



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

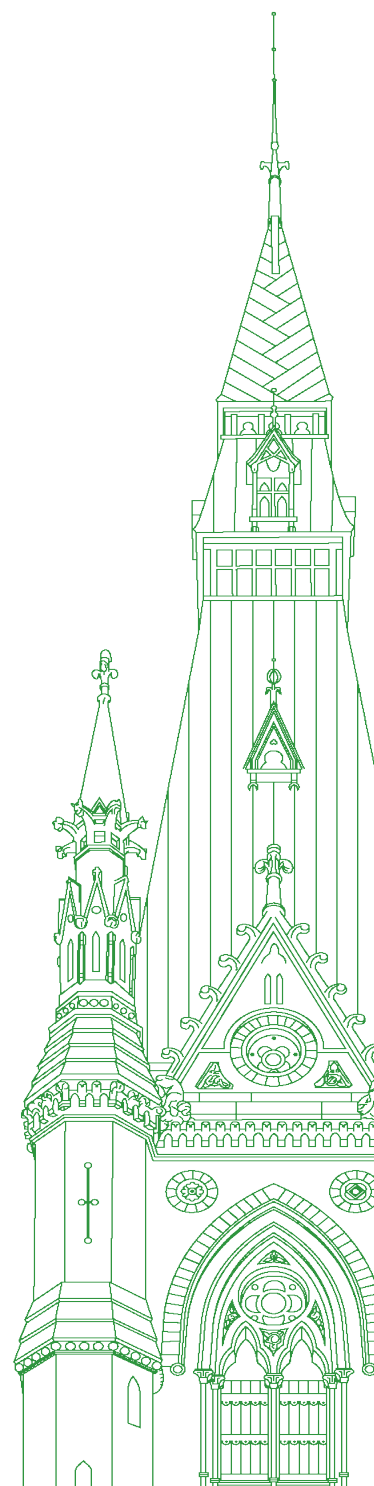
43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 150 No. 047
Thursday, December 10, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 10, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[Translation]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled “Fall Economic Statement 2020: Issues for Parliamentarians”.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s responses to five petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Mona Fortier (for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response).

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

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[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages,

the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled, “Follow-up Audit on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods”.

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

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled “Supplying the Canadian Armed Forces”.

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

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development entitled “Good Friday Accord”.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, entitled “Trade Between Canada and the United Kingdom: A Potential Transitional Trade Agreement—Interim Report”.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on International Trade’s clerk, analysts and colleagues for helping prepare this interim report. Attached to it is the supplementary opinion of the official opposition.

The Conservative Party of Canada congratulates our Canadian negotiating team for announcing a trade agreement with the United Kingdom. However, we are concerned with the government’s lack of transparency on the details, lack of proactive and robust consultation with business and labour and lack of planning to allow parliamentarians in the House of Commons, at committee and in the Senate proper time to scrutinize the potential legislation before the end of the year, when the CETA’s application to the U.K. ends.

Routine Proceedings

In this supplementary opinion, we respectfully list recommendations for the government to consider in the immediate and long term regarding the next steps in trade between Canada and the United Kingdom, including to begin work to negotiate a successor agreement that is good for Canada and good for Canadians.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: For the petitions, we will do the same thing we did yesterday and begin with the members who are online.

I would like to remind hon. members to keep their comments brief so that all members who want to present a petition can do so.

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[English]

PETITIONS**INLAND WATERS**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of Canadians concerned about the state of our waterways and watersheds, otherwise known as inland waters. They have been neglected over the period of the last few decades.

The petitioners call on Canada to update our laws related to inland waters and take into account their essential nature and how tied they are to the health of the nation. They call on us to also ensure that no industry or corporation can take precedence over the health of our waterways and watersheds.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to present a petition about a really a horrific situation that highlights the human rights abuses of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China.

The petitioners highlight the recent Associated Press story that identifies forced abortion, forced insertion of IUDs and forced sterilization targeting Uighur women as part of an effort to reduce the Uighur population. The Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development has recently identified that these acts constitute genocide.

The petitioners have two asks of the government. First, they call on the government to recognize that these acts constitute a genocide, in line with the recommendations of the subcommittee. Second, they are calling for the use of Magnitsky sanctions, through the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, targeting those involved in gross violations of human rights. These are the two asks of the petition, and I commend it for the consideration of the House and all members.

• (1010)

FIREARMS

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to present three petitions from my constituents in Markham—Unionville. The petitioners acknowledge the growing use of smuggled guns used in crimes and call on the Liberal government to support my bill, Bill C-238, an act to amend the Criminal Code (possession of unlawfully imported firearms), and to

take more action to stop the flow of illegal firearms across the border. I hope the government takes these calls to heart.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in case the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is listening, I loved her S.O. 31 about the night before Christmas and I encourage her to listen to mine tomorrow.

I am presenting a petition on the same subject the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan presented. It is with regard to Uighurs in China. The petitioners request the Parliament of Canada to take two actions: first, to formally recognize they have been and are being subject to an ongoing genocide and, second, to use Magnitsky act sanctions on Chinese officials involved in this genocide.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is international Human Rights Day, and while the Standing Orders do clearly state that an individual presenting a petition ought not give their position on the petition, it is extremely difficult in this case as, in East Turkestan, there is a genocide going on against the Uighur Muslims at this time. A committee of the House of Commons has ascertained that.

The petitioners ask the House to recognize that Uighurs in China are facing a genocide and to use the tools we have in the Magnitsky act to bring about sanctions to end the genocide.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first is a petition from citizens who are concerned about Bill C-7's further removing safeguards from the current euthanasia regime. They are calling on the House of Commons to restore the 10-day reflection period for people whose death has been determined to be reasonably foreseeable, restore the original requirement that a person must give consent for the life-ending procedure immediately before it is performed, restore the original requirements for the signature of two witnesses, require medical professionals to do everything possible to enable a person to access life-affirming services and accommodate persons with communication disabilities by clarifying refusal or resistance to administration of physical-assisted death.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in regard to the Uighurs and the suppression of their community by the Chinese Communist Party and the oppression they are facing.

The petitioners are calling on Canada not to remain silent and to ensure we formally recognize that Uighurs in China are being subject to genocide. They call on the use of the Magnitsky act for sanctions.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my final petition concerns the human trafficking of organs and the removal of organs from victims without their consent. It is abhorrent that individuals are able to travel overseas to receive this medical aid that is being brought forward in an unethical way.

The petitioners call on the government to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of financial transaction and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in this abhorrent trade in human organs.

● (1015)

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to table.

The first is an urgent plea from Sikhs and Hindus in Canada and Afghanistan. They draw the attention of the House to the fact that at one time there were hundreds of thousands of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan and today there are fewer than 5,000. They note that a recent bombing killed leaders from both communities.

They are calling on the Minister of Immigration to exercise his powers to allow vulnerable minorities, such as these Hindus and Sikhs from Afghanistan, to come to Canada as privately sponsored refugees.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition addresses the issue of organ harvesting. The petitioners are calling upon the House to move quickly on proposed legislation that would prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs that have been removed without consent.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition addresses the plight of Uighurs in eastern China and the persecution they face from the communist regime in Beijing.

The petitioners are calling on the House to do two things: first, formally recognize that Uighurs in Canada have been and are being subject to genocide and, second, use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, also called the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes against Uighurs.

FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition from my constituents in the greatest riding in Canada, Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. They are concerned for the safety of farmers from the Indian states of Punjab and Haryana who are protesting domestic legislative changes affecting their livelihoods.

Legislative independence of sovereign nations must be respected, but Canada will always stand for the protection of fundamental freedoms both at home and around the world. I stand with farmers in India who are peacefully protesting. I stand with the protesters in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. Without farmers, we do not have food.

Routine Proceedings

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to present a few petitions this morning.

The first petition has been presented by a number of my colleagues, and I want to add my petition to this issue. The petitioners from across Canada are calling for a formal recognition of the genocide of the Uighur population that is occurring in China. The petitioners are very concerned about this genocide. They are also calling for the government to use the Magnitsky act to hold the corrupt foreign officials in China to account for the genocide against the Uighur people.

● (1020)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present today is from Canadians across the country who are concerned about forced organ harvesting, which is happening around the world. They are calling for the passage of Bill S-204. This bill would prevent Canadians from travelling abroad to purchase organs that have been illegally harvested.

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have today is bringing awareness of the Hindus and Sikhs who are living in Afghanistan and are being persecuted. Petitioners are calling on the government to recognize this and allow for private sponsorship of these refugees, so they can come to Canada and live here in Canada.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present today is from Canadians across the country. These Canadians are concerned about the health and well-being of Canadian firearms owners.

They recognize the importance of owning firearms, but recognize the impacts of hearing loss caused by the noise levels of firearms. They seek a noise-reduction apparatus. These petitioners acknowledge that we are the only country in the G7 that does not have a noise-reduction apparatus available, and they are calling for this to be allowed here in Canada for the safety of our sport shooters and hunters.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have is from Canadians across the country who are concerned about gendercide, which is happening here in Canada. They are calling on the Canadian government to recognize it and to pass laws preventing the abortion of girls specifically because they are girls, which is, again, happening right here in Canada.

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MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I have here today is from Canadians from across Canada. They are calling on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to be respected in terms of religious freedom and conscience rights around the euthanasia issue. They are looking for conscience rights for doctors and institutions. They have signed this petition and have asked me to present it.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to have my voice heard on the recognition of Uighurs in China. They have been and are being subject to a genocide.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to ask that you grant leave for an emergency debate on a program, which I think is fair to say has become the signature program of this Parliament, the Canadian emergency response benefit, as well as its successor, the Canada recovery benefit. There is most definitely a sense of urgency around this issue. The program has been a cornerstone of Canada's pandemic response, and it seems the terms and conditions have suddenly changed retroactively for many Canadians who applied in good faith.

With your indulgence, I would like to take a few moments to explain the importance of the issue. I will then proceed to why I think it is important that Parliament deal with this matter on an urgent basis.

It will come as no surprise to many members of the House that at the beginning of the pandemic the NDP advocated for a universal basic income approach. We advocated for a payment to be made everybody, which could then be recuperated from those who were found not to have needed that income at the end of the tax year. We did this because we knew any other approach would lead to a lot of cracks in the system and the people who really needed help would not get it.

As a compromise, the Liberal government moved from its original position of tinkering with EI to something more substantive, and out of that CERB was born. However, the decision to exclude

people meant, inevitably, that a lot of people who really did need help were unable to get it. Many times we had assurances from the government, and the House by way of a motion that passed unanimously, that people who were in real need and applied in good faith would not be persecuted later for it.

We still see cracks in the system. There are cracks for people on maternity leave or workers' compensation. What was recently reported is that artists, the self-employed and small business people, who thought their CERB application was being assessed on their gross income, have found out just this month that all along the government imagined it would be calculated based on their net income.

We know there are a lot of small businesses that have suffered serious losses. We know self-employment is often precarious at the best of times and people needed financial assistance right away during the pandemic. They were encouraged to apply if they needed the help. There are members of the government who told them that if they needed it to apply and they would not be turned away. People did that, and they are now finding out that they may well have to pay back amounts between \$14,000 and \$16,000 by December 31. However, the government is not asking for the repayment of massive amounts of money paid under the wage subsidy to companies that went on to ship it out in dividends to their shareholders.

We need an emergency debate on this because there is a December 31 deadline looming for these large repayments, which people had no idea the Canada Revenue Agency was going to come after them for. It was reported by the CBC on Saturday, December 5. The last opposition supply day was that Monday, which did not leave a lot of turnaround time. Only one party had a supply day very shortly after this came to light, which means Parliament has not really had an opportunity to talk about this.

Given the House of Commons took a very strong position on the issue of CERB repayments, and the government seems to have changed its policy direction, I think it is important that Parliament be given the opportunity to pronounce on that change in direction.

If we do not have this debate now, with the House set to rise tomorrow and not coming back until the end of January, it will be a very long time before members have an opportunity to get this matter back before the House, and for the government to get some direction from Parliament on this. The way the government is behaving is not consistent with the unanimous consent motion passed in the House of Commons.

Therefore, because it could potentially affect a lot of the almost nine million Canadians who availed themselves of the help that was available through the CERB at some point during the pandemic, and because there is a deadline of December 31, I think there is a great need for this emergency debate on the part of Canadians. It is something that I think the House absolutely needs to take up today.

• (1025)

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for bringing this to the attention of the House.

Is the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands intervening on a point of order?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I would like the opportunity, if I could, before you rule on this matter, to put on record my support—

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for her attempt at weighing in on this. These are matters that are not debatable, at least not at this point. It remains a decision for the Chair. I would ask the hon. member to keep her comments for the time being.

I thank the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for bringing this to the attention of the House. I will take this matter under advisement and reflect on what the member has presented. I will get back to the House later today.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from December 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up this question, the hon. member for Steveston—Richmond East had a minute and a half remaining in his time for questions and comments. We are at the tail end of the five-minute period for questions and comments, which is probably enough time for one good question and response.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following your advice, I am up for a good question.

During the debate, we have heard a lot about palliative care. I am wondering if the member could share his thoughts on the important role of palliative care. Could he share what he believes, and how he believes the federal government could be playing a stronger role in that area?

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for asking such meaningful questions.

If I recall correctly, a former member in the House Mark Warawa actually suffered from terminal cancer. He was not able to receive palliative care for a number of days before the end of his life. It is critical that this country provide that support to Canadians who are facing inevitable death. The country could do more to provide options for Canadians facing immediate death.

We know that health care is delivered by provincial governments, but the federal government could actually negotiate more with provincial governments to provide support and funding, and perhaps set standards in palliative care for Canadians in general

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to talk about such an important piece of legislation.

I will be the first to say that I did not really have a position on this particular legislation when it came before the House four years ago. I supported it back then, because I strongly believe that people deserve a choice and that choices are important, especially when it comes to one's health and medical condition. Since then, I do not even remember if I spoke to it the last time it came before the House, but if I did, I did not do it from the informed position that I find myself in now.

I want to talk about Don Tooley, my father-in-law, who passed away three days ago. Don suffered from cancer, and he died at the young age of 67.

Don grew up in Plevna, Ontario, and for those who do not know, Plevna is north of Highway 7, in my colleague's neighbouring riding. He grew up in a hunting and fishing lodge in Plevna that his grandfather had started in 1944 right after the Second World War had ended. Don loved life. He was a tough person. He knew how to hunt, fish and do all those “manly” things, at least they would have been considered that way back in the day, but he was also very soft, caring person. He was very artistic and loved things with a great degree of passion.

However, just over a year ago, during the 2019 election, Don was diagnosed with colon cancer and he went through the process of being treated. He wanted nothing more than to live. He was so young, he wanted to live and he wanted to be there for his grandchildren. In the new year, in January, he had a colonoscopy and was declared cured of cancer. Don thought that he had the rest of his life ahead of him. The reality is that it did not go quite as well for Don. By July of last year, he had been experiencing some challenges with his mobility and ended up in the emergency room in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic during the first wave, where he was told that he had a tumour in his brain. Don went under immediate surgery. He was asked what he wanted to do, and he said that he wanted surgery to have it removed, because he needed to spend more time with his grandkids. Don had the tumour removed on a Friday. The doctor was going to let him out of the hospital once he could walk again. He was so determined to walk that he walked out of that hospital on the Monday morning, 48 hours after having surgery on his brain.

Don continued to live life, he continued to spend time with his grandkids, but everybody kind of knew where it was going and what the inevitable was. I think Don even did, although he really never talked about it. In the fall, about a month and a half ago, he had radiation, which helped his situation a bit. Then two weeks ago, Don ended up in the hospital again, because after a routine CAT scan it was determined that he needed to go back to emergency right away.

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My father-in-law headed back to the hospital where he was informed that he had very few choices: he could be operated on again with great risk and not knowing how that would turn out, or he could let nature take its course effectively. Don chose to be operated on again, because he wanted nothing more than to live. His objective was to live for another day for his grandchildren and to be there with them, because he loved spending time with them.

● (1030)

Don was operated on about three or four days later. It did not go as well as it had the first time that he was operated on, in the summer. Don ended up being told that he was not going to walk again. He was given the grim reality that the cancer had grown to a point where the doctors could not operate on it in its entirety, they could not remove it all and that he probably did not have a lot of time left to live.

Don still did not give up. He wanted more input into this. He wanted to talk to other people. He refused to give in to the idea that it could end.

About three or four days after that, the doctors had a very frank conversation with him and they said, "Don, this is the reality of where you are in your life, and what is going to happen." Once he fully grasped that and fully understood, I believe that is when Don came to terms with the reality of his course and where his life was going. That night, just over a week ago, he suffered a massive heart attack. I truly believe it was because his heart just realized that he was not going to live much longer.

The next morning, my wife and my mother-in-law and my brother-in-law went to the hospital because Don wanted their advice as to what he should do. At that point, Don realized that the fight was over, that it was time to give up; and he chose to not be treated. The doctors said that they could treat him for the heart attack, but the likelihood of its being effective was very small because of the blood thinners and the effects of everything else going on in his body. Don chose to let nature take its course.

For seven days, Don was in palliative care in the same hospital. I had the opportunity to see him once. Because of COVID restrictions, it is very hard to get in and out of the hospital. Don suffered during that time. That is the reality of the situation. He wanted to live so badly, but when he knew that his time was coming to an end, he recognized that was the case. I do not even know if Don would have chosen medical assistance in dying if that had been an option for him. He certainly did not have 10 days to have the reflection period, and I do not even know if he would have chosen that. However, what I know is that he did not have a choice.

The reality is that I strongly believe coming from a more informed position now, yet not as informed as so many other people, that people need that choice. Our medical system has advanced so much in this world, doctors fight to keep people alive at every opportunity they can. I do not blame the doctors for being against parts of this legislation and some who are against all of it. That is what they are there for. Doctors are there to fight and keep fighting to keep people alive, but sometimes it gets to the point where that is not going to happen.

If he, and so many other people like him, had made that choice, Don could have prevented seven or eight days of his own suffering. For a year, he fought to live and the last seven days he realized that it was not going to happen. If anybody is put in that position, I strongly believe that they should have the choice to make that decision.

● (1035)

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague Kingstonian, a son of Kingston whom many Kingstonians would be proud of today. I only have a comment, and my colleague had some kind comments for me a few days ago.

I want to thank him for giving space in this legislature for people who are having a tough time with this decision in regard to the legislation. He has demonstrated that, in the heart of hearts of every human being, there is this strong drive to live. In most cases, we deal with legislation where we are trying to upbraid bad behaviour, whether with the Criminal Code or regulations on white-collar crime. In this case, we are looking at legislation that actually would cause the state to intervene in someone's life.

I want to thank the member for breathing some air of reasonableness into this debate, and for giving people space to have conflicting positions on this.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I totally agree. I started my speech by saying that I am at a very different position on this particular legislation than I was four years ago when it was debated in this House. I do not harbour any ill feelings toward people who take a different position from me on this.

The reality is that, from what I have seen, I only ever envisioned people who did not want to fight for life, but I have seen with my own eyes somebody who fought as hard as he possibly could until the moment that he knew that it was not possible anymore. I thank the member for his comment, and I respect the position of every member of this House. I am certainly not here to try to convince people differently from their own position on this. It is hotly contested. There is a lot of energy behind this debate, and there are a lot of different emotions behind it, but I just wanted to let people know where I am on it and where my position has evolved from.

● (1040)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and extend deep condolences to him and his wife and family on the loss of his father-in-law. Certainly, the stories that we have shared and how emotional and difficult this subject is for each and every one of us is really clear. For myself, I came to the position of strongly supporting the bill when we dealt with it in the last Parliament, and the issue was made clear to me by many constituents who raised the issue with me.

Sue Rodriguez, who took the matter all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada so many years ago, was a resident of North Saanich, within my constituency, and there is a huge support base for her personally and the cause she raised. Therefore, in the time remaining I want to ask the member: if we do not deal with this issue, vote and get it to the Senate before we rise for Christmas, what is the legal effect for the people of Quebec, where the Truchon decision will take legal effect and there will be a void of the law for end of life in Quebec?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would rather speak not so much about the legal effect, but the effect on the individuals who will be in these positions like my father-in-law was just a few days ago. There will be more people who suffer, quite honestly. I want to make it very clear that the doctors and the nurses in Kingston General Hospital did everything they could for my father-in-law to make sure that he was as comfortable as possible, but there was still a great degree of pain there. By not passing this legislation today, we are potentially putting ourselves in a position where other people will suffer the same way, and that is just not something that I want to see.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for doing this. It is something I know I could not do just a few days after such a tragic event.

I was hoping he could talk about those 10 days, because at the justice committee, when I was on it, we heard about suffering. I know it is difficult to ask this of my friend, but could he talk about the 10 days and the difficulty, knowing that there is that period of time that one cannot escape from the legislation?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, even if Don had been able to say on day one that he wanted this procedure, he would not have been able to confirm that, if he had lasted 10 days. During that 10-day period, there was an incredible amount of hardship and pain that he went through. There were, obviously, his loved ones around him who also felt a great degree of pain and suffering, but for the individual in that position, I witnessed it first-hand, and it is nothing that I would ever want to see somebody go through, if they chose not to go through it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we rise to discuss a matter of the gravest importance, literally a matter of life and death.

It has been my practice as a member of Parliament to favour the expansion of free choice and individual human agency in all our decisions. I believe that government's principle role is to protect the life and liberty of its people, and that doing so means allowing people to make decisions for themselves with minimal application of force, in essence to minimize force and maximize freedom.

I am the finance critic and I have applied that principle to all economic matters, such as how can we allow individuals to make their own decisions with their own money. Here we talk about a matter that is more important than money, the matter of life and death.

I look upon this bill to determine whether it extends or withdraws individual freedom and free will from the people to whom it will apply. As I look through the practical application of the bill, it

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is my view that the bill will do more to withdraw individual choice and freedom than it will to extend it.

Let me begin by quoting the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, a physician and Liberal member of Parliament, who said:

My biggest concern, as someone who has spent my whole life trying to avoid accidentally killing people, is that we don't end up using MAID for people who don't really want to die.

