parties, invested in economic stimulus that actually created deficit situations, but again, Mr. Flaherty developed a plan, through the government of the day, to work our way out of deficits in spite of that significant deficit spending that went on. In 2015, we saw the current government invest a surplus of \$1 billion, according to Finance Canada reports.

With the plan that was put in place, yes, there were some difficult decisions that were made but they were made in order to ensure that our economic sustainability was in place, whether it was in northern Canada or Atlantic Canada. Certainly, the decisions that the previous government made, in particular Mr. Flaherty, to get us to that point worked to the desired plan.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make two points and perhaps the member for Barrie—Innisfil could reflect on them.

I found it very interesting that the Prime Minister announced he wanted to shut down the oil sands when he was in Paris and then he announced a moratorium in the U.S. What does that say to Canadians about his interest and willingness to allow our energy resources to develop?

Today, we had the hammer put down on debate. Maybe five speakers have been able to debate this important issue. The government has had this legislation on the docket. Probably the Liberals should have introduced it two years ago. Now all of a sudden, they try to make their lack of planning our emergency. Quite frankly, I do not believe it is.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the Prime Minister's comments, as I said during my speech, when he travels to Paris and speaks on our national resource sector and makes statements like if he could flip the switch tomorrow, he would do it, it effectively means he could shut it down tomorrow. I do not know what the alternative is of shutting it down, but it would be a great economic hardship on our country. Those are very irresponsible comments to make, because they come back, work their way into the investor community and speak directly to investor confidence. As I said, if I am looking to invest in a natural resource project or looking to partner in this country and I have that uncertainty, which is the one and only thing business does not want, then why would I make that investment.

On the issue of the government House leader dropping the hammer tonight on debate, with only five speakers on the list to speak about this, again it is a pattern of the government, which is really hypocritical. When we go back to the Liberal platform of 2015, in fact back to the throne speech, the Prime Minister stated, for what it is worth, that every member in the House would be respected and would have the opportunity to speak on pieces of legislation. He said that not just once in the platform, but also said it in the throne speech. I am not sure what number this is with respect to time allocation and stopping the debate. It probably is close to 100 times or more that the government has done this. It is completely counter to what the Prime Minister said.

It should not be surprising to anyone on this side or to Canadians in fact. The Prime Minister has said he would do many things, but he has failed to do them.

The year 2015 was going to be the last election under first past the post. We know that in 2019 that will not happen because it did not suit the Liberal narrative. The Liberals knew they would not benefit from it.

He said veterans should not have to fight their government in court. Veterans are fighting their government in court in every region of the country. I was another false promise by the Prime Minister.

It is not surprising to me, and it should not be surprising to Canadians, that he has done this because he is not as advertised.

Government Orders

• (2345)

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to express my support for Bill C-88, which would amend the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act.

For too long, indigenous people have been left out of the planning and decision-making that directly affects their lands and communities and the ways in which they express and nurture their culture and traditional ways. Historically, the model for managing resources in the Northwest Territories did not give meaningful consideration to indigenous participation; environmental safeguards were not sufficient and economic gains were not distributed fairly.

It is not uncommon to hear elders speak of past developments occurring against their will and, in some cases, allowing destruction of traditional land use areas or family dwellings. Decisions did not provide for input from community members and did not consider local or traditional knowledge. Most decisions were not made by people who resided in the north. A host of abandoned projects leave reminders that environmental safeguards were not in place to protect and respect the resources that indigenous peoples have relied on for centuries. Resource royalty schemes and impact benefit agreements were not in place to allow for shared economic opportunities.

The personal accounts shared by indigenous peoples at public meetings, workshops and other meetings evoke historic wounds. They provide insight as to why community members are apprehensive about government-led processes. That was the old way of doing business before the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, a piece of legislation established in 1998 that created the existing integrated co-management system where comprehensive land claim agreements are the underpinning of the system. It is a leading global example of a collaborative decision-making system that guarantees the participation of indigenous peoples.

Modern treaties clarify how resources will be co-operatively managed, how parties will work together to make decisions, and how economic measures are to be implemented. The regime involves land and resource ownership and access, land use planning, permitting and licensing, environmental assessment, and wildlife and renewable resource management. Co-management boards made up of members from federal, territorial and indigenous governments and organizations participate in the decision-making processes.