Medical assistance in dying was supposed to be exclusively for people who did want to die, who, having been presented with all the worldly alternatives, chose death. We have a member of Parliament and former physician on the government side saying that the bill will have the effect of forcing people to a decision they would not otherwise make.

This is not just a theoretical issue. Allow me to read the story of Mr. Roger Foley. This is from a CTV story, which states:

Foley suffers from cerebellar ataxia, a brain disorder that limits his ability to move his arms and legs, and prevents him from independently performing daily tasks.

Roger Foley, 42, who earlier this year launched a landmark lawsuit against a London hospital, several health agencies, the Ontario government and the federal government, alleges that health officials will not provide him with an assisted home care team of his choosing, instead offering, among other things, medically assisted death.

In other words, we have a state health care system to which everybody is forced to pay and of which everyone is forced to be a part, from which it is impossible to avoid receiving care because paying out of pocket is illegal, private insurance is not allowed for essential care. When this gentleman then went to the care, the only care the government would allow him to have, it said that it could not provide him with that care, but what it could do was end his life, that he could pack it in, that he could just give up.

That is not free choice. That is the state effectively compelling a man to end his life or face endless years of unnecessarily turmoil that could have been avoided were appropriate care allowed. For that reason, I cannot support the bill.

I add my voice to thousands of people from the community representing persons with disabilities. The government is often fond of quoting the UN. The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities was “extremely concerned about the implementation of the legislation on medical assistance in dying from a disability perspective. I have been informed that there is no protocol in place to demonstrate that persons with disabilities” deemed eligible for assisted dying “have been provided with viable alternatives.” Mr. Foley's case is a prime example of that.

● (1045)

Therefore, those most vulnerable are not given a choice, but rather they are funnelled toward one inescapable outcome and compelled by the state to end their lives at threat of merciless and unnecessary suffering. Rather than providing these people with the care that would mitigate their suffering and fulfill the wishes of a happy life, they are told they have no choice but to end life altogether.

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I will quote from disability groups, 72 of which wrote a letter to the government expressing their opposition to the bill.

I will start with Krista Carr, the executive vice-president of Inclusion Canada, an organization that works with Canadians with intellectual disabilities. She stated, “Bill C-7 is our worst nightmare.... The community of Canadians with disabilities and their families have long feared that having a disability would become an acceptable reason for 'state-provided suicide'.”

There are the words of Dr. Goligher, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto, who said, “Bill C-7 declares an entire class of people, those with physical disabilities, as potentially appropriate for suicide — that their lives are potentially not worth living. Indeed were it not for their disability, we would not be willing to end them. I cannot imagine a more degrading and discriminatory message for our society to communicate to our fellow citizens living with disabilities.”

We are meant to give a voice to all Canadians, but most of all to the voiceless, and the voiceless are speaking through their advocates. Seventy-two groups have spoken out against the bill, the dehumanizing way with which it treats persons with disabilities and the manner by which it robs them of their free will and human agency. I fear that it adds to the quiet and sometimes unspoken narrative of certain politicians and opinion leaders who suggest that persons with disabilities do not have the same worth as others, a concept I find repulsive.

The lives of persons with disabilities are every bit as valuable and precious as the lives of the rest of us. No legislation should ever pass through the House or the next House that devalues the precious gift of life that persons with disabilities should have the right to enjoy. No bill should rob people of their free choice and human agency to live on in peace and dignity should they so choose.

This bill does not contain any protections against scenarios where people who are conflicted might try to suggest upon a person with disabilities that they should simply accept death. We put forward an amendment to ensure that a case like Roger Foley's would never happen again by banning medical professionals and other caregivers from raising the issue of assisted dying with a patient rather than letting the patient raise the issue himself or herself. The government opposed that.

The government is removing the requirement that there be two witnesses to sign off before someone dies. It is removing the 10-day waiting period, which allows people, who might be in a burst of urgent distress, to consider and reconsider their decision, a decision that we all know is absolutely irreversible, the most irreversible of all decisions, and that is to end one's life.

● (1050)

Why the government would oppose such protections that would ensure the patient truly does consent to end of life I do not know, but I do know one thing and will conclude on this. We must protect the freedom and choice of all our people and we must recognize the dignity and worth of every human life.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party has spoken a lot about dignity, but when I ask questions about providing a guaranteed liveable basic income,

something being fought for and supported by the disability community to ensure people can live in dignity and have those choices, I am often met with no response.

I wonder if my colleague can share with me whether he supports a guaranteed liveable income, accessible and affordable social housing and other supports required to ensure people can live in dignity and do have choices.

● (1055)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, we do support basic dignity in life for all people. When it comes to persons with disabilities, there are two ways that this can happen. Many persons with disabilities prefer to earn their income through work, and have the ability to do so. That is a statistical fact. A million Canadians with disabilities have jobs; 300,000 of them have severe disabilities and have jobs.

We should reform our benefit and tax system to let them keep more of their wages. Right now, if people with disabilities get jobs, in many cases they lose more in clawbacks and taxes than they gain from wages, effectively banning them from the workforce. Many in the disability community have spoken out against that.

I think of Mark Wafer, who is 80% deaf. He could not get a job when he was a kid, so he hired himself, started a business and opened five different Tim Hortons locations that employed 130 people with disabilities at full wages without government assistance, doing the same work but at a higher quality than the rest of his workforce. He had some of the highest performing Tim Hortons locations in the country by all the metrics, proving that people with disabilities have something to contribute, not just their lives but in their livelihoods. We should encourage and reward that.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate, and I have said this before, that members of the Conservative Party are standing up and supporting persons with disabilities. However, I am concerned when language gets added that death is being compelled by the state, which is not true, and that the Conservatives will stand up for the voiceless.

I would like to ask the hon. member about the voiceless person in the hospital bed who has suffered through cancer, who is sitting there for 10 days in excruciating suffering. Where is the voice of the Conservative Party for that person?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the first question is with respect to the compulsion of death. I will read a quote, “My biggest concern, as someone who has spent my whole life trying to avoid accidentally killing people, is that we don't end up using MAID for people who don't really want to die” That is the Liberal member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, himself a physician. The member should ask his Liberal colleague why he thinks this bill could ultimately compel people to die even when they do not want to.

Where is the support for people suffering in a hospital bed? We believe in strong palliative care so people receive the end-of-life care that permits them to live out their final days in dignity and to make a true choice rather than being compelled by a lack of alternatives.

[Translation]

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Can he tell us what the Conservatives' position was on the Truchon case and why the Conservatives took that stance?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, to be honest, unfortunately, I did not hear the question, so I cannot answer it.

Conservatives would have appealed the Truchon decision. The government can appeal the ruling and even take it as far as the Supreme Court.

The government decided not to do that, however. It could have. That would have given all Canadians a chance to understand their rights in this regard.

• (1100)

[English]

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what results from this bill is truly a matter of life and death. The decisions we make here always have some ripple effects on others, but this bill needs to be about protecting the rights of some of our most vulnerable.

It is from a place of deep conviction that I speak on Bill C-7. My hon. colleague for Thunder Bay—Rainy River echoed some of these concerns and convictions in a CBC article written by Kathleen Harris. He states:

I don't like voting against my party, but as someone with a medical background and somebody who has dealt with this issue over the years a lot, I think morally it's incumbent upon me to stand up when it comes to issues of health and life and death.

I find it heartbreaking that we are putting doctors and legislators in this position. As the member opposite suggests, the primary issue is protection of conscience rights for medical professionals, health care providers, and the rights of hospices and other institutions not wanting to cause the death of people in their care.

As a Maclean's editorial explains, many doctors who may be willing to expedite the natural process of dying, given their traditional role to relieve suffering, would likely be threatened by the qualitative and ethical distinction between hastening a death that is drawing near and ending a life that is expected to persist. This is a very valid point.

When one senator asked an expert witness whether it was true that medical professionals were leaving because of the lack of conscience rights, Dr. Leonie Herx replied that she knew of doctors who took early retirement for reasons of professional integrity or because of their own personal moral compass.

Do we want to harden the hearts of those who, because of their very own world view, cannot comply? These are people who feel that MAID is a betrayal of their professional commitment to save lives, a betrayal of their faith or a betrayal of their conscience.

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A CBC article says it rather well:

Rather than instilling hope and helping to build resilience by focusing on options for living, health care providers will now be asked to discuss an early death.

Many helpful voices express serious reservation with this bill. Constitutional lawyer and author Don Hutchinson explains that this bill does not provide a sound structure and protection for all people, especially those living with disabilities, chronic pain or mental illness.

The executive vice-president of Inclusion Canada told us that for the disabled community, Bill C-7 is their worst nightmare. Their “biggest fear has always been that having a disability would become an acceptable reason for state-provided suicide.”

Colleagues may say that will never happen. Many of us never thought that we would be here debating same-day MAID, yet here we are. We are hearing stories that are happening today even with the current legislation.

Palliative care consultant Dr. Herx described the experience of Candice Lewis, “a 25-year-old woman with a developmental disability and chronic medical problems”. When she entered the ER, a doctor approached her mother and suggested that she consider MAID for her daughter. She refused. The doctor promptly told her she was being selfish.

The disabled community has made it very clear, time and again, that they have suffered at the hands of our current legislation and they feel directly targeted by this new MAID legislation, as no other community is directly referred to in the proposed amendments to the current legislation.

Despite the holes in the current legislation adopted in 2016, the government is pushing for a further expansion to the eligibility of MAID at an alarming pace. Krista Carr, executive vice-president of Inclusion Canada, explains that the community of Canadians with disabilities and their families have long feared that “having a disability would become an acceptable reason for state-provided suicide”.

According to the Council of Canadian Academies, without its reasonably foreseeable natural death provision, Canada would become more permissive with respect to medical assistance in dying than any other jurisdiction in the world.

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• (1105)

There are also the voices of Lemmens and Krakowitz-Broker. They explain that, unlike in any other country in the world, the new bill fails to explicitly require that all reasonable options be made available and tried before allowing physicians to end a patient's life. Even when that decision for MAID is made, we absolutely need to reserve the right for people to have a change of heart.

Dr. Leonie Herx, the past president of the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians and chair of the division of palliative medicine at Queen's University, sees life stories every day that show how people can change their minds with respect to MAID. She refers to one beloved patient who arrived at her clinic asking for MAID, but quickly abandoned his quest after being assured of his worth and that he was not a burden.

Recently, the member for Vancouver Granville asked the justice minister in the House why the 10-day reflection period and reconfirmation of consent were waived in this proposed new legislation. She said that the removal of these safeguards was not required by the Truchon decision: the ruling the Liberals chose not to appeal.

I noted the member's comments with great interest, given that she was the former justice minister who brought forward the original bill to legalize MAID in Canada, known as Bill C-14. In response to her questions and other critics, the current justice minister replied that the 10-day waiting period only increased suffering and that he had even heard of people who stopped taking their medications during this period.

Ensuring that all Canadians have access to care needs to be our top priority to address the needs of suffering Canadians. Death cannot, and should not, be the only choice to end excessive suffering. I have talked to many health care providers who say that we have the tools and resources here in Canada to alleviate all kinds of suffering, and even to alleviate the anxiety of individuals facing imminent death.

John Diefenbaker once said, "Freedom is the right to be wrong, not the right to do wrong." Canadians value our right to think freely, to consider our thoughts and opinions, and to change our minds if we so choose. The elimination of the 10-day reflection period and the requirement to reconfirm consent takes this option away from those facing this difficult situation. How are we preserving the right for people to change their minds when we waive the waiting period? It would seem that this bill makes the choice for MAID to be final and irreversible.

That is not what is reported in the "First Annual Report on Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada, 2019". It says that 3.6% of the patients who made a written request for MAID subsequently withdrew that request. While that may not seem like a very significant number, to put it into context 263 people out of the 7,336 people who completed written requests later chose to change their minds because they had the opportunity to do that in the 10-day waiting period. That is 263 lives. Every single one of them deserved the right and the freedom to make that decision. This piece of legislation before us would take that right away from individuals.

Experts speaking to the Senate committee on Bill C-7 discussed how, in the proposed bill, MAID eligibility would apply to treatable

diseases where death was not imminent. This is also where the bill adds a 90-day assessment period. It is no wonder that people with disabilities or chronic illnesses feel threatened by this legislation. This addition is especially concerning when people are faced with a sudden, dramatic life-changing illness or disability, as it often takes much longer than three months to gain a renewed perspective.

It is no wonder the former health minister, Dr. Jane Philpott, and the member of Parliament for Vancouver Granville wrote an editorial for Maclean's urging Parliament to proceed with caution, and questioning whether there was enough medical and social evidence to even understand the implications of these potential changes.

Saying that we are at a defining moment in history by approving this bill without further amendments is not an overstatement. I am thankful for the opportunity to highlight these very real risks, and I want to urge the Liberal government to address the bill's serious challenges.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Provencher for his speech.

I would like to start with a comment. My colleague seems to be saying that having one of the world's most progressive policies on medical assistance in dying is a bad thing. I disagree. We are a progressive society and proud of it.

To clarify my colleague's and the Conservatives' position once and for all, I would like to know if he is against the idea of medical assistance in dying or if he is against the amendments and our government's response to the Quebec Superior Court's decision.

I believe the amendments we have proposed will improve the existing act, and I would like my colleague to tell us if he is against the idea of MAID itself, which, I would remind him, is the law currently in effect here in Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, for the record, I want to restate that I voted against Bill C-14 when it came before the House four years ago. We have come to a difficult spot as a country and as a nation when we diminish the value of life.

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I believe that all life is important. This piece of legislation, based on the ruling in the Truchon decision in Quebec, goes much further than that ruling suggests. It also does not provide the proper protection for conscience rights for medical professionals. It takes away that 10-day reflection period. That is an important note to make because as I said, 263 people changed their minds during that 10-day reflection period. This bill removes it. This is same-day death being proposed by the Liberals.

If someone is having a bad day facing an illness that they think is unbearable and degenerative, and for whatever reason they request medical assistance in dying, they do not have the 10-day reflection period to see whether that was the right decision. Under this legislation, that decision would be permanent and final.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Provencher for standing up for life and promoting life. I have lamented the fact that the Liberal government has had a singular focus on facilitating and speeding up death rather than promoting life.

I notice that my colleague did not have time to address the issue of palliative care, which is something the Liberal government promised four years ago it was going to champion. The Liberals suggested they were going to invest \$6 billion in palliative care, then we found out that it was going to cover the whole country. Then they said it was over 10 years. They promised it in 2015, 2017 and 2019. There has been virtually nothing done to make sure people who have painful diseases and are suffering are still able to live lives that are productive and joyful.

Perhaps my colleague could comment on that, and the role palliative care should be playing in delivering support for these people who need our support.

• (1115)

Mr. Ted Falk: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Abbotsford who I know shares the passion, as I do, that life is important and that we need to value life right from conception to natural death. That is an important fundamental principle that needs to be enshrined here in Canada.

I recently sat with local doctor Curtis Krahn and his wife at an event, and we talked about end-of-life and dying. Shortly after I was elected, a few years back, my mother was very ill with cancer. Dr. Krahn's wife, who is a registered nurse, was one of the chief palliative care providers in our community. She was very gracious with my mother. At the event, Dr. Krahn told me clearly that we have the resources, the tools and the medications to make people comfortable in end-of-life situations and when people are suffering. Often people become quite anxious as they are approaching their final days. He said, "We can even take away their anxiousness. We have medication that can do that as well."

I know that the government made some very lofty promises when it came to palliative care, and it failed miserably to deliver on those promises. Seventy per cent of people, when given the option of being provided with palliative care, would choose to live rather than to accept MAID.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to enter into the debate.

This is the first time I am speaking to Bill C-7. What drives my desire to speak today is the fact that we would take away the safeguards that were rightfully put in place to protect people from quick decisions and unnecessary death in Canada. This weighs on me because there are two individuals who I have witnessed pass away.

A good friend of mine, Scott Clarkson, had cancer. At thirty years old, he had a child, but unfortunately he succumbed to cancer. I watched as the angels who work in palliative care cared for him until the end. I think about the extra days he had with his son and his wife, but I know that Scott had tough days where it seemed pretty dark and bleak.

However, the bill, with its current safeguards, could catch an individual on a bad day, even without facing certain death, be it cancer or other conditions. On an off day, Scott might have been convinced that medically assisted dying was something for him. This is where I have an issue with the government not taking the amendment to include the 10-day reflection period. We all have tough days, but without the safeguard of a pause, there may have been times when Scott would have succumbed to the pain and made a different decision, and that would have resulted in less time with his wife and son.

This is why we need to revisit the bill. I encourage the government to please consider some of the reasonable amendments that we put forward, such as the 10-day reflection period.

The other person I think of is standing over my shoulder today, my father, who passed away during the summer. There were times when it must have been tough for him, but he was always a very positive man and believed that there were better days ahead, so much so that the month before he passed away after battling cancer for three years, he renewed his driver's licence for five years. He was always thinking that there were positive days ahead and that there were reasons to live. However, there were tough days, and I wonder what would have happened if the bill had passed in its current state and on one of those days my father might have made a different decision.

He was mentally stable right to the end and had great palliative care with some great doctors and nurses, but on a day when maybe family was not around, he might have thought it was right for him. My father died the same month as his 75th birthday, and without that reflection period, he may not have enjoyed that birthday with his family, and they may not have had that extra time with him.

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These are the reasons I have entered into the debate today for the first time, to speak against Bill C-7. Primarily it is the issue that, at committee, no amendments were taken, and if we do not have safeguards in place there will be abuse. There will be individuals who decide to end their lives because of whatever pain and suffering they are in. That pain and suffering might end for them, but it passes on to their loved ones who are left to deal with those feelings. That is why we need to pause, go back to committee and draft a bill that has safeguards.

• (1120)

Other members have talked about all the people who have grave concerns about this bill and what it would do for people with disabilities. I think it is ironic that we are in the middle of a pandemic and we are asking health professionals and all Canadians to do whatever they can to save lives, and in the meantime parliamentarians are debating and are going to be passing, but hopefully not anytime soon, the opening up and lessening of restrictions on medical assistance in dying.

My colleague, the member for Cariboo—Prince George, is championing the cause of a national 988 suicide prevention hotline. This is not a partisan issue, and I encourage all parliamentarians to get behind that initiative. We would like to save the lives of people who are maybe finding themselves in tough situations. That is a noble cause.

We are talking about helping people, and unfortunately some are people with mental health issues who are committing suicide, we are trying to prevent those losses and the pain of those families. However, at the same time we are making people's ability to get a medically assisted death that much easier. I just cannot agree with that.

This is the first time I am speaking to the bill because of the personal nature of this. This is a tough subject. I entered into the debate so that we could understand who we represent. I represent Saskatoon—University, and the majority of my constituents want the safeguards to stay in place.

In conclusion, I implore the people of Canada, if they think we need safeguards, to contact their Liberal member of Parliament and in a respectful way please ask for some of the restrictions that were in place to be reintroduced on the bill. If we can come together in a respectful manner and find solutions, that is what Canadians want to do in the trying year of 2020, to find ways to bridge the gaps in our society. If we do not do this, if we do not consider other people's opinions and other views, I believe our society would be headed in the wrong direction, and the division we have seen in other parts of the world would come to Canada.

I plead with all reasonable people on the other side of the aisle to pause this. Let us go back to the drawing board, and let us make sure we have the safeguards in place to protect lives.

• (1125)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech. There has been a number of speeches today of people sharing some really personal stories about what they have gone through, what friends and family have gone through. It really

adds to the debate, and I want to thank the member for that. It shows that we all come from different perspectives.

Perhaps this goes a little into the weeds on this, but the Parliament of Canada has legalized medical assistance in dying, making it a medical procedure. A lot of the concerns that have been raised by members of the Conservative Party are with respect to what doctors are doing. Is that not the role of the province and the role of the colleges to regulate those professions? Should that not be left out of the hands of the federal Parliament?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that is what our role is as federal members of Parliament, to debate important legislation like this.

In my office right now, I got an email this morning from a Dr. McCartney. He was talking about his desire not to be forced into this medical procedure, as it was called. Not to get into the weeds, but there are many other physicians who have deep issues with MAID. If we do not get this right, we may see physicians leaving the practice that they love, and Canada will be a lesser country because of it.

We need all hands on deck, especially during—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the very heartfelt sharing. I know that this is a difficult topic, and many of us have experienced these life and death situations in our own lives, so I want to acknowledge that.

I do have a question, though, and it goes back to dignity. The last member I posed a question to, asking if he supported a guaranteed liveable income, accessible affordable social housing and everything else needed to live in dignity, referred to getting a job. I think it is important to recognize that, for example, 70% of adults with intellectual cognitive delays live in poverty.

I want to ask the member if he is supportive of giving people what they truly need, so that they can live in dignity, including the items that I mentioned.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to answer that.

I believe that we want the same thing. The dignity that comes with a job and the inherent benefit to the individual to fulfill their potential is what we should all strive for. We know that people who are in tough economic situations may consider MAID, and we need, as a society, to push back. If it is a warm meal or a warm bed to sleep at night, that is what society should be providing people who are a little down on their luck, but we also, not to get too economically driven in our defence of having these restrictions, do understand that we need a growing economy to help more individuals out of poverty.

With poverty comes tough decisions. That is why I, as an individual member along with the Conservative members, have been voicing our concern around the direction—

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for one more short question and response.

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to share, first of all, my deep condolences to the member, as I know his family well.

I just want to quote a little message I got in an email yesterday. This individual says:

I watched your speech in [the House] yesterday and was touched by it. My dad was 93 and home alone with cancer in 2005. He was so bad I wished for euthanasia. Got him in palliative care and he improved immediately. They gave him 3 weeks of improved quality of life. When things got very bad they made him painfree until he died. It changed my mind on euthanasia.

That is just a comment, again, about the dynamics of the government making a commitment to improving palliative care, yet we are not seeing that take place.

• (1130)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Mr. Speaker, the importance of palliative care is there, and we have spoken at great lengths that we need to make it accessible across Canada. My father actually passed away in Yorkton, where the member who posed the question is from, and I must say the people there provided outstanding palliative care that granted us a few more days with dad. That is what he wanted, and we need to make sure that is available in all parts of Canada. That is what is missing. The current government likes to virtue signal in one direction, but we see what MAID is with no additional amendments at committee. The Liberals are putting their heads down and believing that they know best for this country. I vehemently disagree with their position on this.

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

Some hon. members: Question

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

In the usual form, if members of recognized parties present in the House wish to request either a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I invite them now to rise and indicate so to the Chair.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, this division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from November 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last debated the motion, there were six and a half minutes remaining in the speech by the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and a bit of a sur-

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prise to virtually stand in the House of Commons to continue my speech on Bill C-8, an act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94).

I want to reiterate that despite the fact that Canada is one of a few countries in the world where indigenous rights and treaties are entrenched in the constitution, our relationship with indigenous people is far from perfect. It represents, unfortunately, a very dark chapter of Canadian history, which has left a damaging impact on the lives of indigenous peoples across our country today.

In the first half of my speech, I talked about the damaging history of residential schools and the impact they have had on indigenous people to this day. This terrible act committed by the Canadian government saw thousands of children ripped away from their families and forced to assimilate with what it perceived as Canadian values, which could not be any more un-Canadian.

In a 100-plus year period, over 150,000 indigenous children were removed from their families and forced to live in terrible conditions. Their rich culture and history was stripped away from them. The abuse endured by these children had an everlasting impact and an adverse effect on indigenous cultures for generations to come.

I really cannot imagine what it would be like, as a father of a five-year-old and a seven-year-old, to have my children taken away from me, along with everything that I hold dear: my personal values, family values and religion. I cannot imagine my children being put into a foreign environment where they are unable to connect with the generations before. I find it deeply troubling that it ever occurred in Canada.

The history of abuse represents a shameful portion of Canadian history and reminds us of the importance of respect and dignity that should be afforded indigenous peoples across Canada. I look forward to a better day when we see the process of reconciliation moving forward and everyone walking strongly together, building a better Canada for everyone, indigenous and non-indigenous. In this modern day and age, however, indigenous people across Canada continue to face many important issues and we, as a country, have a lot of important work ahead of us on the path to true and meaningful reconciliation.

I have been shocked and, quite frankly, disgusted by some of the recent news articles that outline the ways our indigenous people are still being treated to this very day. There are still many indigenous communities that do not have access to clean drinking water. While the government has committed to ending long-term drinking water advisories for all first nations communities, there are still 61 indigenous communities that do not have access to clean drinking water.

As the member of Parliament for Northumberland—Peterborough South, I am honoured to be the representative of the Alderville First Nation and Hiawatha First Nation. Both of these first nations are extremely well led by Chief Carr and Chief Mowat, and I have been honoured to have conversations with both.

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While Alderville First Nation was connected to clean drinking water in 2017 and Hiawatha First Nation is in the process of this, the fact that both of these great powerful nations have had to endure going without clean drinking water in the 20th and 21st centuries is incredible to me. It is something that should never have happened in Canada. I find this appalling.

Beyond that, indigenous people across Canada are facing a mental health crisis. With a lack of access to mental health services, Statistics Canada found that overall, indigenous people in Canada die by suicide at a rate nearly three times as high as non-indigenous Canadians. There is no doubt that this must be related to the troublesome history indigenous people have had in our country, and we need to do better. We need to make sure indigenous people are not committing suicide, and certainly not at three times the rate of non-indigenous peoples in Canada.

• (1135)

Another huge issue is missing and murdered indigenous women. Between 1980 and 2012, despite the fact that indigenous women make up 4% of the female population, indigenous women and girls represented 16% of all female homicides in Canada. This is shocking.

Bill C-8, which would expand the Canadian oath of citizenship to include recognition of the treaty rights of the first nations, Inuit and Métis people, is an important step toward true and meaningful reconciliation. By including this historic amendment, Canada is taking steps to educate newcomers of Canada and recognize our dark history.

I am proud to support the bill to create a new oath of citizenship, one that would elevate and promote the inherent dignity of indigenous people and their rights, including treaty rights, to new Canadians. It is important that we recognize the first people who called this great land home. .

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the commitments that were given many years ago by the Prime Minister and the government was to work toward reconciliation. Here we have yet another piece of legislation that deals with that very important issue, and it is always encouraging when members on all sides of the House recognize the importance of reconciliation. For me, that is what the bill is really about.

I ask my colleague and friend to provide his thoughts on the importance of continuing to strive for reconciliation.

• (1140)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, this is incredibly important. As I said, I am proud to have the nations of Alderville and Hiawatha as part of my riding. There are so many terrific and great people there. I wonder, though: If indigenous people were given the opportunity they truly deserve, could one of those indigenous children who grew up in residential schools have cured cancer? Could one of those children have led the way to a cure for COVID a bit quicker?

We need to make sure every Canadian child has the opportunity to be successful, and—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing Bill C-8.

I must say that when we first looked at the bill, we found it interesting. The government wanted to reach out to indigenous nations, which is good, considering all the harms inflicted on them in the past.

We are obviously not particularly attached to any oath for new Canadian citizens, given that we want to be independent and have our own oath for Quebec citizenship.

However, after examining the bill more closely, we realized that it contained a poison pill. On the one hand, the government wants to reach out to indigenous peoples, but on the other hand, Quebec gets a slap in the face. In fact, new citizens would have to swear an oath on the Canadian Constitution, which Quebec never signed. It was forced upon us; we never voted on it, either.

I would like to hear my Conservative colleague's thoughts on the fact that the government is trying to surreptitiously slip something past us that is actually quite insulting to Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, let me start by saying that I fully respect the people of Quebec and am generally a proponent of provincial jurisdiction and autonomy where it is possible. However, I believe that this legislation is for promoting reconciliation with our indigenous peoples, and for that reason I have to support it as we continue our journey of reconciliation with the indigenous people of our country.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Fort Albany was founded in 1697, over 100 years before Toronto ever came into existence. The Cree were negotiating directly with the Europeans for 200 years before Canada. Of course, Fort Albany is where the notorious St. Anne's residential school was and where the current government continues to spend millions of dollars fighting survivors.

The Liberals are very good at symbols, but they are absolutely vicious when it comes to denying the rights of the survivors of some of the worst abuse. How do we ensure that when we move forward on these important symbols, we are actually holding the government to account to respect the legal rights and historic rights of the people who have been neglected and abused over the years?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, as always, the hon. member brings a passionate eloquence to the chamber. I support what he is saying in that we need action and we need clean drinking water for all first nations people. We need to make sure no indigenous child is left behind. There is so much opportunity, not just for indigenous children, but for what they will bring to Canada, namely the diversity of opinion, thoughts and leadership, which will no doubt come from indigenous communities if they are given the opportunity.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure and honour for me to participate in this debate.

The bill before us, Bill C-8, is essentially about the respect and consideration that we here in the House always owe to first nations. This applies as much to Canadian citizens as it does to those who will one day join our country as citizens. When these new citizens come forward, they will have to swear this oath of allegiance, which, thanks to Bill C-8, now recognizes first nations. This is therefore an important issue, one that calls for reconciliation and consideration and, above all, respect.

We all know that the first nations have been living on the land known as Canada for a very long time. We all know that when the Europeans arrived in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, the first nations were overcome in the events that unfolded. We must, however, always acknowledge their indelible presence on this land and their tremendous contribution to building this great country known as Canada.

This process was not a seamless one. Unfortunately, there was a litany of sad, unfortunate and unjust events that led to what is currently going on in this country. We cannot erase 400 years of difficult relations with the stroke of a pen, but we can learn from our mistakes and never repeat them. We can take a different approach, a different attitude, to see the future from a better perspective, while showing the patience necessary to acknowledge that mistakes were made in the past and to establish trust and reconciliation.

It is an honour and a privilege to have the community of Wendake, previously known as the Huron Village, in my riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent. I was born in Loretteville, right next to Wendake, in 1964, so I grew up very close to the Wendat people. I still have some very dear and very close childhood friends from that community. I am lucky, because I have been around first nations peoples my whole life, which may help me better understand some concerns. Still, who am I to talk about their experience? All I can say is that the Wendat people have made exceptional and extraordinary contributions to the community and in particular to Quebec City.

The Wendat people have lived on this land since the dawn of time, but in a more sedentary way. After being threatened with outright extinction through wars and battles, they went from Île d'Orléans to Sillery to what is now known as L'Ancienne-Lorette, before ultimately settling at the foot of the Kabir-Kouba Falls in 1696.

Of course I have nothing but good to say about them because I know them very well. I have been their neighbour for 56 years. It is a privilege and an honour to represent them in the House of Com-

mons, as it was to represent them some time ago in the National Assembly of Quebec. I have to say that I am the one who is privileged in Canada, and I say it with all due respect. I am tempted to say that it is the best nation in Canada, but other nations might dispute that.

Instead I will say that Wendake and the Wendat people are an inspiration for all Canadians with respect to collaboration and living together harmoniously, and we should look to the Wendat people's relationship with non-indigenous people in the Quebec City area and follow their example everywhere in Canada. They are an inspiration.

The Wendat community I represent is made up of proud, positive and constructive people. They are also business people. In Wendake, in my riding, there are dozens of businesses that hire indigenous and non-indigenous workers. Nearly 400 non-indigenous people work in these businesses located in Wendake territory.

● (1145)

Just recently I had the pleasure of visiting a factory that makes snowshoes. Raquettes GV was established in Wendake in 1959 and employs dozens of people. It sells its products throughout Quebec and Canada and around the world. Naturally, I am very proud of these people, and that is why I am so pleased to represent them in the House of Commons. They are hardworking people who can look to the future while being extraordinarily attached to the heritage of their ancestors and proudly representing it.

Sadly, we were recently called to pay tribute to Max Gros-Louis, who, as hon. members know, was a high-ranking indigenous leader. For more than 50 years, he was committed to defending his nation and the first nations. He did so with the fighting spirit of a proud Huron-Wendat, but also with respect for the people he was dealing with. That is why, when Grand Chief Gros-Louis passed away, everyone unanimously spoke of his extraordinary contribution to the good relationship we need to have.

There was an election in Wendake roughly a month ago. A young man by the name of Rémy Vincent was elected. I congratulate him. He succeeded Konrad Sioui, who held that position for 12 years. I worked with him during the 12 years of his mandate since his term began about a month and a half before I started mine at the provincial level. We always collaborated with respect. We had differing opinions. I could recognize certain things that he could not and vice versa. That is what living together is all about. We can have different points of view and agree to disagree. We must work together to improve the things we do not agree on, and we must work together when we have common views. I know that is the approach that the new chief, Rémy Vincent, is taking as he begins the mandate that his nation has just given him.

Government Orders

I do not claim to be better than anyone else, but it so happens that I have the great privilege of knowing the first nations well, especially the Huron-Wendat people, having grown up alongside them from my earliest days. As I said in my introduction, we have a responsibility to recognize that relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people have been particularly difficult and rocky. I will have the opportunity to talk about a few aspects of that.

• (1150)

[*English*]

On the other hand, we have the responsibility to recognize that some steps have been taken that have had such an important impact on how we live today. Let me remind members that it was the Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker who recognized the fact that first nations should have the right to vote.

[*Translation*]

We must also recognize that on June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered the Canadian government's formal apology to the first nations for the residential school tragedy. For an entire century, residential schools were opened by successive governments, from Sir John A. Macdonald to the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, forcing over 140,000 first nations children to renounce and deny their most precious heritage, the legacy of their ancestors. It is arguably the greatest tragedy in Canadian history.

It took courage and honour to recognize this tragedy. I am proud to know that the Right Honourable Stephen Harper is the one who offered this formal apology to the first nations on the recommendation of the late Jack Layton of the NDP. Yes, we must acknowledge our mistakes, but we must also build on the good things we have done and look to the future.

We salute the government for placing a lot of emphasis on reconciliation with first nations in its statements. We hope that this reconciliation will be based on concrete, positive action that focuses on the future of relations between first nations and non-indigenous peoples. We noted, as did everyone, that the current government made a commitment to first nations that they would have clean drinking water, which seems obvious to those of us who do not have this problem. Unfortunately, the government has failed. We salute the minister for having the honour and dignity to admit it, but we hope that he will redouble his reconciliation efforts and that it will not be just talk.

From our perspective, the fact that the recognition of first nations is included in the oath that will be taken by new Canadians is important, even essential, and it must be perpetuated by this reality.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Prime Minister, ministers and all members are very much committed to reconciliation. I appreciate many of the remarks made by the opposition House leader.

In fact, one of the documents that I keep around when I am inside the chamber is the recommendations of the Truth and Recon-

ciliation Commission in a mini-report. What we are really talking about is number 94 of its calls for action.

Can the member just reinforce that this is just one of the calls for action and there is always going to be room for us to continue to look at what we can do? Several of those recommendations require us to work with other levels of government and other stakeholders as well.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, obviously this report is quite important. It is the basis of the reflections that we should be having. Some of those recommendations are right. Sometimes there is room for discussion. If we are talking about provincial jurisdiction on some issues, then we have to work together with them. We have to put aside our differences on some issues to work toward the best future relationship we can have with first nations.

I do also recognize that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created under the former Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his very interesting speech. I could support most of what he had to say, but there was one thing that disappointed me.

It is important to reach out to indigenous nations and make up for the mistakes made in the past in some small way, even if it is only a very small way, since we are talking about putting a few words in an oath of citizenship. I do not think that is going to solve all the problems. However, there is a negative element in what is proposed in Bill C-8, and yet I did not hear my colleague talk about it. Quebec did not sign the Canadian Constitution, but now new citizens are being asked to take an oath on the Canadian Constitution. There is something wrong with that. It is a disgrace.

Unless I am mistaken, Mr. Mulroney, the former leader of the Conservatives, recognized this at the time. He said that he wanted to bring Quebecers back in with honour and enthusiasm. Once again, that was a failure in terms of closing the rest of Canada to Quebec.

I would like to know what my colleague, as a member from Quebec, thinks about that. Does he still intend to vote in favour of Bill C-8, or does he intend to support amendments that could be made to it?

• (1200)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment and question from the member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères. I figured he would ask me that question, which is why I did not address the subject in my speech, since our speaking time is limited.

I agree with what the member is saying about how the 1982 Constitution was never recognized by the Quebec National Assembly. I know what I am talking about, since I used to be a member of the National Assembly. As the member so aptly stated, impressive efforts were made by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and others to get Quebec to sign the Constitution with honour and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, for partisan political reasons, the current governing party disgraced itself by making backroom deals to prevent the historic accord that would have enabled us to carry on.

At the same time, I would like to point out to my colleague that, even though the 1982 Constitution was not signed by Quebec and has not been recognized by the National Assembly for 38 years, it is in effect nevertheless. The proof is that the House of Commons operates under that Constitution. That means that the mandate that my colleague received and the work that he has done for over five years, which I appreciate, is done in a chamber that operates under the Canadian Constitution.

Yes, we need to continue to remind everyone that Quebec did not sign the Constitution. However, we also need to remind them that the Constitution still applies, that this country is still running and that, even though the National Assembly does not recognize the Constitution, as I can personally attest, because I used to be a member of that assembly, the Constitution enables the National Assembly and the provincial jurisdictions to operate.

Yes, let us continue to remind everyone that, unfortunately, because of the federal Liberal Party's base political manoeuvring, the Meech Lake accord fell through, but Canada continues to carry on.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would request that there be a recorded vote.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, the recorded division stands deferred until later this day, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[English]

BROADCASTING ACT

The House resumed from November 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Government Orders

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise to speak to and give some thoughts on Bill C-10, which makes amendments to the Broadcasting Act with respect to changes the government is proposing.

As a parliamentarian, when I first learned of the legislation and began doing research on it, I realized it is important to give some context as to why this act requires amendments. It is 29 years old. To give some context as to what was happening in the broadcasting and entertainment industry back in the day, I was three years old. I do not remember when the original Broadcasting Act came into force in the Parliament of Canada very well. Bryan Adams was topping the charts, and the relevant music was by Paula Abdul and Boys II Men. I am not denying it was great music, just a little older. It was six prime ministers ago.

Three decades later, I think there is consensus among the parties in the House that we need to tackle this legislation and make updates to reflect the reality we are in today. The bill proposes to update a huge part of what was not there in 1991 regarding Internet and social networks. Today, if we go through the list, we have Facebook, Google, Netflix, Crave, Spotify and Apple Music. All these online platforms are new to the rules the federal government must regulate around. They are not the same as the conventional players we had when this act was enacted back in 1991. It is key that we find a balance between conventional media and the new online platforms we have around today.

Having said that, I am disappointed with the government side and not very happy with or supportive of the legislation as it stands today, not necessarily because of the direction it takes regarding some angles, but the lack of direction and answers we are getting on this.

Like many pieces of legislation, I would say there are parts I support and parts that I oppose. There are far too many I am not satisfied with, that would need serious amendments for me to support it in the end. I want to be clear when I say that. The frustration I am sharing regarding Bill C-10 is not because I do not believe we need or do not need to modernize the law; rather it is because of the many shortcomings I am hoping to address in my time here today.

I want to commend our shadow minister, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, who kicked off the debate on this legislation. As a Quebecker, a Canadian and a francophone, he gave some great context about the importance of getting this legislation right.

In my time today, I want to talk about two things. One is Canadian content. Of course we all want more Canadian content. I also want to talk about the aspect of conventional broadcasters to give my constituents of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry who are watching this clip, or Canadians who may not be familiar with this legislation, the rules and background around it.

Government Orders

There is a rule for conventional broadcasters in this country that anywhere between 25% to 40% of their content must be Canadian. When we talk about conventional broadcasters, it is important to understand who they are. We are talking about CTV, Citytv, CBC and Global. Those companies have an easier time of meeting the requirement for Canadian content because they broadcast sports and have news programming. They also have to contribute a percentage of funds to the Canada Media Fund, which supports the production of Canadian content in this country. As parliamentarians, the challenge we face is that we need to debate and have good legislation on where these online platforms fit into that. Netflix has talked about wanting to create more Canadian content, but it is concerned, and this is where we get into a bit of red tape, that it is harder for it to meet that threshold because it does not have the sports and news programming a conventional broadcaster does.

Here is the crazy part and where the red tape is outdated and needs updating. My colleague, the shadow minister, mentioned *The Decline* in his speech, a Quebec feature film that was done in partnership with Netflix, and I believe was filmed in his riding. It used Canadian actors, had a Canadian crew and was filmed in Quebec. The economic impact was that it brought over \$5 million in economic growth to the province of Quebec. It checks all the boxes, except it could not be certified as Canadian content because it was financed and produced by Netflix, which is not recognized.

• (1205)

This speaks to where we literally have millions of dollars in economic development and a film based in Quebec with Canadian actors that cannot get recognized with some of the red tape and rules that are in place today. Netflix is trying to make an effort, but cannot get there. One would think that, when we talk about updating Bill C-10 and modernizing some of these laws, it would encompass some of those areas. Unfortunately, from what we have seen to date, without serious amendment, I do not believe it is there.

One of the concerns we have with the legislation before us is that, for a lot of these parts, it would kick the can down the road on a lot of these decisions, saying that there is the intention to do something but will let the CRTC come up with the rules, regulations and deadlines on it. However, as a Parliament, I believe it may be our role to set those benchmarks. As well, there are provisions in the bill that would take away Parliament's ability to scrutinize some of these decisions and give that ability over to the CRTC.

To my colleagues on the government side or any party that, when my constituents ask me what I did to support Canadian content and the industry in Canada, if I were to say that I supported a bill that passed it over to the CRTC to deal with, I do not think they would be very happy with that.

[Translation]

I apologize in advance to the interpretation team because I am still in the process of learning French.

I am an anglophone from the very anglophone Dundas County, where there is not a lot of French-language content. There is a little in the Township of North Dundas and Dundas County.

Nevertheless, I feel that French-language content is very important, and not just for people living in Quebec or for francophones,

but for all Canadians. Canada needs lots of French-language content for people like me who want to study a second language, as well as for people who want to get to know French and francophone cultures.

A law like this would mean we would have to pass even more laws. I do not think this law is acceptable because it is not nearly good enough.

• (1210)

[English]

One thing we need to do is send Bill C-10 to committee. As we debate the bill in the coming weeks and months, likely with the Christmas recess coming up, I would encourage my colleagues on the government side and perhaps other parties that may be inclined to support the bill to make sure that we are modernizing, that we do not have a piece of legislation to say that we checked a box to make amendments to the Broadcasting Act, but rather have tangible, meaningful ways that update conventional broadcasters in the on-line industry.

We can all agree that we need modernization of this law. We can agree that we need to have more online platforms, get with the times and understand what is there. However, this legislation as a whole would kick the can down the road and would not address a lot of the key issues that Canadians expect with legislation such as this.

I am supportive of more francophone and French content, LGBT content and first nations content, absolutely, but it is our Parliament with the oversight that we deserve here to hold the government of today and future governments accountable to those rules. We can go back to our constituents to say that we are doing meaningful things, not passing it to another body and not reducing transparency, but making it stronger than ever.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill C-10 today. I look forward to following the debate in the coming months and, as always, I look forward to questions from my colleagues on the legislation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's approach in dealing with the legislation.

The member is right in the sense that a lot has changed and that we need to modernize the legislation. I suspect that I have a little more confidence in the CRTC than the member opposite as I see the high level of expertise that is there, but I share the concern regarding how important it is that we have Canadian content. I think we could find some common ground.

The member is right in the sense that, if by chance, the bill went to the committee stage prior to us recessing, it would provide the committee the opportunity to do a little more work potentially. Does the member have some specific amendments in mind that he may have shared with the department? I would encourage him to share, particularly with the minister, who I know would be open to changes that would improve the legislation.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member for Winnipeg North adding more comments, as he does on many pieces of legislation.

There is unanimous agreement that we need more Canadian content. The issue is how best to do that. We will hear more from our shadow minister. His opening speech was about 20 minutes and it gave a lot of details. It talked about the Quebec feature film, about updating the rules to say that players like Netflix have the opportunity to create more Canadian content and about some of the red tape and rules around how we can do that.