In some cases, these co-management boards are responsible for developing policies and guidelines that shape how resources are managed in the north. It is a participatory system that gives everybody the opportunity to offer their knowledge and expertise. Elders, harvesters and community members can offer their knowledge orally, in their language, in their communities, to board members they know and trust and create the opportunity for better decisions that are supported regionally.

Since enacted, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act regime grew, learned and has support from all sides, aboriginal communities and governments, territorial government and industry. The system was working as intended.

However, there are those that do not want a robust, inclusive and effective regulatory process and they set about on a so-called road to improvement. The amendments brought in by the previous Conservative government to move decisions away from regional community members and restructure the land and water boards was simply a backward move reminiscent of the bad old days. Under the guise of “streamlining” and “efficiency”, the Conservatives parachuted this amendment into the much wanted NWT Devolution Act. Amalgamating the boards without the consent of indigenous partners would destroy these opportunities and, as a result, would also jeopardize industry's desire to do business in the north.

The bill before the House today seeks to undo the board restructuring provisions. It seeks to maintain the existing regulatory board structure that was negotiated through land claim agreements.

Bill C-88 would acknowledge and support the rights of indigenous and northern peoples, would honour existing agreements, would support a system that local people believe in, and would continue to provide for communities to make meaningful decisions about their lands, about their lives and about their future. That would be a significant and desirable outcome of this bill.

• (2350)

Bill C-88 would repeal the provisions that sought to amalgamate the boards and would reintroduce the regulatory elements to function under the existing four-board structure. However, the bill would do more than that. In fact, there are many provisions that would modernize and improve the system that were also put on hold. The elimination of regional land and water boards would have violated the terms of these agreements.

By reversing the provisions that sought to restructure the board, Bill C-88 would honour the terms of the land claim agreements as well as the commitment of this government to move forward with reconciliation. Bill C-88 would authorize the Government of Canada's moratorium on oil and gas activity in the Arctic offshore to enable a science-based review. The review would incorporate traditional Inuit knowledge, which is known as IQ, or Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. Developed over millennia of Inuit expertise and interaction with the land, IQ emphasizes collaboration, stewardship, resourcefulness and the acquisition of skills. Including IQ in the review of development projects in the Arctic would clearly support reconciliation.

The United Nations declaration calls for meaningful consultation, respectful relationships and the consent of indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

Government Orders

The consultant who was hired to do the work on Bill C-15 openly admitted that he received direction from the previous minister. He said that he may have heard it or he may not have. I take it that it was clear to him what his job was. Before he even started the consultations, all of us in the Northwest Territories knew what his goal was. He came and met with the cabinet I sat in, and we all questioned why he wanted to change the board system to a superboard. This was before he even started consultations. Everyone in the north knew what his marching orders were.

It was very interesting to see the report and to hear him speak before the committee. He stated that the Conservative government did not follow his wishes and that he had, in fact, recommended that a land use plan for every indigenous government be put in place right across the north prior to moving forward with a superboard concept. However, the government of the day decided that it did not want that part. It just wanted to move forward with the superboard.

The consultant who was hired had no experience dealing with indigenous governments. He was an oil and gas specialist who operated in Alberta. When the consultant came north, his first meeting resulted in all governments at all levels stating very clearly that they did not want to see the changes. They did not want to see this concept of a superboard move forward. He did not show up for the second meeting. Everyone else showed up, but there was no consultant in sight. He did not come.

The report came forward saying that the government should change the system and that it did not work well. When I questioned the consultant at committee, he stated that indigenous governments said one thing in public but came to him afterward and whispered that they loved this whole change. I have not found that anywhere when I have called indigenous governments about that message. Nobody will take ownership of those words. I do not know how one can write a report when one never heard it publicly, and I do not know how a government can follow a recommendation when there was really no quality process.