That is certainly part of what we want to do, not just our Quebec team or our francophone team. We will be coming up with a lot of suggestions and perhaps amendments.

Respectfully, we are going to need some serious changes and a commitment to serious changes at committee or before final reading, if I am to support it. I will follow this and see what happens. My commitment is always to try to be constructive and give ideas to get more Canadian content in the coming months.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest. The problem we are dealing with is that we have the best solution of 1995 for a problem of 2020. We all agree about the incredible power of the Canadian cultural industries, and that is now an issue we can expand internationally. That is the one issue.

The other is, how do we hold the tech giants accountable? To turn it over to the CRTC is ridiculous. We have a couple of key issues here. Facebook is still not paying taxes. We will not see the Liberal government tell Mark Zuckerberg to pay tax. If Facebook paid taxes, we would have a lot of resources, but the Liberal government will not do that.

The safe harbour provisions allow Pornhub to host child pornography right in Canada. The Liberal government will not take on the safe harbour provisions, because it will not stand up to Google or Facebook. It will punt it to the CRTC and tell us how great it was back when we had the *King of Kensington*, and we could do those days again. Those days are gone.

We need a plan to deal with the tech giants and to hold them accountable, the way other jurisdictions are. Then we need to discuss how we promote Canadian content. There are two issues, but they have been blurred into this menage that is not coherent.

• (1215)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I find myself saying this too much when we have these debates, but I agree with the member for Timmins—James Bay. I cannot believe I am saying this, that we have some agreement on the frustrations.

Government Orders

I go back to the member's point about kicking the can over to the CRTC. Parliament needs to be more active in the promotion of Canadian content and in the regulation of this. I agree with him when we talk about the giant tech companies like Facebook and Google.

The frank reality is that we need to have more tough conversations about these companies and what they are doing. We can talk about MindGeek and Pornhub and what they are not doing from a perspective of revenue and contribution to our Canadian economy, but also from a public safety perspective.

I was horrified to see a story in the last few days, I think it was in The New York Times. It talked about MindGeek and the lack of protections. In the year 2020, for all the advancements we have made in online broadcasting and technology, to still have these gaps from a tax perspective, a government perspective, a privacy perspective and safety against children from being victims of sex trafficking, sex crimes perspective, whatever it may be, says a lot.

I will go back to the same thing about Bill C-10. It does very little to actually resolve the key issues that Canadians want to see addressed.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to Bill C-10. To quote the Minister of Canadian Heritage in the official background documents for the legislation, it states unequivocally:

Canadians have a right to recognize themselves in the music they listen to and the television they watch. We are proposing major changes to the Broadcasting Act in order to ensure online broadcasting services that operate in Canada contribute to the creation, production and distribution of Canadian stories.

I share the minister's support of Canadian music, movies and television, or as I will call it throughout this speech, CanCon. However, the bill may do exactly the opposite of supporting CanCon. It is not about the intent of a bill but about the reality, and I believe we will all see room for some serious concerns on this issue during my talk today.

I would like to point out that notwithstanding any criticisms I make, changes need to be made to rules surrounding production and creation of CanCon. We need to revisit the content qualification rules that specify whether something is Canadian. We heard a great example in the speech just prior to mine about a production in Quebec that did not qualify as CanCon even though it was produced in Canada and told Canadian stories.

Government Orders

There is a real need to look at these thresholds. However, when we dig deeper into what is being proposed by the minister, his commentary about wanting to licence Canadian Internet content producers, the realities of digital content creation and the big tech corporations that dominate the media landscape today, it becomes apparent to me that the bill has serious shortcomings. The bill may lay the foundation in the future for a series of government interventions that have the potential to damage the creative and innovative Canadian media producers in the digital field.

On November 3, the day the legislation was introduced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, several Canadian media experts spoke out publicly against Bill C-10.

An article published in *The Globe and Mail*, for example, entitled “Broadcasting bill targets online streaming services”, mentions digital media expert and University of Ottawa law professor Michael Geist. I have enjoyed reading his daily blog posts on this issue. It is very informative. He said that the policy foundation behind Bill C-10 was very weak and that the government's claims that the Canadian film and television production industry was in crisis was not supported by evidence.

Mr. Geist said, “The truth is that the market has been working...well as Canada being an attractive place to invest in these areas.” He further stated that what was actually at risk was that some of the largest investors in film and television production would pull back until they had more certainty on their obligation and that new services would think twice before entering the Canadian market.

Perhaps more concerning for the government is that in that same news article, the well-known advocacy group, the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, which specifically promote Canadian content, called the bill “a mess that fails to ensure the companies are subject to specific requirements for using Canadian production teams.”

I am personally concerned by the fact that the legislation does, as mentioned by the member prior to me in his speech, give a vastly enhanced range of abilities to the CRTC. For example, it grants it full enforcement powers, while at the same time providing no full-some detail as to the guidelines for Canadian content production and future contributions to the Canadian media fund.

Despite asking MPs to vote in support of the legislation, it is hard to shake the fact that the lack of details creates a situation where we have to trust the government and see the details later. We should all find that problematic.

To go back to some comments made by Mr. Geist, the law professor in Ottawa, the primary concern to examine, in his view, is that the policy foundation for the bill is weak. He has stated that CanCon is not in crisis and the level playing field claims are misleading. The example of the CanCon production here is relevant. The minister has acknowledged that foreign-based streaming companies are investing directly into Canada, but the minister wishes to compel such investments to be made mandatory.

In the words of Mr. Geist, this indicates a lack of confidence in our ability to compete and in fact flies in the face of all the evidence. Just hear me out here.

The CRTC chair, Ian Scott, has already said that Netflix is probably the biggest single contributor to the Canadian production sector today. The Canadian media industry has received record amounts of investment for film and television production. Over the last decade, investment levels have nearly doubled. Certified Canadian content has grown, with two of the largest years on record for CanCon television production having taken place within the last three calendar years. Last year was the biggest year for French language production over the last decade.

● (1220)

When we dig down into the available provincial data, we will find further evidence of production levels setting new records. Earlier this year, the Ontario government's agency for cultural creations, called Ontario Creates, announced that it had a record-breaking year for Ontario's film and television sector, with more than \$2 billion in production spending for well over 300 productions.

Professor Dwayne Winseck at Carleton University is on record. In his annual review, he finds film and television production in Canada has continuously increased for two decades, most recently driven by massive investments from streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime.

These facts and figures show that the basis for which the minister claims Bill C-10 is necessary are actually contrary to reality and once again raises the issue of the unintended consequences of interfering in the wrong way in this sphere.

The second issue noted by Mr. Geist is that as opposed to creating certainty, the bill would create enormous short-term uncertainty. For those companies that do invest, they may not know if their investments will count.

I suspect that Amazon, Netflix and these types of companies will keep investing regardless of whether the bill is passed or not. However, many smaller streaming services, BritBox, Spuul, Crunchyroll, are not household names, but are among dozens of streaming services that have emerged in recent years to serve a global audience. Unless the CRTC provides specific exemptions for these niche services, many are likely to forgo the Canadian market entirely, given all the new regulatory costs. Many multicultural markets will be especially hard hit by what will amount to, by the bill, a regulatory firewall in Canada.

Another very interesting point that has been raised by certain critics is the topic of trade threats and retaliatory tariffs. This concern should be on all of our radar screens. According to Mr. Geist, in this case, Bill C-10 violates the general standards in the USMCA. The government is relying on the cultural exemption to allow for this, yet even with the exemption, the U.S. will still be entitled to levy retaliatory tariffs.

Given the claims by the minister that this will generate billions of dollars in financial benefit for the industry, the retaliatory tariffs could be enormous and given the reworked structure of the USMCA, the tariffs the U.S. launches against Canada need not be limited to cultural tariffs. It could target any sector it likes. This is a potential concern that needs to be examined.

The legislation is likely to result in less competition and higher costs. If we generate large revenues, we will face mandated Can-Con payment requirements that make no sense given the content. If we stay small, we will still have to comply with disclosure requirements that have no real incentive to grow past the threshold. That is assuming we see an actual threshold as none was listed in this legislation. This will result in less competition and less choice for the Canadian market.

I believe that the Netflixes and the Amazons will continue to invest, but as I mentioned earlier, some of the start-up companies that have specialized content, maybe multicultural content, will not know whether to invest in Canada or not because of the uncertainty around the bill. This will lead to a scenario where they will just avoid investing in Canada. We need to think about what this means for the future of Canadian content.

My view is that the bill is not protecting Canadian sovereignty. The legislation basically surrenders it to the Internet giants. Therefore, they will keep investing here, but I do not know if it opens up the ability for some of these other start-ups to do so. They will become the dominant funders and purchasers of Canadian content. Canadian broadcasters may not be able to compete for Canadian content, given the desire of the giants to meet their CRTC obligations. This would force big decisions to Amazon and Netflix and leave Canadian broadcasters and smaller streaming services on the outside looking in.

I would ask all of us here to heed the warnings of different experts who have raised valid concerns, whether they be trade or investment related, and let us take a look at amending the bill in a way that will answer those concerns.

• (1225)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a very firm proponent for freedom of the press and freedom of speech, but after hearing my colleague's comments on Bill C-10, I believe him to be of the view that there should be very limited regulation on the part of the government with respect to the information that is disseminated on the Internet through web giants, as he describes them.

I would ask him if he believes there should be some role for government to play with respect to regulating information that appears

online, for example, anti-vaccine campaigns or other information that is not based on science.

Mr. Derek Sloan: Madam Speaker, Canadians and others need to be free to raise concerns, whether on the Internet or elsewhere. Obviously things that are illegal, that inspire violence or incite criminal activity need to be regulated. When it comes to general discussions and raising concerns, we have a right to do so. I would be concerned by any member, and I am not suggesting this member was, in a parliamentary democracy such as ours suggesting that there needs to be some ethereal censorship board somewhere that decides what concerns are valid. In this country, citizens raise concerns and they elect representatives to represent them in government. We are a function of that and need to allow citizens to express their concerns.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The Broadcasting Act is absolutely outdated, and we are trying to move forward so that everyone who benefits from the broadcasting ecosystem can contribute to the production of Canadian or Quebec content.

Bill C-10 is a step forward. However, it completely ignores social media that broadcast content, such as YouTube. I therefore think we need to expand the definition of broadcaster, because if it takes another 30 years to review this new legislation, which is how long it took to review the old one, it will be important to ensure that, regardless of the broadcaster, we can bring everyone who benefits from culture around the same table, so they can contribute financially to producing that culture.

[English]

Mr. Derek Sloan: Madam Speaker, the member has indicated another shortcoming of the bill. As I mentioned in my speech, we need to make sure that we are promoting Canadian content and not advantaging certain providers over others. There needs to be an even playing field for everybody, and I am not sure the bill does that.

• (1230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I was surprised when the hon. member referenced the FRIENDS of Canadian Broadcasting, as that organization's strongest criticism of Bill C-10 was its failure to provide long-term sustainable funding and a path forward for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I was under the impression that the party to which the hon. member belongs was not in favour of expanding CBC funding or of better supporting our public broadcaster.

I would like to ask the member's opinion, and if he is in fact supporting the demands of FRIENDS of Canadian Broadcasting?

Government Orders

Mr. Derek Sloan: Madam Speaker, my point was to identify that there are concerns related to the bill coming from various political persuasions and various parts of Canadian society. With respect to the specific contention on the CBC, I agree with my party's general contentions in that vein, but it is fair to say that on the bill a variety of concerns are coming from different areas, and I am happy to raise those.

* * *

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I wish to get back to the House in respect to the request that was earlier posed by the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona in respect to an emergency debate. I want to thank him again for bringing this to the attention of the House. I have taken into consideration the arguments that he put forward, and I am not persuaded that the request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders.

* * *

[Translation]

BROADCASTING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here today to speak at second reading stage of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

Let me begin by saying that we have some serious reservations about this bill. I will have the chance to talk later in greater detail about the major powers being given to the CRTC, the lack of definition on certain important issues, as well as the fact that it does not fix essential problems that directly affect the broadcast of information and the current more modern context of web giants and social media. I will also come back to the lack of consideration given to French in this new legislation, which was surprising and disappointing coming from the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

First, let's be clear. It goes without saying that we are in favour of reviewing the Broadcasting Act. The last review occurred 28 years ago. The Internet was available on some university campuses and in some spheres such as the Department of National Defence, but it was not part of our daily lives like it is now.

Twenty-eight years ago, anyone who knew a little English may have known what the word "Google" referred to, but that was about it. If, 28 years ago, we had mentioned Facebook to our children, neighbours or friends, they would have given us a weird look and asked what we were talking about. It makes sense, then, for the Broadcasting Act to be reviewed after 28 years.

However, it is disappointing to see that the government is not going deeper on important issues like the web giants and social media platforms. That is disappointing, because we are already going through the bill 28 years later, so we might as well do it right and not put off regulating certain issues, like these ones in particular.

Now, 28 years later, the Broadcasting Act is in need of updating, meaning that it needs to be reviewed and then amended. Furthermore, the Conservatives agree on the principle of fairness regarding the web giants and social media platforms. We need to ensure that people who pay for and use these online services and people who pay for and use so-called traditional services, such as cable, are treated the same way. We need to ensure this process is fair and that taxes are collected fairly.

We are guided by these two principles: The Broadcasting Act must be reviewed and we must address the new realities and respect the principle of fairness. I will now speak to the matters that concern us.

First, let us talk about the French language. Even though the Minister of Canadian Heritage and I may have serious differences of opinion on certain matters, I am in complete agreement with him on one thing: the importance of French. At our request, the House had a take-note debate on this and the minister asked us out of the love we all have for the French language, to defend it and preserve it in Canada. This applies in particular to Montreal where, by its very nature and the fact that there are seven to eight million francophones in a sea of almost 350 million anglophones in North America, it is only natural that French be deemed worthy of always being preserved.

If ever there were a vehicle to help protect the French language, goodness knows it would be broadcasting, the web and communications, and yet, French is somewhat neglected in this bill, which is disappointing. French is specifically mentioned twice in this bill. Before reading it out, however, I will put on my glasses, because no matter how much I speak, I still need to know how to read, and if I am going to read, I might as well read properly. I am 56 years old and I fully accept what that entails. I have white hair, I have wrinkles, and that also comes with glasses. I am going to stop talking nonsense and get serious again.

The one and only measure to improve the place of French can be found in the proposed amended version of paragraph 3(1)(k) of the act, which states that "a range of broadcasting services in English and in French shall be progressively extended to all Canadians" as resources become available. That wording is nothing more than wishful thinking, although the government boasts that it is doing everything it can to protect the French language. It can hardly be said in this case that it is written in black and white and backed by concrete actions.

● (1235)

We think this situation is unacceptable, and it represents a far too vague approach to protecting French.

This is no small thing, given that the debate on the importance of French is currently under way in Quebec and Canada and we are waiting for this government to finally introduce a new version of the Official Languages Act. Rather than honouring and respecting its commitments under the act, the government has decided to publish a white paper. We know what a white paper is: When we read it, there are only blank pages, because it does not propose any concrete measures on the subject at hand.

We would have liked this bill to have a little more muscle. Unfortunately, it is not what we expected. However, we acknowledge and applaud the fact that there are proactive measures regarding indigenous people, racialized individuals and members of the LGBTQ2 community. We agree with all of that.

However, we believe that French would have been entitled to the same attention that was given to indigenous communities. For the benefit of members who might not know my story, in 1984, I started my radio career at CIHW-FM 100.3, in Wendake, so I am fully aware of the importance of radio and broadcasting for indigenous communities.

Therefore, we believe that this does not solve the issue of social media and web giants. Quite frankly, we would have expected some basic guidelines, frameworks and fairness with respect to social media and web giants.

As I said at the outset, and everyone recognizes this, 28 years ago, when someone talked about “the web”, you had to know a little bit of English to know that they were referring to an actual web. The word was not commonly understood in everyday speech. So while the Broadcasting Act needs to be refreshed, the government needs to directly address the issue of social media and web giants.

In this case, we do not feel that this bill resolves the major problems this new reality created. It goes without saying that we agree on what is happening. We have to pay attention and not fool ourselves. We are in no way suggesting that this reality does not exist. We are not against it. It exists, and all we have to do is regulate things properly.

Often, the best regulations are those that create an equitable framework that allows and protects freedom of expression. The rules must apply to each and every one of us. We must not create two classes of news media where some broadcasters have certain obligations while others, like online outlets, are subject to different kinds of regulations. Fairness is important here, but unfortunately, the government came up short in that department.

Earlier, I was talking about the CRTC's inherent powers. We have very serious reservations about that because it gives the CRTC considerable discretionary authority to define what constitutes an online enterprise and to force such enterprises to spend money producing and broadcasting Canadian content.

Of course, we recognize that the CRTC has a role to play in making sure that everything is done properly, but the way the current bill is drafted, we think it has been given far too much power. We have nothing against the CRTC, but if you give the CRTC all the powers, you have to give it the means to do what it wants to do. Also, this provides a structure that means that it takes a long time before results can be implemented. As a result, the common good is not very well served in all of this.

Following this second stage of the bill, a parliamentary committee will study it and propose amendments. Our critic in this area will make proposals to move in the direction we are interested in, which is to freshen up the Broadcasting Act.

We are obviously in favour of fairness, but these two elements still need to be included in the bill. That is not quite what we are

seeing right now. We hope that the improvements and amendments that we will bring forward in committee will be accepted by the government.

● (1240)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, not 15 minutes ago we heard a speech by a Conservative colleague who said that French content has already increased considerably over the past few years when his government was in power and that we needed to allow the market to operate without additional regulation.

Then, moments ago, we heard another speech by a Conservative member who says that we need to do more to encourage franco-phone content.

I would like my colleague to tell me what the Conservative Party's position is on this matter and on the provisions in this bill that introduce some very serious fines for web giants. I think he would agree that there needs to be more regulation, as our bill proposes. The proposed fines are the stiffest in the world.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments and remarks from the parliamentary secretary to the minister who introduced this bill.

It is rather odd to hear a member of the Liberal Party of Canada come to the defence of the French language when we know that, unfortunately, that party's top official in Quebec believes that Bill 101 is just fine as it is and there is no need to go any further. We, on the other hand, believe that Bill 101 should apply to federally regulated businesses. One of the member's colleagues, who I believe represents a riding neighbouring her own, expressed serious doubts about the importance of Bill 101 in Quebec. Twenty minutes after officially backtracking in parliamentary committee, the member in question expressed support for an online post that said the exact opposite of what she had just said. There is no consistency.

On top of that, those folks were elected five years ago after saying that the Official Languages Act needed to be revised and that they would do everything they could to move that forward, and now, five years later, all we have gotten is the promise of a white paper.

I would like the government side to do its job when it comes to French before passing judgment on anyone.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of modernizing the Broadcasting Act given the rapid and staggering evolution of information and communications technology.

Does my colleague believe that Bill C-10 is designed to really reflect and make room for the perspectives of indigenous peoples, Quebecers, racialized communities and various other ethnocultural communities?

Government Orders

• (1245)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comment and I commend him on his new mandate, which he received a year and several months ago now. I really appreciated the work we do together. I would like to digress a little, if I may, because we are talking about communication after all. My colleague's father was a major player in the communications industry in the 20th century when he worked as a press photographer in Quebec and across Canada. I wanted to point that out.

The member talked about the representation of indigenous, racialized and LGBT communities. We are in favour of that principle, but we would have liked the same attention to be given to French. That is what is missing from this bill right now. Some future plans were mentioned and that is fine. We cannot be against that, but a lot is being said and very little is actually being done.

However, we agree that indigenous communities need more representation. The same is true for racialized and LGBT communities.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I do indeed think that, after 28 years, the act needed to be reviewed, because technology has advanced. However, it seems that the government did not finish the job. There are still a bunch of holes left. Some players are not at the table. The way it works is, if you benefit from the system, you have to contribute to the system.

The CRTC has totally arbitrary exemption powers. Broadcasting on social media like YouTube is not included, and Internet service providers are not included either. Cable companies are, however. In other words, if you watch your TV show on cable, the company will contribute to the system to create original content. However, if you watch your show on Videotron Wi-Fi, in that case, the company does not contribute to creating content.

What does my colleague think of that?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, it is a little like what we were talking about earlier. We support the fairness principle, but unfortunately, this bill does not directly address the issue of web giants, social media and fairness. We believe that the government has failed in its duty in this regard.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be able to speak on the modernization of this act. As my colleague, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, said earlier, it is an act that absolutely needs to be modernized.

As we have heard, this act has effectively been in place since 1991. It has not been modernized up to this point. With all of the changes that have gone on in the digital world, and I think the list is as long as the day in terms of the digital changes that have occurred, there is no question that the Broadcasting Act needs to be modernized to meet the standard of 2020. I had to laugh at the comment of my colleague from Timmins—James Bay earlier that this bill brings a 1995 solution to a 2020 problem.

There are some concerns that we have—

Mr. Charlie Angus: You didn't mention the *King of Kensington* part.

Mr. John Brassard: And the *King of Kensington* part, too.

Madam Speaker, we have some concerns with the legislation. There are some good things, like all pieces of legislation, but there are certainly things that provide some inequity that need to be addressed. There have been numerous studies done over the years about upgrading the Broadcasting Act.

In fact, just recently there was a recommendation from the broadcasting and telecommunications legislative review, which published a report in 2020. It was appointed a few years ago, and its purpose was to look at the key pieces of legislation that govern our communications sector. In that report, there were 97 recommendations based on the objectives of supporting the creation, production and discoverability of Canadian content, and improving the rights of the digital consumer, amongst other things.

In the report, it spoke specifically, and of course Bill C-10 speaks specifically, to online platforms. It speaks to financial contributions by broadcasters and online undertakings, and an update to Canada's broadcasting and regulation policy. It also gives the CRTC increasing powers.

For us, that is probably one of the most concerning parts of the bill, among some others, the fact that it can impose an administrative monetary policy for violations of certain provisions of the act, such as contraventions of regulations or orders made under the act, broadcasting when prohibited to do so and failing to submit information. There are numerous things that the CRTC will gain power on with respect to this. It also provides for oversight of the Canadian broadcasting landscape.

There are things within the bill that definitely need to be worked on. Here is one of the things that the bill does not address, and I want to spend a considerable amount of time on this. Recently I had the opportunity to meet with Metroland newspapers, which is part of the Torstar group. They were advocating on behalf of online digital content.

As members know, the inequity that is created, the disparity of online digital content is significant for those content producers. Oftentimes many of those stories will end up on Facebook or even Google, and a lot of the ad revenue that is being created does not go back to the content providers. That means there has been a significant change in the landscape of digital content in this country as a result of players like Facebook and Google. Facebook and Google profit significantly from that content that is being provided, but those content producers do not. It is causing a significant problem.

In meeting with Metroland, Shaun and Elise brought to my attention some of those concerns. My hope is, and I am writing a letter in support of their ask, that some of what they are suggesting to level the playing field is actually adopted by the government fairly soon. What the bill would not do is address the concerns of the digital content providers.

Their concern, of course, is preserving a functioning journalism industry. They said at the time that citizens around the globe are demanding high-quality journalism and investigative reporting. Nonetheless, the ability of news publishers to continue providing such critical information is under threat by the market power and preferential regulatory treatment of dominant platforms in digital information. Democratic governments are recognizing market failures in the market for news, and they are now working to implement policies to address them.

• (1250)

Just the other day, I was in a conference Zoom call with the new owners of Torstar, who own Metroland Media. Overwhelmingly, the consensus of the community leaders who were on that call spoke about the role of journalism, the role of truth and the role of providing balance, particularly in the case of local journalism. We had quite an interesting discussion about that because, as we see the evolution of social media platforms, there is a level of disinformation. Therefore, it comes back to a matter of trust in the content being provided by these digital producers.

France, Spain, the U.K. and Australia have already passed regulations. In fact, I am told that just today Australia passed legislation to level the playing field. Again, in the context of Bill C-10, none of this is addressed in this piece of legislation. What the Australian legislation is designed to do is to reduce the effects of the platforms' market power and to restore balance and fairness in the market for digital advertising and digital news distribution, which is exactly what I heard from Metroland representatives when I met with them.

Other countries, including the U.S., are now analyzing how the market is dominated through those digital platforms, and they are developing regulatory reforms and legislation and beginning antitrust proceedings to rectify the platforms' market dominance. The hope is to continue that discussion here in Canada and end up with either regulation or legislation that solves that inequity in the country. When many of our allies, and I do not mean that in a war context but in regard to the countries that we are aligned with digitally, are engaging in that process, we need to start doing that as a country as well.

Consumer demand for news obviously remains high, not just in the local and national content but also digital content. That speaks to the need for more credible and professional news as a result of that increased demand. There was a time when there was no social media, obviously, and as Canadians we received our news from reputable sources and reputable news people. There is an online demand for that news to continue, but in some cases it is not indicative of what is important or what is factual in a lot of cases.

Therefore, supporting that level playing field for the digital content and the producers of it becomes critical in protecting the truth, and that is what the Metroland representatives are talking about. They are, in their words, approaching market failure because of the inequity that is happening. They reminded me that market failure occurs when participants in a market do not produce an economically and socially optimal outcome because of non-market factors. Examples might be the inclusion of regulatory barriers to enter or market power.

Government Orders

Market failures can take several forms and several of them are applicable to the market for digital ads and news in Canada. The most pressing failure that they indicated was the result of the market power of both Google and Facebook, which I referenced earlier. Google and Facebook, they say, are in an effective duopoly over the market for digital advertising in Canada and its peer nations. Those platforms have segmented the market between search, which is Google, and Facebook for social media, which limits the direct competition between the two.

I know I have spent a lot of time on levelling the digital playing field in support of local content producers, but the concern that I have and the hope that I have is that the government will recognize this inequity and will work toward regulation or legislation that allows for these local content producers and the individuals who work for them to be paid fairly, not just from a monetary standpoint in terms of income but also from advertising as well, because that becomes important to the viability, the sustainability and the legitimacy of the news business in this country, going forward.

I would be glad to answer any questions.

• (1255)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a lot of what I heard from the member's speech I agree with, as there is a lot of misinformation on social media platforms. He talked about more credible news, and I believe he was referring to those online sources.

A lot of what gets spread around are conspiracy theories, conspiracy theories that are then repeated by members of this House, including the member who just spoke, who yelled out the other day an anti-Semitic trope talking about George Soros.

Could the hon. member comment on the misinformation he speaks out against and why he uses that in this House?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, in the context of Bill C-10, I am not even going to dignify that with an answer.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He spoke at length about local content, but also about the media and journalism. The NDP is quite disappointed with the current bill. We hope we can improve it by amending it in committee.

Right now, many websites like Bing, MSN and Yahoo rebroadcast news content created by others, but they do not pay for the content. Unfortunately, Bill C-10 does absolutely nothing to force these web giants to pay for content created by real journalists.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, that is a very fair question. I think I addressed that at length in my speech on this bill. It goes back to precisely what I have been hearing from local digital content producers, not just from an advertising standpoint, but from an income standpoint. That inequity is existing and it is significant. It could lead to market failure from a digital content standpoint.

Government Orders

We must get to a point where we are able to provide that level playing field to allow the content to be shared. It will come. Other countries have done it, including Australia today. More importantly, the content producers and those who write must be paid fairly and quickly after this information is used by Facebook, Google or the other examples the member gave. Unless and until we get to that point, we are going to see a continued decline in digital content and sources in this country.

• (1300)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a couple of concerning things about this bill.

Number one, it gives more power to the CRTC, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, which is a big flag in this country. During the pandemic last summer, the CBC in its wisdom, decided to pull the local Compass, the half-hour newscast out of Prince Edward Island, with no consultation. It is their only newscast. The CRTC should be looking at the licencing agreement of CBC and Prince Edward Island, not just to give them a slap on their hands, but to fine the CBC for pulling that show, because it is in its licence agreement.

The other thing, and I want the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil to comment on this, is that order in council is given all precedent in this bill. It is the Cabinet and the heritage minister who will end making every decision at the cabinet table, which is absolutely wrong.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, to the latter point by the hon. member, we have seen that a lot of the legislation introduced in this place really has had that power consolidated through the executive branch of government. I look to some of the environmental bills that we have dealt with in the past, such as Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, for example, where the minister has the ultimate say. The power is not distributed among Parliament or even within the government, but within the executive branch. I am not surprised by that assertion, quite frankly, given the history of this government.

Secondly, the example in P.E.I. speaks to the insatiable appetite that people have for news, not just national or international news, but local news as well. It is not surprising to me when people push back as they did in P.E.I. They are seeking the truth as well.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to engage in this debate, which really does affect Canadian culture, how we see ourselves in the global marketplace and our identity as Canadians.

The Broadcasting Act has not been renewed or reviewed for 28 years, so it is time that we get this done. The problem is that, as is so typical with the Liberal government, it has brought forward legislation that is so deeply flawed that we, as Conservatives in the House who want to get it right, just cannot support it. I am going to go through some of those flaws, because they are significant, but the reason we are even talking about reviewing the Broadcasting Act is because the whole environment in which broadcasting takes place has changed.

We have moved from an environment in which digital forms of communication were mostly unknown to an environment in which we have digital platforms that are, in fact, challenging the role of

conventional broadcasters in Canada. We have to get this right, because there is a lot at stake. What is at stake is Canadian content and making sure that we, as Canadians, see ourselves in the products we see on television, on streaming services and in the movies. It is also important that we recognize that there are individuals and companies within Canada that are producing content, really good and in most cases Canadian content, that are actually not being reimbursed and compensated for that content.

I will start by highlighting that this bill, and this is one of the positives in it, will effectively add online businesses to our broadcasting regime. This is to make sure that we capture everything that is happening online of a broadcasting nature, and we include it in the regulations and the legislative regimes that we put in place. We do not want conventional broadcasters, which already operate within a set of rules, to be placed at a disadvantage when we have a whole set of other online content providers that operate either under a different set of rules or, in most cases, in the absence of rules. We want to get this right.

One of the challenges of this bill is that it does not address the monetization of content on some of the largest online content providers, the Facebooks and the Googles of the world. Recently, I met with Ken Goudswaard and Carly Ferguson from the Abbotsford News, our local newspaper. It is an excellent newspaper focused on the local issues that matter to our residents.

I met with them and the first thing they raised with me was the Broadcasting Act and the fact that they operate in an environment where the big players, such as Facebook and Google, take advantage of them. I asked how that happens, although I had an inkling of what they were going to say. They said they are producing 100% Canadian content within our community, the city of Abbotsford. They are the ones who pay the reporters, the layout people and everybody else who works in the newspaper office. They are the ones who pay for all of it. They then put that content online, and Facebook and Google get to then advertise off of that content without compensating the Abbotsford News for any of it. It is, in fact, a freebie.

These are the largest corporations in the world. They are also among the most profitable corporations in the world. They are not sharing their wealth and the income that our local content producers rightfully deserve. That is one of the failings of this legislation. It does not adequately address that challenge.

To Ken and to Carly, I say I am advocating for them. We Conservatives are advocating for them in the House. We want to make sure that those who deliver content, Canadian content, in Canada are also properly compensated for it, and that others do not get rich off their backs.

• (1305)

One of the other considerations is that the bill has a lack of clarity when it comes to the powers that would be granted to the CRTC. My colleague rightfully raised this challenge earlier in that much of the decision-making is vested in the Governor in Council. For Canadians who are wondering who the Governor in Council is, it is effectively the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the cabinet, who can simply, by fiat, say that this is what we are going to do and this is how much will be committed to Canadian content.

As members know, in Canada our broadcasters have to invest in Canadian content. They have no choice. We want to make sure that we, as Canadians, see ourselves in the products of online content, as well as in our broadcast media. They are committed to taking anywhere from 25% to 40% of their content and ensuring that it is Canadian. They also have to contribute 5% to the Canada Media Fund, which is a separate fund that helps Canadian content producers deliver Canadian content in a way that does not bankrupt them.

These support mechanisms are in place for Canadian broadcasters, the conventional broadcasters, but we have this whole other realm of content producers and content streaming services, the online platforms that are not part of that broadcasting regime. We want to make sure that they also play by the same set of rules that our domestic broadcasters have to play by.

Unfortunately, the powers to direct this are vested in the cabinet and the CRTC, but those powers are not clear on exactly what kind of requirements would be imposed upon our online streaming services when they deliver content to Canadians. There is no certainty, and if I were someone who was leading one of these streaming services, I would think that, until I had clarity from the Canadian authorities as to exactly how much I had to invest in Canadian content and how much it was going to cost me, I would probably hold off on any further investments, and that is not good for Canada.

To their credit, companies such as Netflix, Crave and Amazon Prime and others like them do invest in Canadian content already, but they are not subject to the same rules as our Canadian broadcasters and content providers, and that needs to change. What we are doing is levelling the playing field. Unfortunately, we do not know what the rules are for that level playing field.

Effectively, the government is saying to trust it. When have we heard that before from the Prime Minister? The irony here is that we have a Liberal government that is bringing forward Bill C-10 with changes to the Broadcasting Act that are supposed to enhance Canadian content. This is to drive home the fact that we are Canadian, we have a Canadian identity and we want to see ourselves in that content.

However, this is the same Prime Minister who publicly said that Canada has no core identity. Do members remember when he said that? We have no core identity but we want Canadian content. Members can see that there are so many flaws in this proposed legislation. Step by step, we need to deal with the Broadcasting Act in a manner that actually delivers exactly what Canadians need.

The last point I will make is that there is no reference at all to taxing the big boys. The Facebooks and Googles of this world are still not paying taxes in Canada. Are Netflix, Crave, Amazon Prime, Spotify and the others paying taxes in Canada? No, but they are driving major revenue growth from delivering their content here in Canada.

This is all about fairness. Bill C-10 does not deliver fairness, and for that reason we, as Conservatives, will be voting against the legislation.

• (1310)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member raised this a

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number of times in his speech, and I agree with him that the Internet giants not paying their fair share. However, I believe Crave may be a Canadian company, but I am happy to be corrected on that.

The member briefly touched on this in terms of taxation, but what does he think the role of the federal government should be, and what should it do to ensure that the Internet giants like Facebook pay their fair share?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I think if we were to ask Canadians what they expect, they would say they simply expect fairness. They are not asking us to overtax companies from other countries that are investing in a very good service for Canadians and in Canadian content. That is a good thing, but we need fairness. Fairness means a level playing field for everybody, so taxation should not only focus on Canadians, but focus on everybody who derives income from delivering content within our country.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my Conservative colleague for his truly passionate and fascinating speech.

I fully share his indignation about the fact that web giants do not pay taxes. However, I have some reservations when I consider the past few years. It seems to me that the Conservatives were in power from 2006 to 2015, and they did not do a single thing to fix this problem.

I do not understand why, because Google, Facebook and all these web giants did not spring up in the past couple weeks. They have existed for at least 15 to 20 years. Why did the Conservatives do absolutely nothing to address this when they were in power?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, the reality is that 10 or 15 years ago, Facebook, Google and some of the streaming services were not anywhere close to as pervasive as they are today. Today Canadians know that the big boys are the ones that deliver content and that many of them are getting away with not paying the requisite taxes they should be paying in Canada. I am in favour of making sure the playing field is level and that there is fairness for everybody.

Here we are in 2020. It is not 2010 or 2006, when the former Conservative government was elected. The digital online environment is dramatically different today than it was 15 years ago.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam President, I am pleased to hear that my Conservative colleague is finally on board with our position of advocating tax fairness and requiring web giants to pay taxes in Canada.

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I would like to ask him about workers. The current act states that predominant use must be made of Canadian talent, meaning Canadian or Quebec workers. Today, in this bill, there is no mention of this, which means that our workers will be used only where possible, subject to certain circumstances. We believe that this weakens the act. We are concerned for our artists, artisans and technicians. What does he think of this?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague raises a good point, and it is another one of the major flaws in this legislation and why the Conservatives cannot support it.

I do not know if he and the NDP will be supporting it, but the reality is that when we walk through Bill C-10 step by step, we see flaw after flaw. We could have done much better. Unfortunately, the bill is fundamentally flawed, which is why the Conservatives will not support it, but it is time to review our broadcasting environment in Canada and introduce fairness onto the playing field.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I ask for a brief question from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is hard to ask a brief question, because I am so deeply engaged in Canadian content and creativity.

I want to ask the hon. member if he thinks it would be better to keep the current section 3 of the Broadcasting Act. We do need modernization, but by getting rid of the language in section 3 regarding deeply embedded Canadian content, we would weaken the act.

I married into a family of actors. I am going to give a shout-out to my stepdaughter Janet Kidder, who is starring in *Star Trek: Discovery*. She plays Osyraa, an evil green villain, not like me, so—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to allow time for the member for Abbotsford to give a very short answer.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I did not really hear a question from the “evil green villain”, so I will leave it at that. She is not an evil green villain, I can assure everyone. She is a valuable colleague of ours in the House.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, how does one follow on the comments made by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands? I congratulate her relative for getting a role in *Star Trek: Discovery*. I am sure there are a lot of Trekkies out there who appreciate that and will watch with bated breath to see who she is portraying.

It is an honour for me to rise in the House today to join in the discussion of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

As the member for Abbotsford put on the table, there are some fundamental flaws with it, one of which relates to the Governor in Council. When we go through the bill, one thing that jumps out right away is the power the Governor in Council will have. There would be a lot of power situated in the minister's office and cabinet

when it comes to making decisions regarding Canadian content and broadcasting services, and that is a fundamental flaw in the bill.

What also pops out when reading the bill is the pretty broad definition of “online business”. I think that is what people were looking for.

Another issue my constituents have brought forward to me, which we will have time to talk about more, is the issue of giving more power to the CRTC. When we talk about the availability of online services, broadcasting and the news, most Canadians would like to see less power in the Ottawa bubble and the CRTC and more power throughout the country, as people would like to have more options.

I agree, and I think many members of the House would agree, that waiting 28 years to update a bill is a substantial length of time. The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry mentioned he was three years old when this act was introduced, and he talked about some of the great music then. Times have changed, and a lot of conversations need to be had now about how we are going to do business using online services with Facebook and Netflix.

What are we going to do? How are we going to do it? The members across the way have talked about what taxes should look like for very big corporations, and the member for Abbotsford brought it up very well when he said that when businesses come to Canada they expect to be treated fairly. That is something we need to keep in mind when we are looking at this legislation.

We talked about having Canadian content and making sure there is a level playing field when it comes to news services. I think the other issue we need to talk about is how smaller online businesses and news services are competing with the bigger online services. That needs to be levelled as well.

Some smaller businesses are trying to compete against taxpayer dollars. The member for Barrie—Innisfil said, very correctly, that some of these small local publications are trying to compete with the CBC online, and the CBC has a good online paper. The member for Saskatoon—Grasswood talked about how it just updated its online presence, which is wonderful, but that online presence is now competing with smaller online papers. It is very hard for them to compete, because they do not have the resources that bigger companies like CBC, CTV or Global have. We need to take that into consideration as well when we are looking at how we will be able to ensure that smaller publications have the ability to compete. A lot of Canadians across the country want to see competition in the online broadcasting field and the ability to have more selection and options when looking at online news and broadcasting.

We also need to have a discussion about how we are going to ensure there is correct information online. That conversation is important in this day and age. Some of the members across the way have brought up fake news, or whatever they like to call it, but I think it is also incumbent upon us to make sure we hold ourselves to a higher level of decorum in the House when debating bills. Let us not bring up issues that are not related to Bill C-10, nor have personal attacks back and forth during these speeches. That is below parliamentarians and below the level that our constituents expect from us. We need a higher level of discourse in this chamber.

• (1320)

I expect that to continue and expect us to raise the bar of decorum in the House to ensure that when we have debates about important legislation, we stick to the facts and the debate at hand. We must leave personal and partisan feelings away from the table when we have these conversations. I will do my best to ensure that there is good decorum in this chamber whenever I am on my feet to talk about important bills.

When we have conversations on Bill C-10, possible situations could arise that are interesting. The long-awaited legislation is the result of the Yale report on the framework for communications in Canada tabled in February 2020. The 97 recommendations of the report deal with social media, copyright, taxation of web giants and advertising fees to ensure the sustainability of traditional media. Bill C-10 is limited to the modernization of the Broadcasting Act, which essentially consists of introducing, as I said earlier, a very broad definition of online business, broadcasting cultural content and giving the CRTC broad discretion to regulate them where it does require a percentage of Canadian content, requires financial contributions and imposes fines to investigate compliance.

There are a lot of recommendations from the Yale report, which Bill C-10 is based on, that have not been implemented, and I think we should take some time to step back. That is why on this side we think Bill C-10 misses the mark in a few areas, especially regarding centralizing the discretion within the CRTC and within the Minister of Canadian Heritage's office, which we think is a big concern. Many of my colleagues have talked about that concern. We need to ensure there are broader consultations about where Canadians would like to see the ability to regulate and where our online business and our broadcasting ideas would come from.

We want more news available, and we want Canadian content within our broadcasting. However, the bill misses the mark on creating some fairness within the broadcasting sector and ensuring that we have space for smaller and start-up publications. There are a couple back home I can think of that would be hurt from not having a level playing field when starting up and competing with the larger companies, such as CBC, Global and CTV. They need to start with an online presence, because that helps.

I know, as do the young staff in my office, that there are not a lot of newspapers in the office anymore. We have our phones and PressReader, and we get much of our information from online sources.

I know the Regina Leader Post and The Star Phoenix have dropping publication numbers in Saskatchewan. They are working hard to make sure they have a large online presence because they realize

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that more and more people are getting their news from websites and through online services.

We need to allow for room in online businesses so they have the ability to compete. It is not as fair at this point as we would like to see it, and we wish there would have been the ability within Bill C-10 to create a more level playing field.

When it comes to online services, companies such as Netflix and Facebook should pay their fair share, as my colleagues across the way like to say. I think that is a good point, but they need to have certainty so that before they come to Canada, they know what the taxes or fees are going to be when they bring their businesses to Canada. Without certainty, it is very hard to attract new businesses and new tech companies to Canada if they do not know what the fees will be.

Given the uncertainty reasons and the power that is going to be situated within the CRTC and the minister's office, we have issues and concerns. That is why we will not be supporting this piece of legislation at this time.

• (1325)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that levelling the playing field and taxing web giants is the purview of the Minister of Finance, which is why the Minister of Finance, in the fall economic statement, said that we would be taxing web giants.

With respect to Bill C-10, which was presented by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, I would say, perhaps echoing colleagues from the Conservative Party, that it is high time we modernize the Broadcasting Act. I wonder why this colleague is suggesting that we should delay it further by doing more consultations. We have consulted extensively with the broadcasting sector, content providers and the culture industry here in Canada.

Unlike the Conservatives, who did not modernize the Broadcasting Act when they were in power for 10 years, we are proposing to do that now. It is 2020, and it is time to move forward. Would the member opposite agree?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, it is time to modernize the Broadcasting Act.

Would the member agree that all the power should not reside with the CRTC and with the office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, regarding what the Broadcasting Act should entail?

I have a problem with that. Canadians and constituents that I represent in Regina—Lewvan say that the CRTC does not need more power. It needs less power. That is definitely one reason why. It is because of the people I support. I have listened to people within my constituency and across Saskatchewan who firmly believe that there should be less power residing in the minister's office and in the CRTC, not more power.

Those would be two very good reasons why I cannot support this bill at this time.

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• (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would make a little correction to what the parliamentary secretary said. The Liberals are not going to tax web giants next year. They are going to make the consumers who use their services pay GST. That is not at all the same thing.

I really enjoyed my colleague's speech. He said that the definition of "broadcaster" was very broad, but a lot of people are saying that it is actually not broad enough and that this law should account for technologies that do not yet exist and that will be released in the future. For example, social media platforms are not considered broadcasters, even though there is a good chance that some of them will become broadcasters in the coming months. Things are moving very quickly.