• (2355)

In closing, I want to point out that there is a difference in the way our government does consultation versus how the Conservative members across the way do it. They brought forward a flawed system that did not take into account any of the indigenous governments' positions and they did not respect any of the words that were brought forward to them. We have now a process where all of the indigenous governments are in favour. We have the Tlicho, the Gwich'in, the Sahtu and the Government of the Northwest Territories. The Premier of the Northwest Territories appeared at the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. The Premier of the Government of the Northwest Territories said that he supports Bill C-88 and wants it to go forward. The grand chief of the Tlicho appeared—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Richmond Centre is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Alice Wong: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way has not even touched on the other parts of the bill. I would urge him to comment on the whole bill, not just parts of it.

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that, if she was concerned about relevance, that rule is not strictly adhered to. That does not appear to have been a valid point of order.

The hon. member for Northwest Territories.

Mr. Michael McLeod: Mr. Speaker, this bill has the full support of the Government of the Northwest Territories. It has the full support of the people of the Tlicho nation. The grand chief appeared at committee and stated that. The Gwich'in people are in support of it, and the Sahtu are in support of it. Many members across the way mentioned that Mervyn Gruben, the mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, appeared at committee, which he did. He spoke long and passionately about what is happening in his riding, but he also spoke about how he supports Bill C-88. I know, because I asked him the direct question and he responded saying, yes, he does support Bill C-88.

We have a lot of information and words being spoken here that do not quite adequately reflect what has taken place up to now historically. There are three versions of this bill. The first version was the creation of the superboard. Why did we need a superboard? There was no support for it. It was not an idea from the Government of the Northwest Territories, it was not brought forward by industry and it was not brought forward by the indigenous government. Who wanted it? It was not raised by anybody. It was brought forward by the Conservative government, and it was part of the marching orders provided to the consultant who was hired and had no experience dealing with indigenous people at all. He had no experience with land claims. He could not even reference any parts of the land claim. Why was he hired? It is pretty obvious. If all of us in the Government of the Northwest Territories of the day knew what he was doing and what the end result would be before he even started; it is pretty obvious.

There is the second piece that was brought forward in this bill, and there are still some parts of it that were discussed and negotiated with the Conservative government of the day. There are eight regulatory items, and they are all in the devolution act. I should point out that the devolution act is being held up because of this legislation not moving forward. We need to see that happen. These would be carried into the Mackenzie Valley resource management act, and I will list them quickly: the regional studies—

• (2400)

The Speaker: I apologize for interrupting. The hon. member will have six minutes remaining in his speech when the House next deals with this matter.

It being midnight, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 28, 2019, this House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:01 a.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, June 10, 2019

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Customs Tariff

Motion that debate be not further adjourned

Ms. Chagger	28887
Motion	28887
Ms. Alleslev	28887
Mr. Bains	28887
Mr. Julian	28888
Mr. Carrie	28888
Ms. Hardcastle	28889
Mr. McDonald	28889
Ms. Gladu	28889
Mr. Genuis	28890
Mr. Albas	28890
Mr. Whalen	28890
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	28891
Motion agreed to	28893

Second Reading

Bill C-101. Second reading	28893
Mr. Fast	28893
Mr. Easter	28894
Ms. Trudel	28894
Mr. Drouin	28894
Mr. Carrie	28895
Mr. Sorbara	28895
Amendment negatived	28896
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)	28897

Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act

Mr. O'Regan (for the Minister of Intergovernment and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade)	28897
Bill C-88. Third reading	28897
Mr. Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	28897
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	28898
Mr. Cannings	28898
Ms. Chagger	28898
Mr. Sopuck	28899
Amendment	28902

Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28902
Mr. Cannings	28903
Mr. Brassard	28903
Mr. Cannings	28903
Mr. Whalen	28906
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	28906
Mr. MacGregor	28907
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28907
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	28907
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28910
Mr. Davidson	28910
Mr. Bagnell	28910
Mrs. Wong	28911
Mr. Brassard	28911
Ms. Gladu	28911
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28914
Mr. Bagnell	28914
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	28914
Mrs. Wong	28915
Mr. Block	28915
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28916
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	28917
Mr. Saroya	28917
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28918
Mr. Bagnell	28918
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	28919
Notice of time allocation motion	
Ms. Chagger	28919
Notice of Closure Motion	
Ms. Chagger	28919
Third Reading	
Bill C-88. Third reading	28919
Mr. Brassard	28919
Mr. Bagnell	28921
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28922
Mrs. McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	28922
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28923

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