Should we not create a bill that accounts for technological changes and that is broad enough to include them in the future?

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I agree completely with the member's statement.

One of the problems we had with this bill is that the definition was so broad, and there was not more included in it. The member is right: the modernization of this bill should include the fact that Facebook and Netflix should be seen as broadcasters. That would be a good solution.

That is probably one of the reasons why he may not be able to vote in favour of this bill, because that definition is not there.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I do agree with some of the things he said, including the fact that this bill relies too heavily on the CRTC. It is not that the people working for the CRTC are bad people, but I had some bad experiences with the CRTC a few years ago when I was the spokesperson for the Mouvement Montréal français. We had complained to the CRTC about some private radio stations in Quebec because they were not complying with quotas for French music, especially at peak listening hours. They were finding ways around the rules.

For example, they would edit English songs into one 10- to 15-minute-long track. Since the songs played consecutively without interruption, for quota purposes, that counted as a single song. Private radio stations were effectively playing a 15-minute English song at peak listening hours. It was ridiculous.

Does my colleague not think that, as legislators, we should give the CRTC much clearer rules, especially to protect French-language content?

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, that would be another issue that we have with the legislation. It does not provide any

benchmarks to legislate the percentage of French-language content. I would agree with the member.

I bet he is not the only one who has had issues with the CRTC, when it comes to people who have been involved in the broadcasting services. His interaction is probably not one that is replicated across the country with the hardworking people at the CRTC. We just think there should be a more strict delineation of power within the CRTC, and people across the country would like to have more say in what broadcasting standards should be.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, before we begin discussions on regulating content on the Internet, let us recognize that Canada has 38 million regulators. They are called customers. They are the people who decide what they watch. With the click of a mouse, they can choose the content that serves their interests. For the same reason, the ability to produce unique and diverse content is greater today than ever before. The advent of the Internet, far from limiting the production of Canadian content, has vastly expanded it by dramatically reducing the cost of production and distribution.

If members really think about it, the cost of producing and distributing content today is probably 99% lower than it was just 25 years ago. There are 14-year-old kids who can produce their own movie trailers on their laptop computers and broadcast them before as many eyes as want to see them, without spending a single dollar beyond the purchase of a bit of software and a laptop on which to design them, and the quality is probably superior to what Hollywood would have been able to create just a few decades ago.

This has democratized and expanded the scope of content. It has allowed minorities, and people with particular interests not held by the majority, to reach audiences. Back in the old days, people had to compete for real estate in HMV, the local record store or the local Blockbuster, and if someone was not among the top 50, they did not get that real estate. Even if their product was interesting to 3% of the public, they could not sell it to anybody, because they had no means of getting it to the public and they could not generate the capital to produce it in the first place.

I will acknowledge that the changes to which this bill proposes to respond are actually good changes. They are democratizing changes. They spread out power and diversity, which is something we should allow and that freedom provides.

The current government seeks to extend its reach and broaden its tentacles into the Internet.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Hear, hear.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: "Hear, hear," says the Liberal member across the way. Every once in a while the veil falls, and they reveal their true selves. I say they want to extend their tentacles into the Internet, and one of the most prominent Liberal MPs says, "Hear, hear." I thank him for his temporary and accidental honesty.

I will quote Andrew Coyne, who is far from a Conservative, who says in *The Globe and Mail*, which is far from a Conservative publication, “The Canadian government’s Bill C-10 has opened the door to serious state regulation of the Internet.” The Prime Minister has expressed his admiration for Fidel Castro and for the basic dictatorship of communist China; has attempted to use this pandemic to extend to himself the unmitigated power to raise any tax at any time by any amount, until 2022; has used a debate commission to put Craig Kielburger, and other Liberal insiders, in control of how the leaders’ debate would go; and has extended a taxpayer subsidy to the media and then put the head of Unifor, a Liberal-backed organization, in charge of how the money is given out. Whenever such a Prime Minister introduces a bill to extend the power of the state over the Internet, we should be very suspicious.

I will quote Mr. Coyne, who says:

While the government claims it would not empower the CRTC to regulate smaller services such as Britbox, social media sites such as Youtube or online news content, the bill contains no specific provisions that would prohibit it, and includes provisions that seem to allow it. For example, the bill exempts “programs that are uploaded to an online undertaking” by its users and “online undertakings whose broadcasting consist of only such programs.” It leaves the way open for the CRTC to regulate services that show both user-generated and curated content. Like Youtube.

That means we would be opening the door for the CRTC to regulate the kinds of things that everyday Canadians produce and upload onto the Internet.

• (1335)

We are allowing the CRTC, which is an already overly powerful bureaucracy of nameless, faceless government authorities, to potentially extend its regulation into what content people put on the Internet. It is no surprise the Prime Minister would want to limit and regulate that kind of content. Often the kind of independent material uploaded to the Internet by everyday Canadians is the only place outside of the House where he faces real criticism. He is not protected by the adoring glow of his supporters in the press gallery. Therefore, he has to contend with the scrutiny of everyday Canadians who dare criticize him or his ideological direction, or dare produce content that might contradict his world view.

The government refuses to clearly circumscribe the power of the CRTC, and it opens the door for that power to be extended. We can only assume it was designed for the very purpose of extending more control over what Canadians watch, read, hear and produce. That is further compounded by the fact that the bill allows the cabinet to have order-making power over the CRTC, and to direct how it will apply these brand new powers: powers that the member across the way is salivating over right now. Powers that he said, “Hear, hear” to, as soon as I suggested that he might have them.

We live in a free country. Everyday, ordinary Canadians should be allowed their own megaphones and the only limit on how loud and how vast their voices are should be whether people choose to listen to them. Everyday Canadians should be able to decide what they like by voting with their clicks. That is the kind of liberty we should extend to the Canadian people. In the marketplace of ideas, there is no role for state coercion and intimidation. There is no role for nameless, faceless government bureaucrats to decide who is heard and who is not. Everyday Canadian people should have the freedom to do that for themselves.

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If we, on this side of the House of Commons, are the only ones to stand up for free speech, then there a lot of Canadians who will stand with us. We know that we have, in the Prime Minister, someone who does not believe in free speech. After a French newspaper was the victim of a terrorist attack, he was asked about free speech and whether that publication should have freedom of expression. He said, “Freedom of expression is not unlimited”, as if to suggest that the attack against the publication was somehow justified on the grounds that the publication had improperly exercised freedom of expression, and that the state ought to have the ability to limit that expression. He then backed down, by the way. He came to the House of Commons and reversed himself completely, swallowed himself whole and realized how much he had humiliated himself by revealing his real thoughts to the Canadian people.

Every time the Prime Minister attempts to extend control over what we see, hear, read and produce, we ought to view the proposal through the lens of a man who believes in strong state control over its citizens. We on this side of the House will stand for the ancient liberties we have inherited from our ancestors and that we hope to bequeath to those who come after us.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I detect a Reform Party comeback when I listen to the member opposite. I am a bit surprised of the manner in which the member feels government does not have any role. If we listen to his comments, we would think that he wants to see the demise of the CRTC. From across the way, he gestures yes, what is wrong with that?

The vast majority of Canadians recognize the value of Canadian content, not to mention the thousands of jobs that come as a direct result. Through this legislation the government is ensuring Canadian content and good middle-class jobs. We are moving forward.

Why is the Conservative Party moving more to the Reform side? This is like going back to the Harper era in the extreme.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member wants to go back to 1984.

I will identify the member as the Liberal MP who yelled “Hear, hear!” when I said the government is attempting to extend its tentacles and take control over the Internet. He yelled out “Hear, hear!”, confirming my claim to be true.

We know the member’s bias. He believes that people like him should decide what everyday Canadians are allowed to see. He thinks that Canadians are too stupid or too morally bankrupt to choose for themselves, that he, in his ivory tower with his Liberal elitist friends, should be able to regulate what Canadians choose to watch because he, of course, is made of better clay. He is a superior, a thinker, and therefore should be able to regulate the thoughts of every single Canadian.

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We on this side disagree. We have faith in Canadians and believe they should have the freedom to choose for themselves.

● (1345)

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was very curious to hear what our Conservative colleagues would have to say about Bill C-10. I was actually wondering what was holding up the vote on this bill, when everyone on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the entire cultural and media sector are anxious for us to study this and move it forward.

Of course I understand my colleague's concerns about certain Internet regulations that will prevent misinformation, which they are probably a little more partial to than we are, but I do not see where freedom of expression is being infringed upon in any way in this bill. If he were to consult the players in the media and cultural sector in Quebec and Canada, my colleague would very quickly see that these are legitimate requests coming from the industry, that they are not ideological at all, and they have nothing to do with the online content that the government may or may not want to control.

I would like to know whether my colleague took the time to consult the cultural and media sector before forming his opinion on the matter.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, here is the centralist Bloc, which now wants more federal regulations. It wants an authority here in Ottawa to have more control over what Quebecers choose to watch and consume. The Bloc Québécois is contradicting itself. It is the centralist Bloc.

We think that Quebecers should be masters in their own house, that each of them should be able to choose for themselves what they watch on the Internet. A federal authority in Ottawa should not be deciding that for them.

He is asking me why I think that the government wants to control the Internet. I am looking at the comments of the minister, who said that people should have to get a licence from the federal government to produce online content. I would never have thought that a sovereignist party would support the idea of a federal authority in Ottawa requiring people to have a licence to express themselves.

We are the only party that will protect Quebecers' freedom of expression.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to once again debate in this place, and to debate a bill that takes on a special relevance in the year that we find ourselves in. The dynamics associated with online content have expanded dramatically with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We can look at the last number of decades. I recall back in high school, people were talking about how the speed of a computer was doubling every 90 days, and the next year they would say it was doubling every 45 days. The rate at which technology is advancing is incredible, and along with that come challenges and changing dynamics that definitely need to be addressed in legislation. With the tabling of the Yale report with the 97 recommendations, this is what

I would assume is part of that response, being that it addresses only a small number of those challenges.

Having stated the demands that we face and needing to make some of these changes, I would make a couple of observations about the bill.

I think of a few speeches from my colleagues preceding me, including the member for Carleton, the member for Abbotsford, the member for Regina—Lewvan, and others, who have articulated very well some of the challenges that we faced. I have some constituents who are real politicians, who do not just follow the news as it is seen on the news channels, but follow when bills are introduced and their responses were striking. When this bill was first tabled, I had a number of constituents who reached out and asked how do they know that this is not the government just trying to take more power, how do they know that this is not the government trying to regulate free thought, and how do they know that there is not a nefarious agenda at work here.

That speaks to some of the greater societal challenges that exist, especially when it comes to the way that the government members opposite conduct themselves and certainly some of the comments that the Prime Minister has made, whether regarding China or other aspects of society and even our country; or comments of the minister who is responsible for bringing forward this bill has made. There was a great deal of concern.

Certainly, my hope is that in the midst of the debate in this House the government members will articulate very clearly those concerns. I have here in front of me 14 pages; and yet, having read it, there is not a whole lot of clarity as to what is actually trying to be accomplished and that poses a problem. That is part of the reason that constituents reach out and ask what this is about. They have concerns because they do not trust the intentions that are brought forward in the preamble. Certainly, that is something that needs to be very much clarified.

There are a few points that need to be addressed, including leveling the playing field with the explosion of digital content. It is interesting that we are having this debate today when just a number of days ago there were some fairly significant conversations happening in the United States surrounding Facebook and whether it is too large and the government in the United States needs to take some antitrust actions. I would hope that the minister is following this carefully, and how it speaks to the larger issues that we face when it comes to addressing the evolving nature that is digital content.

A big part of my concern here is with what this bill would not ensure in regard to those web giants, because they are giants and they touch every part of our life. I have an Android phone and Google touches every part of my life, whether it is talking to my kids as they are tucked into bed at night and I am here in Ottawa or to do with my job as a member of Parliament, whatever the case is.

● (1350)

Facebook as well; what do we not see on Facebook these days? There is certainly a great deal of concern that it is not clearly articulated how some of these things would be addressed. As well, it is not made clear what the standards would be for those multinationals and the rules that domestic content suppliers and producers have here in Canada.

I want to talk about unleashing the private sector. There is a community in my constituency many in this House will know as Drumheller. It is the dinosaur capital of the world, the heart of the Canadian badlands. Not only is it known for the dinosaurs and the Royal Tyrrell Museum, and a big shout-out to everybody there and the challenges they are facing because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has been very interesting how that community has benefited greatly in content creation.

In fact, my wife suggested we watch the Netflix series *Lost in Space*, and I thought to myself that those hills looked familiar. It turns out I had not been to that planet, but rather I had driven through Drumheller. It was filmed there, and of course there was some CGI and whatnot associated with it, but there is incredible work done here in Canada. It is not just solely Canadian content like we see sometimes produced by the CBC, and although there are some aspects of that content a lot of people are very proud of, there is a lot of it that quite frankly I question why tax dollars go toward paying for.

There is a lot shot in Canada, whether it be Vancouver, the Prairies or Toronto. A number of television shows supposedly based in New York are actually shot in downtown Toronto. It is absolutely incredible how much Canadian content there is and to ensure the free market is absolutely unleashed, to ensure Canada is a destination for that investment and the jobs that come along with it.

When the Leader of the Opposition was running for the leadership of the party, I was very pleased he addressed one of these things, which was to eliminate the goods and services tax on Canadian digital platforms as a mechanism to say that it is an equal playing field. It is something that bears mentioning in this place.

I will discuss a couple of other issues and then I will wrap up with a very important one. Nothing in this bill seems to address the issue of royalty sharing to media content shared on digital media. It does not explain how digital platforms would be treated versus more conventional broadcasting. It would give full enforcement powers to the CRTC, and like the member for Carleton articulated very well, I certainly have a great deal of concern when enforcement powers are given. Like the member for Abbotsford mentioned before, there is a tremendous amount of hesitation when the minister has the final say on a lot of the governance aspects of how content is done.

There are a number of other concerns, but I do not think I will have time to get to them, so I will finish with simply this. All Canadians should be concerned with The New York Times editorial, and it has been discussed in this House, related to the exploitation of children on the web giants like MindGeek's Pornhub. A tremendous number of issues need to be addressed, which I do not have the time to get into today.

Statements by Members

The New York Times exposé and some of the debate that has taken place subsequently here and around the world look to make sure there is a clear understanding of how we can ensure those most vulnerable among us are protected. I simply finish my remarks with that.

● (1355)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions for my hon. colleague.

Bill C-10 is a direct response from artists, musicians, independent producers and technicians in the arts and culture sector in Canada. They are saying that we are losing our cultural sovereignty. What the member said is true. A number of productions are happening in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and Manitoba, but these are service productions with American stories being told. They are telling us that we are losing our cultural sovereignty, and I think the Conservative Party recognizes that.

In fact, a few days ago, the Conservative MPs for Lakeland, Portage—Lisgar and Peace River—Westlock all said that government needed to intervene to regulate online platforms. However, the minute we try to do something and the first attempt we make at doing that, they say we are trying to take away free speech.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments, but I do not think there was a question there.

I am no expert on media and production, but I have talked to many filmmakers. In fact, I am proud to have a filmmaker in my constituency who is creating a film production base. It is a ready-made set that people can use, whether international, domestic, local, indigenous, French, whatever may be the case.

It is interesting that the minister raises those issues, because the bill does not seem to address the very things he suggested it would. There is ambiguity in what the bill attempts to address. Therefore, how can a producer, how can a content—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have three minutes for questions following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the pandemic has hit families within my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard. Especially hard hit are those families with children with disabilities.

Statements by Members

Amelia is a four-year-old girl in my riding. She has an extremely rare genetic condition. Amelia cannot walk, cannot sit and cannot see. Amelia's condition causes her severe seizures daily. Amelia is fully dependent upon her family for all her activities of daily living. Amelia's family actually needs accommodations in order for her to live a fulsome life. As COVID-19 hit, the cost of those accommodations to their home through the form of reparations skyrocketed.

Elsewhere in my riding, I have also heard of a dad who was taking care of his autistic son. Those supports that he needed to access have been strained and have not been as readily available.

I want to take this moment to share their stories with all members in the House and with all Canadians. We hear them and we support them.

* * *

CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a former immigrant, I rise today to represent millions of immigrants who have followed the rules and regulations to become Canadians.

Newcomers are proud of completing the criminal record checks, proud of proving their education and skills and proud of acquiring jobs which benefit our new home here.

However, because of the joy of becoming Canadians and the pride in our contributions to this country, we are heartbroken that such a glaring loophole exists that allows exploitation in getting Canadian citizenship. This loophole is exploited by overseas businesses, profiting by arranging for birth-giving vacation-like packages that cheapen our citizenship and the hard work of those who obtain it the right way.

Sadly, this problem is prevalent across Canada, jumping 13% in just one year. So far, our government has taken no action to see it hindered. To be a Canadian citizen is a sacred trust, a commitment to a set of democratic norms and ideals that bind us to our history and the promise of our future.

I call upon the government to protect that very trust.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on this Human Rights Day, I want to honour the human rights defenders who put their lives at risk to advance ours.

These heroes led the movement denouncing systemic racism and police brutality against indigenous peoples, Black and racialized Canadians. They reminded us that Black lives matter. They demanded accountability for victims of sexual assault and gender-based violence. They continue to call on their fellow Canadians to protect the world's most vulnerable, including children, refugees, members of the LBGTQI communities, religious minorities and those marred by war.

Our government has heard these voices loud and clear. Last month we convened the first federal-provincial-territorial meeting on human rights, our second one since taking office in 2015.

Last week we introduced landmark legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This legislation was inspired by so many indigenous peoples, and is built on the work of Romeo Saganash in the last Parliament.

In the year of COVID, let us recommit to achieving human rights for all.

* * *

[Translation]

DOMINIQUE FORTIER AND ÉMÉLIE BERNIER

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, Quebec is making a name for itself in its official language. Today, I speak for all Quebecers who are proud of their fellow citizens.

Dominique Fortier is originally from the greater Quebec City area, more specifically Cap-Rouge. She is the first Quebec author to win one of the most prestigious literary awards in the Francophonie, the Renaudot prize, in the essay category. Because of this award, her book, *Les villes de papier*, about the imaginary life of the American poet Emily Dickinson, will be famous throughout the Francophonie.

In Charlevoix, the power of words is essential to the survival of a people, and Émélie Bernier is harnessing that power for Quebec. She won first prize in the news reporting category at the Grands Prix des Hebdomas for her reporting on the slaughter of wolves. She also took home five other awards, bringing great honour to the weekly newspaper *Le Charlevoisien* for the quality of its content and writing. That is happening back home in Charlevoix.

To Dominique Fortier—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Hochelaga.

* * *

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been quite a year, and the people of Hochelaga have shown exceptional resilience in 2020.

This holiday season, I encourage everyone to give back, whether by donating to food banks or by volunteering. I encourage everyone to buy their presents from small local businesses, to thank all those who work in our health care system and in essential services, who are on the front lines of this crisis, and to protect their loved ones and themselves by continuing to follow public health rules.

I thank the community organizations that are stepping up their efforts to help the less fortunate during the holidays, including the Hochelaga community centre, Bouffe-Action in Rosemont, Projet Harmonie, Table de quartier Hochelaga-Maisonneuve and the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve community kitchen.

Happy holidays to the people of Hochelaga. Rest well so that we can start 2021 strong.

Merry Christmas, everyone.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN GEORGETOWN CHAPTER

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Georgetown chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women in Wellington—Halton Hills.

In the summer of 1971, a group of friends gathered with the idea of promoting public education, human rights and civic engagement. They became the Georgetown chapter of the CFUW, a self-funded non-partisan organization with over 8,000 members and 100 chapters across Canada.

Over the past 50 years, the Georgetown chapter has raised thousands of dollars for local youth scholarships, hosted election debates, run children's programming and supported numerous community causes.

I congratulate the Georgetown chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women on this bicentennial. Many thanks for their contribution over so many decades to our community.

* * *

LOU MARSH AWARD

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a tie. This week, the Lou Marsh, the award for Canada's top athlete, went to two great Canadian footballers, Edmonton's Alphonso Davies and Montreal's Laurent Duvernay-Tardif.

Alphonso Davies was born in a refugee camp in Ghana after his parents fled the civil war in Liberia. When he was five, they settled in Edmonton and became Canadian citizens. At just 19 years old, number 19 became a champion's league winner with Bayern Munich. Alphonso always plays with a huge smile on his face and represents a bright future for Canada's men's soccer team.

Laurent Duvernay-Tardif is an offensive guard with the 54th Super Bowl champion Kansas City Chiefs. He played for McGill University where he earned his medical degree before being drafted to the NFL in the sixth round. He was featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated when he decided to skip the 2020 football season to fight the coronavirus outbreak on the front lines at a long-term care facility in Quebec.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

These are two very inspiring Canadian athletes. I ask everyone in the House today to join me in congratulating the winners of the 2020 Lou Marsh award, Alphonso Davies and Laurent Duvernay-Tardif.

* * *

[English]

HANUKKAH

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight at sundown marks the first night of Hanukkah. In my riding of York Centre and communities across Canada and around the world, millions of Jewish families will light the Hanukkah and celebrate the festival of lights with their loved ones.

Though this year we cannot gather with family, friends and our neighbours, the story of Hanukkah, of perseverance and resilience, of hope and triumph against oppression, is a timeless reminder of the spirit that guides us through our challenges today.

Each night of Hanukkah we add another candle, increasing the light surrounding our homes and our families. This tradition shines brightly and reflects the vibrancy of the Jewish community. It is also a symbol of the power of one's convictions in the face of adversity, that spark of inspiration, the light that travels from candle to candle, person to person, household to household and to all our communities. It is the light that drives out the darkness. This is the strength that is Canada in its diversity and its inclusion.

With the festival of lights beginning, on behalf of all my constituents, I would like to wish all members of the House and all Canadians a happy and healthy holiday season.

[Chag urim sameach]. Happy Hanukkah.

* * *

FREDERICK SASAKAMOOSE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very saddened when told that Frederick Sasakamoose passed away from COVID-19 complications in late November.

Freddy was the NHL's first indigenous player with treaty status. He made his official debut in 1954 with the Chicago Blackhawks. On *Hockey Night in Canada*, he taught Foster Hewitt how to pronounce his last name.

Sasakamoose played against greats such as Gordie Howe, Jean Beliveau, Maurice Richard, but after 12 games, he realized his heart was not in the NHL but back at Sandy Lake.

Fred's story was far from over following his NHL days. He played another decade in western Canada, he became a band councillor, served as chief and established athletic programs for kids.

Statements by Members

As a child, Freddy would play hockey and skated in my hometown of Canwood. In his later life, he played recreational hockey in Canwood. I can still remember watching Freddy skate down the ice, cross the centerline, top the circles, let go of that famous snapshot and say to myself, "Thank God I'm not the goalie."

I pass on my condolences to Neil and the entire Sasakamoose family. Freddy was a great man.

* * *

● (1410)

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Human Rights Day. I am proud to say that as a part of our Subcommittee on International Human Rights, we as Canadians have stood together to listen to heart-wrenching testimonies from witnesses across the globe. This year has been rightly themed at "Recover Better - Stand Up for Human Rights".

Yes, 2020 has forever changed our conversation globally around human rights. Today is an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of human rights in rebuilding the world we want, the need for global solidarity as well as our interconnectedness and shared humanity.

Protecting and defending human rights is a shared duty. I sincerely encourage all Canadians to reflect on how we can all do much more to advance human rights in our day-to-day life, at our homes, school, workplaces, social media and local communities. Together we can definitely build a more equal, safer and fairer world for generations to come.

Let us all stand up for human rights.

* * *

[Translation]

ROMAIN GIGUÈRE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after six years of remission, Romain Giguère, a 16-year-old boy in my riding, has learned that his leukemia has returned. He is now waging a new battle against this terrible disease.

Romain is not alone in this ordeal. Students have come together in a show of solidarity at two high schools, Le boisé and Le tandem, which was where I worked as a teacher and a principal before I got into politics.

This wave of generosity has swept across the region. I and many others will be shaving my head in solidarity with Romain and the movement supporting his cause. This will be happening on Monday, December 14.

The money collected thanks to the generosity of the community and of Solidarité Jeunesse will go towards helping Romain and his family and to Leucan.

I urge everyone who can do so to support the cause. Romain will be able to watch the event by video conference from the hospital. He will see people who believe in him, who support him, who are proud of him and who applaud his courage.

Romain, you have a whole region behind you. Do not give up.

[English]

SEARCH FOR MISSING WOMAN

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, a family in my riding saw their daughter for the last time. Nadia Atwi told her parents, "Bye, Mom. See you tomorrow." That tomorrow never happened.

Nadia has now been missing all this time and her family is looking for any answers or clues to her whereabouts. I want to take this time to praise Nadia's family and community for their courageous efforts to locate her and for working so hard to bring her home. I ask everyone to do their best so that we can bring her home safe and sound.

All mothers want the best for their daughters, and they deserve that. We need to continue to advocate for initiatives to keep young women safe from those who wish them harm. If Nadia sees this message, I want her to know we have not given up on her.

* * *

[Translation]

THE OPIOID CRISIS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuska, NDP): Mr. Speaker, statistics show that the death rates from opioids in many northern Ontario regions are much higher than rates in major centres in the south.

It is a myth that drugs are only a problem in big cities. Even small towns like Hearst and first nations communities are affected by the opioid crisis.

[English]

With an increasingly toxic, unregulated supply of street drugs, individuals cannot be certain of the safety of any processed drug in circulation. The pandemic has added barriers to accessing harm reduction services and treatment, while physical distancing recommendations mean more people are taking drugs alone and dying in isolation.

As communities struggle to deal with opioids, it is imperative we do all we can to support those efforts. While drug addiction is a health problem, the flow of illegal opioids is an international criminal exercise that must be tackled headlong. Until progress is made, there will always be the next batch of poorly prepared drugs to rip holes in our communities, taking loved ones from us far too early and in a preventable way.

• (1415)

[Translation]

ROGER DUBOIS

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Roger Dubois is one of those people who find meaning in life through their efforts to make the world a better place.

Mr. Dubois is a successful businessman who started out with very little and grew his company, Canimex, into an international success story. However, his generous philanthropy will also be part of his legacy.

His generosity is immense and legendary. Drummond's foundations and community organizations testify to it. How many projects got off the ground thanks to his generosity and involvement? There are too many to count.

Mr. Dubois is also passionate about classical music. A lover of the arts known around the world, he has been a patron of many musicians whose talents propelled them to international careers.

Roger Dubois' worth is not measured in dollars, but in the positive benefits of what he has done for the Drummond community. Statues are erected for such men. He has just received Canada's highest civilian honour, and he more than deserves it.

Mr. Dubois, the entire riding of Drummond is very, very proud and grateful.

* * *

[English]

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL ADVISERS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, I had a Zoom meeting with independent travel advisers from Manitoba. As I looked at my screen, I saw the beautiful faces of 20, mostly female, entrepreneurs who have worked hard to serve their communities and clients, but are now suffering and are very worried because of the impacts of COVID. They shared heartbreaking stories of having their commissions, already paid to them prior to COVID, now being clawed back by some in the airline industry. In some cases, the commission was taken directly from their bank accounts without their consent. This is unfair and unjust.

That is why we are telling the government that if it is going to help bail out the airlines, that help should include independent travel advisers. These women run small businesses across Canada, which we know are the backbone of our economy. They also represent the spirit of Canadian women, which are hard-working, tenacious and providing for their families by serving others. These women deserve more than being left behind to flail in the wind. Let us help them out.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM IN TORONTO—DANFORTH

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, happy Hanukkah. It is the festival of lights. After the year we have had, we can all use more light. When I am lighting my candle tonight, I am going to be thinking of some of the hope and light that

Oral Questions

I have from amazing community volunteers and all of the wonderful work they do.

One such volunteer is Stephen Bates, who spent two months in Eswatini with the Women Farmers Foundation, helping women farmers move from being gardeners to commercial farming. His work has helped to push forward gender equality. I want to thank him for his work.

I am also going to thank today, on the five-year anniversary of 73,000 Syrian refugees resettling to Canada, the Ripple Refugee Project for its work to support 20 refugees coming to our country and for everything it did to help the community reach out.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, months after Canadian citizens were taken hostage by the Communist regime in China, we learn that the Liberals fought hard to keep a close relationship with China. In fact, the Deputy Prime Minister fought for Canada to train China's military on Canadian soil, against the direct advice of the chief of the defence staff.

With our citizens in jail, our exports banned and with China committing human rights abuses around the world, why did the Deputy Prime Minister push hard to partner with them?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks two years since Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were arbitrarily detained in China. These years have been stolen from Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor, from their families and loved ones. I know that all Canadians admire the integrity and strength of character these two men have shown. I would also like pay tribute to their families. The release of these two brave Canadians is an absolute priority for our government.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Deputy Prime Minister. All Canadians are worried about the fate of Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor. Those two years were stolen. While the Chinese were stealing the lives of our citizens, why was she trying to push the Canadian Armed Forces to train the Chinese military on our soil?

When they are abusing our citizens, our rights and international law, why was the government trying to partner with them?

• (1420)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have long personal experience reporting on authoritarian communist regimes and I am very aware of the threat they pose. When it comes to China, Canada is appalled by the treatment of the Uighurs. We stand with the people of Hong Kong, especially the Canadian citizens there, and the release of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig is an absolute priority for our government.

Oral Questions

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's actions never match those fine words. That is the problem with the government. The Liberals ignored security and scientific experts on the CanSino vaccine deal. They ignore our allies on Huawei. Now we learn they were ignoring the chief of the defence staff when it came to military exercises with China. Defence officials clearly said there were risks of knowledge transfer by working with China.

Why does the Deputy Prime Minister think that she knows better than the military about how to maintain our military secrets?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little about CanSino and vaccines because that is where the Leader of the Opposition began his question.

Let me say I understand why the leader of the official opposition is worked up about vaccines. It is because he and his party spent weeks trying to scare Canadians into believing we were at the back of the line. Instead, Canada has the most robust vaccine portfolio in the world. Vaccines arrive next week and the Pfizer vaccine has been approved. The leader of the official opposition would do better to confront the anti-vaccine—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Canadian Forces and our allies were warning about the protection of military secrets, documents reveal that the government was more worried about upsetting the Communist regime in Beijing. Every time we ask about China, the Liberals say that national security is a priority, or as the Deputy Prime Minister just demonstrated, they do not answer the question.

My question is simple: Why did her department try to overrule the Canadian Armed Forces and force them to train the Chinese military on Canadian soil while our citizens were being imprisoned?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear about our government's priority since the moment Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig were detained. Our clear priority then, as well as now, was to secure the release of these two brave Canadians. We stand with them and stand with their families, and we are going to continue working doggedly until we secure their release.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the second anniversary of the two Michaels' detainment.

This morning, we learned that the Deputy Prime Minister pressured the Canadian Armed Forces to conduct joint exercises with the Chinese military. That is unbelievable. The Liberal government must take the two Michaels' situation seriously and stand up to the Chinese regime.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government and I take the threat of all authoritarian communist regimes very seriously.

When it comes to China, our priority, as we must point out today on this sad anniversary, is, of course, the two Michaels: Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, two courageous Canadians. I commend the efforts of their families.

Today I want to emphasize that Canada is working for them and that we will continue to work for them.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all the living premiers in Quebec's history, the National Assembly of Quebec, the mayors of Quebec's six largest cities, the unions, everyone in Quebec wants the Charter of the French Language to apply to federally regulated businesses.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister replied that he did not want to do anything and that he would wait for Quebec's language bill. To clarify, can the Liberals confirm that the federal government will abide by Quebec's law?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Our government recognizes how fragile the French language is in Quebec and Montreal. We understand the importance of supporting the French language, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, those are still the words of someone who does not want to do anything.

The Bloc has introduced a bill to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. When we ask the Liberals to vote in favour of it, they say that they are waiting for the Quebec bill. When asked if they will respect Quebec's legislation, they refuse to answer. All they do is put things off.

Will the Liberal government step up and force businesses under its jurisdiction to comply with Bill 101?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that we recognize that the French language is in decline in Quebec and Montreal.

I would also like to point out that we are all concerned about the fragility of the French language in Quebec. Since Quebec is a francophone province, it is essential to protect French in Quebec and give it its rightful place. We would be very happy to work with all members of the House to do so.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for decades, Liberal and Conservative governments cut health transfers. As a result, our loved ones now have less access to health care.

Now, premiers, including Premier Legault, are demanding higher health transfers. Why is the Prime Minister refusing to increase health transfers to ensure that people receive better care?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made significant investments in health care, and we will continue to make significant investments, both in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada. The fight against COVID-19 depends not on any one person, but on everybody doing their part. Now we need to focus on working together to deploy the vaccine, which will be here next week and to fight COVID-19 together.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is what we are learning. More and more reports are coming out that confirm that large companies took public money, laid off their workers and made massive profits. However, the Liberal government and the Prime Minister have no concerns about that. What the Prime Minister is concerned about is going after self-employed workers and artists with clawbacks to CERB, which they applied for in good faith.

The Prime Minister could fix this problem right now. Will he commit to ending the clawbacks to self-employed workers and artists who applied for the CERB in good faith?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians needed support the most, the CERB was there, and it supported nearly nine million Canadians.

The CRA has issued letters to some CERB recipients where the agency could not validate income eligibility criteria. The letters do not require immediate payment; rather, they inform the individual that there may be a requirement to repay amounts received.

We have supported Canadians throughout this crisis and we will continue to do so.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned that two departments disagreed on the terms of engagement between the Canadian Armed Forces and the Chinese army. There is no evidence the Prime Minister gave orders to either department. What an appalling lack of leadership. Two departments are operating at cross purposes. Diplomats and soldiers are working against each other.

When will this government come up with a clear China policy?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a sad day that marks the two-year anniversary of the arbitrary detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. These men and their family and friends were robbed of two years of their lives.

Oral Questions

I know that everyone on this side of the House, and I hope this is true of all parliamentarians and all Canadians, are united in demanding their immediate release. We will continue to fight for them.

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer demonstrates why the government's policy on China is such a complete mess.

The Prime Minister took one position on Meng Wanzhou, Ambassador McCallum another. The government was going to make a decision on Huawei before the last election, and then it was not. The government was going to come forward with a new framework on China, then it was not. Instead, we got an evolving and shifting policy, the opposite of a framework.

Enough is enough. When will the government start defending Canadian interests and Canadian values, work with our allies and come forward with a clear, coherent policy on China?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid today is not a day for politics. Today is a sober day that marks two years of the arbitrary detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, two years that have been stolen from these fine gentlemen, two years that have been stolen from their families and their loved ones.

I know that colleagues on this side of the House, my colleagues on the other side, and indeed all Canadians want to speak with one voice today to ask for the immediate release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. We will fight with them every step of the way.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would be great if the minister would actually answer the question.

Yesterday, top secret government documents revealed that the Liberal government was irate when the chief of the defence staff stopped communist Chinese troops from receiving winter warfare training on Canadian soil with our soldiers. Even after acknowledging there were national security concerns raised by our Five Eyes partners, the Liberal government said, "...there is still a desire to maintain an ongoing relationship with China".

Why is the Prime Minister bowing to the Chinese communist regime and turning his back on our closest allies?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will always stand up for Canadians at home and abroad, and this includes in our relationship with China.

Oral Questions

Let me be very clear: We do not train with the Chinese military. However, I understand the member's concern, because it was a previous government that actually signed a co-operation plan initiative in 2013 under Rob Nicholson, when he was the minister of national defence. The member was the parliamentary secretary of defence at that time.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister knows full well that the Chinese government from back then and the Chinese government today are completely different, and Canadians are shocked and outraged by the Prime Minister cozying up to the regime in Beijing. Even the defence minister accurately described us as being engaged in hostage diplomacy. We already know the Prime Minister naively admires the communist dictatorship, and now he wants to train Chinese troops at Garrison Petawawa so they can learn tactics that our Five Eyes allies warned would cause a dangerous transfer of military knowledge.

It is sickening that the Prime Minister has complete disregard for our armed forces, our national security and our democratic way of life, so the only question is this: Whose—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agreement they had signed is one of the reasons we actually changed our approach. It was also because of the concerns the member outlined. We will always stand up for Canadians who are arbitrarily detained. This is one of the reasons we actually stopped our training with the Chinese, and this is exactly what we are doing.

I would ask the member to stop turning this into a political issue, because those are exactly the steps we have taken.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past few months, Canadians have realized more than ever how numerous the needs are in health care. To meet those needs, adequate funding is needed and, as we know, health care is a provincial responsibility. In order for the provinces to respond properly, they must be funded properly.

Is the Liberal government prepared to endorse the proposal we support, namely stable, predictable, unconditional health care funding?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the pandemic, our government has been supporting Canadians. The federal government has provided more than \$8 out of every \$10 spent fighting COVID-19.

We will continue to work with our partners and do whatever it takes for as long as it takes, until we get through this pandemic.

• (1435)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer in French, but she did not answer the question.

The question was about stable, predictable, unconditional funding for the health care system. However, the Liberal government is taking the opposite approach. Consider seniors' residences, for example. Yes, the Prime Minister says he is prepared to fund that sector, but only on his terms. That is not how it works.

As we speak, the Prime Minister of this Liberal government is meeting with the premiers of the provinces. Does he agree that funding for health care should be stable, predictable and unconditional?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, our government has made unprecedented investments to support health care for Canadians.

Over the next five years, an estimated \$235 billion in total will be provided to the provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer. We will continue to support the provinces and territories.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that Ottawa intends to make Quebec pay the carbon tax because Canada is not going to meet the Paris Agreement targets. Quebec's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are two and a half times less than Canada's. The government has missed the mark; we are the leaders. Quebec already has carbon pricing with the carbon tax it created.

Why does the government not encourage the provinces and governments to join the carbon exchange instead of lecturing them?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her question.

Quebec is a leader in the fight against climate change and it put a price on carbon pollution in 2013. We assess provincial systems every year, and will do so until 2022. The Quebec system has met the standards every year.

We will continue to support the provinces, like Quebec, which implement ambitious measures to reduce pollution and leave a cleaner environment for future generations.

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in that case, they should join us.

This government purchased a \$17-billion pipeline. This government is getting all worked up because the U.S. president-elect is not interested in Keystone XL. This government took advantage of the pandemic to authorize 100 oil drilling projects without an environmental assessment.

After all that, this government is surprised that greenhouse gas emissions are not going down. Come on.

Does this government think it is in a position to lecture Quebec?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect the government to take action on climate change while also growing the economy, and the fall economic statement maintained that commitment.

Under our plan to restart the economy after COVID-19, we will provide grants of up to \$5,000 to help Canadians make energy-efficient improvements to their homes. We will accelerate investments in zero-emission infrastructure and invest in science-based climate solutions, such as planting two billion trees. We are doing this for our children and for future generations.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite all the fine words, the federal government has no plan to combat climate change. It introduced a bill to achieve net-zero emissions, but it has yet to set greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2030. Then when it does, it has the power to change the target on a whim in the event that it fails. There is no accountability.

Quebec has a plan. It has a carbon exchange that works well.

Why is the minister changing his mind today and why does he want to impose a failed system on Quebec and interfere in Quebec's jurisdiction?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the legislation includes solid accountability and transparency measures for all future governments.

My colleague must be aware that the architectural structure of the Paris Agreement is based on the year 2030, just like British Columbia's plan, Quebec's plan and the plan of countries around the world. What is more, the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development has to report on the progress made in five years and determine whether we are on the right path.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives warned that the original wage subsidy could potentially be used by corporate profiteers to pay out dividends to their shareholders. The government dismissed our concerns, and what happened? Sixty-eight of those companies did exactly what we originally warned.

Meanwhile, the government goes after tiny micro-business owners who thought they were eligible for the CERB based on their gross income. Now, the government says, "No, we meant net."

Why is the government picking the pockets of the little guy in order to pad the pockets of the fat cat?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak for a moment about the wage subsidy. This subsidy, which was supported unanimously by all members of the House, has supported more than 3.9 million Canadian jobs. Let me be clear: The wage subsidy

can only be claimed for employee remuneration. It cannot be used for any other purposes. This is a support measure that is keeping Canadians on the job, keeping Canadians at work. I am pleased that all members of the House supported it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all the money goes into the same account, so what the business actually uses it for is impossible to say. Sixty-eight companies took money they would have used for wages and instead of paying workers more and keeping them on, they laid them off and effectively used the tax dollars Canadians provided them to pay out wealthy shareholders, just as Conservatives warned would happen.

Other countries brought in controls to protect taxpayers from this kind of abuse. Why did the government not do the same?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me again remind all members of the House that the wage subsidy is supporting more than 3.9 million Canadians to keep their jobs. That is essential. The wage subsidy includes an accountability requirement in the legislation. An officer in the company must attest to the accuracy of the company's claims when claiming this subsidy.

I know that Canadian business people are honest and responsible and that the vast majority of them play by the rules. However, let me be clear in the House today. We mean it. The rules are there and they will be enforced.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she claims to believe businesses are honest, but this is the same government that was calling small businesses tax cheats not so long ago. When recently the minister said she wanted to "unlock" the savings of Canadians, including small businesses, for a preloaded stimulus, it brought back an awful lot of memories of when the government attempted to impose a 73% tax on the savings of small business people. This is the same party that has threatened to tax the capital gains on primary residences.

Will the minister, yes or no, rule out taxes on capital gains of principal residences, reintroducing the previous small business tax or any other tax increase?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have all seen that the Conservatives have in recent days been descending into some dark and, indeed, dystopian conspiracy theories, and I think I understand why. The problem is the Conservatives themselves cannot figure out what they stand for. Do they believe in science or do they believe in anti-vaxxers? Do they believe in supporting Canadians and Canadian business or do they believe in austerity? Do they believe in free trade or do they believe in protectionism?

Oral Questions

What the Conservatives need to do is figure out what they stand for and let us know once they have made the decision.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday my motion calling on the government to make greater investments into housing shelterless individuals passed with unanimous consent. In the last two months in Winnipeg Centre, four cases of trench fever have been diagnosed. This is a disease not seen in Canada for almost 100 years. It is a result of extreme poverty. Our community is facing another public health crisis and we need help now.

Will the government commit to making investments now, so people in Winnipeg can have their basic human rights of health and housing met?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I join the hon. member in recognizing the urgency of this situation.

We are making the necessary investments and we are committing to future investments. In the fall economic statement, we saw almost \$300 million in additional dollars for the federal reaching home program, which tackles head-on issues around homelessness and funds 62 communities on the front lines of the fight against homelessness. Early during the pandemic, we allotted an additional \$157 million in funding for reaching home and \$50 million more for women's shelters, \$237 million—

• (1445)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Dave owns Wayward Distillery in my riding. He and his employees produced hand sanitizer for local police, health care workers and community organizations. He gave away tens of thousands of dollars' worth of sanitizer for free and sold some at cost. Even though his profit went down, his revenues show as being up, and the government says that he does not qualify for any emergency support programs.

Why did the Liberals abandon Canadian heroes and give big orders to multinational corporations instead of purchasing from small Canadian businesses like Dave's?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to be in touch with the office of the hon. member and learn more about the particular situation of that business.

We have a wide range of programs in place to support Canadian businesses. The wage subsidy, rent support, additional lockdown support, CEBA, including the new CEBA top-up that became available last Friday, and the regional development agencies are there to fill in the gaps for businesses that, for unique reasons, just do not quite qualify.

I would be happy to work with the hon. member regarding this business.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that, with help from the federal government, Xplornet is now able to offer its customers in New Brunswick high-speed Internet. This includes customers from Blackville, Baie-Sainte-Anne, Acadieville and St. Margarets in my riding. I know that the government has created a network of resources, including universal broadband funds, that will benefit communities such as ours in getting connected to this essential service.

Can the minister tell the House what else New Brunswickers can expect when it comes to the future of connectivity?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me thank my hon. colleague for Miramichi—Grand Lake for working so hard to get his community connected to high-speed Internet. It is because of his hard work, and the hard work of members like him, that by the end of this month, 2,973 households in New Brunswick will be connected to this essential service. In the next two years, another 83,000 will have high-speed connectivity.

I urge my colleagues across the aisle to stop spreading misinformation about the program. It is discouraging their communities from applying.

Our government will work with all partners to get every Canadian connected.

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HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment on behalf of all parliamentarians and thank the doctors, nurses, long-term care workers and lab technicians who have been working overtime, putting their lives and their families at risk throughout the pandemic this year to keep Canadians healthy and safe. We all have an obligation to support their work across partisan lines.

Ahead of the first ministers' meeting this week, will the government commit to increased, stable, predictable and, most importantly, unconditional funding for health care for the provinces?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the member opposite's thanks to health care workers across the country, including all of those she mentioned as well as pharmacists and personal support workers who are working in the community. We know that they are bearing the burden for all of us, and one of the best ways that we can help them is to contain the spread of COVID-19.

I encourage all Canadians to continue, even though it is difficult, to take the measures as prescribed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and support these hard-working health care workers so that they too can get a rest in the near future.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the answer we are looking for.

It is very simple. The Liberals need to figure out what they believe in. Do they believe in the WE Charity scandal and giving money to their insider friends or do they believe in giving money to long-term care workers? Do they believe in the Aga Khan's island or do they believe in increasing funding for doctors and nurses? Do they believe in SNC-Lavalin or do they believe in stable, predictable, unconditional funds for increased health care transfer payments to the provinces?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the member opposite believes in, but what this government believes in all the way is supporting Canadians through the pandemic. Yes, we believe in health care. That is why we transferred \$24 billion through COVID-19 safe restart funds to provinces and territories, so they could augment testing, contract tracing and data, and support workers with wage top-ups and in long-term care.

We also created a rapid response program to send in hard-working people through the Canadian Red Cross. We sent the military in to support long-term care homes when they could not manage. Every step of the way, we have been there for Canadians and will continue to do so.

* * *

● (1450)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to the Prime Minister's call this spring, Canadian distilleries invested heavily in manufacturing disinfectant to fight the pandemic.

We have learned that, while this was going on, the Liberal government awarded contracts to foreign companies for disinfectant without any consideration for Canadian businesses. How does the Prime Minister explain that decision?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that since the beginning of this pandemic, this government has supported businesses across this country that stepped up and went above and beyond to support the effort against COVID-19. Roughly 1,000 companies pivoted to produce PPE in the fight against COVID-19. Companies like Fluid Energy Group in Edmonton are making hand sanitizer for all of Canada. We are immensely proud of how Canadian industry has stepped up, and we continue to support Canadians through their efforts.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in total, this government spent \$570 million in foreign countries, including \$250 million for Chinese disinfectant.

Our Canadian distilleries did not get any contracts. Si-Mart, a business in my riding, invested \$150,000 to help us combat COVID-19. Will the Liberal government buy Canadian when possible? This is another scandal.

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

The situation he described is inaccurate, however.

[English]

We have a contract with Fluid Energy Group for hand sanitizer in the amount of \$106 million. Fluid Energy has provided that hand sanitizer. Right here in Canada, hand sanitizer is produced while we support businesses across this country for the benefit of Canadians always.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government is working against Quebec in shipbuilding.

It is cutting the Davie shipyard out of a \$2-billion contract and giving it to Seaspan in Vancouver. However, Seaspan previously had this contract for six years and did nothing in those six years. In fact, the contract was taken away from Seaspan last year, in 2019.

I am not making this up. The Liberals are prepared to give the contract back to a shipyard that failed to honour it. What are the Quebec Liberals doing? How can they stand for this?

[English]

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I respond, I just want to say this has been a wonderful week for Canadians. We are going to have vaccines in this country on Monday. Pfizer has been approved. Pfizer has committed to vaccine deliveries, and all Canadians can be so proud.

[Translation]

As for the question, we have not made a decision on the ice-breaker yet, not at all. The process is ongoing, and we are looking at our options. Davie is a strong and reliable partner. We are working with Davie.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 3% is the share of contracts that Quebec has obtained under Liberal leadership. Quebec is the second-highest tax-paying province. It has the largest shipyard in Canada, yet we are not able to get more than 3% of the contracts. We are being robbed of a contract by a shipyard that already proved itself incapable of fulfilling it. There are 2,500 jobs at stake in Lévis and Quebec City.

I have been rising for weeks in support of Davie. Will my Liberal colleagues from Quebec rise with me, too?

Oral Questions

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not at all the case.

We have awarded more than 14% of contracts worth over \$2 billion to Quebec businesses. We have not yet made a decision on the icebreaker. As I said before, the shipyard is a very important partner for our government, and we are working with it now.

* * *

• (1455)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Uighurs, Tibetans, Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, even the residents of Hong Kong, face persecution in China. The Washington Post reports that Huawei has tested face recognition software that could be used by China's regime to spy on its minorities and report them to police. Now the same company wants to build out Canada's 5G network, raising fears that its technology will be used to spy on us and undermine our national security.

My question is for the Prime Minister. When will he finally say no to Huawei?

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to protect our networks. We are going to ensure Canada benefits from the latest technology and the latest innovations in telecom. A review of the 5G technology, and associated economic and security issues, is ongoing. Our experts will be advising us all the way and our allies will be advising us all the way.

Let us be clear. The security of Canadians will never be compromised.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with many small businesses going digital due to the pandemic, there is an incredible amount of data points, such as passwords, emails and sensitive personal information. The government knows terrorist organizations, cybercriminals and foreign threat actors, such as China, are carrying out massive cyber-attacks against our government and Canadians. These attacks have a negative impact on our economy, national security and the lives of Canadians. Why is the government's response to cyber-attacks and China so naive?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the member how seriously we take this. I will remind the House that just last week, in the votes on the main estimates, we brought forward \$20.9 million in funding for enhancements to RCMP federal cybercrime enforcement. This is a good opportunity for me to thank the members of the Bloc and the NDP, who joined us in voting for this essential investment.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Chinese state-owned Shandong Gold Mining Company is trying to acquire TMAC Resources in Nunavut. Like the Russians, the Chinese Communist Party is actively positioning itself for military and economic dominance in the Arctic. That is why security experts, such

as retired Major-General David Fraser, have strongly urged the current government not to allow this deal to go through.

Can the Minister of Public Safety assure Canadians that the government will not give up any further ground in Canada's Arctic to the Chinese Communist Party?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member opposite and this House that we will always remain vigilant in ensuring we protect the interests of Canadians, and in particular, our sovereignty in the north. We rely on the advice and information we receive from the national security intelligence community in making these decisions, and we will always stand up for Canadian interests.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015 the conflict in Syria was in full force and on display to the world. We all remember the heartbreaking images and stories of the families affected, which moved people around the globe, including Canadians. It has now been five years since Canadians stepped up in overwhelming numbers to sponsor Syrian refugees and the first of the refugees began to arrive in Canada.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship update the House on operation Syrian refugees?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her advocacy and for her hard work.

Five years ago, Canadians began an ambitious and national effort to welcome some of the world's most vulnerable as they fled the conflict in Syria. Some said it could not be done, but the outpouring of compassion as communities across the country opened their doors and their hearts led to 73,000 people making Canada their new home, including the 29 I just welcomed into the family of Canadian citizenship earlier today.

We now lead the world in welcoming refugees, because we know when Canadians succeed everyone succeeds. I would like to thank Canadians for their efforts and wish every success to all who have found a new home in Canada.

• (1500)

AVIATION INDUSTRY

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months, Canadians who work and depend on the aviation sector have been calling on the Liberal government for a concrete action plan. After suspending service between Sydney and Halifax earlier this fall, all flights to Sydney have now been cancelled indefinitely, leaving many Cape Bretoners without air service for the foreseeable future. As a result of this suspension, airport employees, rotational workers, university students and many others will be greatly impacted.

Ten months into this pandemic, will the government finally act and present its plan for the aviation sector?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize many have been impacted severely by COVID, particularly in the air sector, and we regret the fact that routes have been abandoned. That is why we are working on solutions to this.

As members know, in the fall economic statement we announced more than \$1 billion in aid to airports and also regional airlines, and we are also working on negotiations with the major airlines to find solutions that will ensure regional support of airlines to communities that need it.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Yonge subway extension is critical for job creation, economic recovery and growth, yet the government refuses to invest. The Prime Minister said he wants to invest, but he is waiting for the Ontario government. However, the Ontario government has provided everything he has asked for, and it has committed the funds to get this project built. It is Ontario that is waiting for this government.

No more excuses. No more delays. Why will the Prime Minister not just say yes to the Yonge subway extension?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we have the same question, and the answer will be the same. We continue to invest historic amounts in public transit. In fact, 13 times more than the previous government, which invested only \$1 billion. We have invested \$13 billion, and we continue to move forward.

We are looking forward to receiving from the Ontario government business plans for public transit projects, including the project in the member's riding. We need to create jobs. We need to go ahead, but we also need to be mindful of taxpayer dollars, and that is exactly what we are going to do as we rebuild our economy, create jobs and build a more sustainable future for Canadians.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the finance minister's responses today. Let me be clear. We support the wage subsidy and we fought to increase it. However, what is also clear is that the program is being terribly managed.

Oral Questions

Sixty-eight companies were able to pay large dividends to shareholders while collecting the subsidy. The Liberals are bad at managing programs and money. They are either giving it away to large corporations like this or to friends and insiders.

When will the Liberals stop acting like Santa Claus by giving to rich companies and their friends, and fix the wage subsidy?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the wage subsidy was supported by all members of this House, and for a very good reason. This program has been essential in keeping Canadians on the job and in keeping Canadian companies going through COVID. There have been 3.9 million Canadian jobs supported by this program. As we approach Christmas, that is something all of us should be proud to have been a part of.

This program does come with serious accountability measures, and our government fully expects all companies that avail themselves of this program to follow the rules.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-7, which amends the Canadian framework for medical assistance in dying, is the result of a detailed consultation process involving over 300,000 Canadians, including health care professionals, people with disabilities and caregivers. The deadline set by the courts to pass Bill C-7 is quickly approaching.

Can the minister explain why it is so important to all Canadians for the government to meet the deadline set by the Quebec Superior Court?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her question and her great wisdom.

We need to meet the court's deadline to avoid prolonging the unnecessary suffering of Canadians like Audrey Parker, who chose to move up the date of her death to be sure that she would have the choice, or Jean Truchon, who had the courage to fight for his rights just before he died.

I am the justice minister, but I am first and foremost a member from Quebec. Respecting Quebec means respecting the will of its courts. I thank all members for finally allowing Bill C-7 to move forward so that we could meet the court's deadline.

It is our duty to Ms. Parker, Mr. Truchon and all Canadians who are suffering greatly.

Points of Order

● (1505)

*[English]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two years ago when veteran Sean Bruyca stood up for himself and others in similar situations, the former veterans affairs minister berated him in the media. The very next day, the government took away the benefit that Mr. Bruyca needs to care for his children so that he can get the help he needs for his PTSD. Finally, today after years of fighting, Mr. Bruyca's benefit is to be reinstated. Why does the government continue to spend taxpayer money on fighting veterans in court instead of serving them?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, decisions on veterans' files are made by our professional, non-partisan public servants, always with the intent of care and compassion and with respect for veterans.

This government has continued and will continue to invest in veterans because they are the ones who provided our freedom and democracy and we are fully aware of that.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, 2020 turned out to be a year that no one could have imagined, and the government was able to respond quickly to enact programs to help Canadians cope during the pandemic. We saw support for workers who lost their employment; youth and students who lost summer income opportunities; and parents, predominantly women, who had to make the difficult decision to stay at home with children and forced into double duty or forced to leave their jobs. What that effectively means is that millions of people received something like a basic income for the first time in their lives this year, and yet so many people are still falling through the cracks.

Will the government, in the spirit of the holiday, offer the life-changing gift of compassion to Canadians and, finally, a guaranteed livable income for all?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that, working together, all members of this House have provided unprecedented support to Canadians, to Canadian businesses and to the Canadian economy, as we have faced together this unprecedented crisis. Now is the moment for us, as we face a very virulent second wave, including in New Brunswick, to focus on the crisis at hand, to focus on supporting Canadians as they fight the coronavirus, to focus on beating the coronavirus and to focus on deploying vaccines.

That is where our government is focused, and I hope that is work we can all do together.

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POINTS OF ORDER**ORAL QUESTIONS**

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions with other parties, and if you seek it, I be-

lieve you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: that, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-13, an act to amend the Criminal Code, single event sport betting, be deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in the committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendments, deemed concurred at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: As members will be familiar, this being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member for Windsor West moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

We have other points of order. I see the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan wanting one as well. We have two others ahead of him. The member could stand by for just a moment.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, today is Human Rights Day in the House, and we will soon be voting on the third reading of Bill C-7.

Whatever the outcome, the debate on that bill has shown beyond a shadow of a doubt the urgent need for Canada to respect the rights and dignity of people living with disabilities.

It is in that spirit that I hope, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: that, in the opinion of the House, in the context of a medical assistance in dying regime that does not require a reasonably foreseeable death, it is more important than ever that the government provide the resources Canadians with disabilities need to live with dignity; and therefore the House call upon the government to properly fund services, like home care and palliative care for people across Canada; and ensure that people living with disabilities have an income that keeps them above the poverty line, including by transitioning people living with disabilities who currently qualify for federal, provincial or territorial disability income support or pension program to a federal benefit of \$2,200 per month.

● (1510)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Once again, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: We do not have unanimous consent.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, during question period, my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill mentioned the WE Charity contract, which we learned today did not pass an official languages impact analysis before it was approved by the Treasury Board.

I am therefore seeking the unanimous consent of the House to table this government document stating that the analysis must mention the impact on the vitality of Canada's francophone and anglophone minority communities and foster the full recognition and use of both French and English in Canadian society.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, September 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of C-7.

Call in the members.

• (1550)

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

(Division No. 39)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Alleslev
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bessette	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blois	Boudrias
Boulerice	Bratina
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Cannings	Casey
Chabot	Chagger

Champagne	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chen
Collins	Cornier
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Garneau	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lebouthillier	Lemire
Liepert	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Manly
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saarnich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Michaud
Miller	Monsef
Morantz	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Plamondon	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rayes
Regan	Reid
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schmale	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan

Government Orders

Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Simms
Singh	Sorbara
Spengemann	Ste-Marie
Tabbara	Tassi
Thériault	Therrien
Trudel	Turnbull
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vaughan
Vignola	Virani
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Young	Zahid
Zann— 213	

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Calkins	Carrie
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Gallant	Genuis
Gladu	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmieć	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukowski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Moore
Morrison	Motz
Nater	O'Toole
Patzer	Poilievre
Powlowski	Redekopp
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Scheer	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Sloan
Soroka	Steinley
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tochor
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vis
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Williamson
Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 106

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed to the next vote, we will pause briefly to allow employees who provide support for our operations to substitute each other for safety purposes. In doing that, members must recognize this group of technical and support people for their incredible efforts these past months.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-8.

● (1625)

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

(Division No. 40)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bessette	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Blois
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Bratina
Brière	Calkins
Cannings	Carrie
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Chiu	Chong
Collins	Cooper
Cormier	Cumming
Dabrusin	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	Deltell
d'Entremont	Dhaliwal

Government Orders

Dhillon	Diotte	Poilievre	Powlowski
Doherty	Dong	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Rayes	Redekopp
Drouin	Dubourg	Regan	Reid
Duclos	Duguid	Rempel Garner	Robillard
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Rodriguez	Rogers
Duvall	Dzerowicz	Romanado	Rood
Easter	Ehsassi	Ruff	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
El-Khoury	Ellis	Sahota (Brampton North)	Saini
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Sajjan	Saks
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Samson	Sangha
Fast	Fergus	Sarai	Saroya
Fillmore	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Finnigan	Schmale	Schulte
Fisher	Fonseca	Seeback	Serré
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Sgro	Shanahan
Fraser	Freeland	Sheehan	Shields
Fry	Gallant	Shin	Shipley
Garneau	Garrison	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Gazan	Généreux	Simms	Singh
Genuis	Gerretsen	Sorbara	Soroka
Gladu	Godin	Spengemann	Steinley
Gould	Gourde	Strahl	Stubbs
Gray	Guilbeault	Sweet	Tabbara
Hajdu	Hallan	Tassi	Tochor
Harder	Hardie	Turnbull	Uppal
Harris	Hoback	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Holland	Housefather	Van Popta	Vandal
Hughes	Hussen	Vaughan	Vecchio
Hutchings	Iacono	Vidal	Viersen
Ien	Jaczek	Virani	Vis
Jansen	Jeneroux	Wagantall	Warkentin
Johns	Joly	Waugh	Webber
Jones	Jordan	Weiler	Wilkinson
Jowhari	Julian	Williamson	Wilson-Raybould
Kelloway	Kelly	Wong	Yip
Kent	Khalid	Young	Yurdiga
Khera	Kitchen	Zahid	Zann
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Zimmer	Zuberi— 288
Kram	Kurek		
Kusie	Kusmierczyk		
Kwan	Lake		
Lalonde	Lambropoulos		
Lametti	Lamoureux		
Lattanzio	Lauzon		
Lawrence	Lebouthillier		
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)		
Liepert	Lightbound		
Lloyd	Lobb		
Long	Longfield		
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Lukiwski		
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor		
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Maloney		
Manly	Martel		
Martinez Ferrada	Masse		
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)		
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)		
McCrimmon	McDonald		
McGuinty	McKay		
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)		
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)		
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	McPherson		
Melillo	Mendès		
Mendicino	Miller		
Monsef	Moore		
Morantz	Morrison		
Morrissey	Motz		
Murray	Nater		
Ng	O'Connell		
Oliphant	O'Regan		
O'Toole	Patzer		
Paul-Hus	Petitpas Taylor		

NAYS

Members

Beaulieu
Bérubé
Blanchette-Joncas
Chabot
Charbonneau
Desbiens
Fortin
Gill
Lemire
Normandin
Plamondon
Simard
Thériault
Vignola— 28

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions today, Government Orders will be extended by 73 minutes.

Business of the House

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Persons with Disabilities; the hon. member for Kenora, Regional Economic Development; the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Veterans Affairs.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as per tradition, I would like my counterpart, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, to inform the House and Canadians of what is on the legislative agenda from now until tomorrow.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is important for me to inform the House and the thousands of Canadians who are waiting to find out what we will be debating this week. Without further delay and so as not to make them wait, I will tell my colleague right away.

[English]

This afternoon and tomorrow we will continue with second reading debate of Bill C-10, the Broadcasting Act.

[Translation]

In the event that we finish debating Bill C-10, we will then give priority to the following two bills: Bill C-12 on net-zero emissions and Bill C-13 on sports betting.

Mr. Speaker, I will take the opportunity afforded to me by my colleague's question to thank you and your colleagues in the chair.

I also want to thank my colleague, the House leader of the official opposition, and our Bloc Québécois and NDP counterparts and their teams.

I want to thank the table officers, who do extraordinary work, all of the teams, and the pages who are patient enough to work with us every day and kind enough to always smile while doing so. I also want to thank the whips and their teams.

Finally, I want to thank all members for this very different session. It has not always been easy but, together, we were able to do a lot for the good of all Canadians.

• (1630)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased, unlike last week, to concur with the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I too join my voice with that of all 338 of my colleagues to thank you and the people who ensure that we can do the excellent work that needs to be done here in the House, as well as all the people who have helped make the hybrid Parliament possible over these past months.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, allow me to quickly say a few words to wish everyone some well-deserved rest as the session comes to a close.

Allow me also to acknowledge and thank several people, including all Quebecers for their resilience, their creativity and their solidarity.

My thoughts are with caregivers and seniors who will not be seeing their family this year in most cases, and with the people who will be alone, unable to see their friends. My thoughts also go out to the workers and business owners, who have been hit hard by COVID-19. Christmas might be more difficult for them this year than it has been in years past.

I wish all our colleagues in the House a merry Christmas. We look forward to seeing everyone again in the new year.

I thank all the clerks as well as the interpreters, who had a tough job this year and did exceptional work.

I wish everyone a Christmas as wonderful as it is odd and a 2021 as festive as 2020 was quiet in its own way. Every year we wish everyone well and sometimes we might say it lightly, but this year I feel the weight of my words. I wish everyone love, prosperity, but most of all good health.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the NDP caucus and its leader, the member for Burnaby South, I would like to wish the House of Commons' security staff, the administrative staff, the clerks, the security people who are on the front lines every day, the food services and cleaning staff, the Speaker's entire team, including you, Mr. Speaker, and the pages, who work hard every day in Parliament in the midst of a pandemic, a merry Christmas and happy new year.

We wish a merry Christmas and happy new year to all these people.

[English]

On behalf of the NDP caucus, I would like to say to all members of Parliament, who have worked together in this pandemic Parliament, a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. We of course urge all to redouble efforts to ensure that nobody is left behind during this pandemic, and we mourn the thousands of Canadians who have passed away.

We wish everyone a safe Christmas, for sure, and urge all Canadians to continue to stay safe. Let us be kind to one another. As we stand together, let us socially distance, wear our masks and make sure to follow the instructions of our health authorities. We will get through this pandemic, there is no doubt.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, merry Christmas and a happy new year.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to echo my colleague's sentiments. On behalf of the Green Party of Canada, I sincerely thank the entire parliamentary team, the clerks, the pages and the entire security team. All these people work very hard for everyone.

[English]

I hope that all of us in the House, and all of our loved ones, will be safe and well. I hope all Canadians will take the health advice they are given and will get through this horrible year.

I remember when the Queen said she had an *annus horribilis*. I think all of us have had a pretty difficult year. However, members on all sides of the House have worked very hard, and the best of our work came when we worked together without partisanship.

For those who are lighting menorahs tonight, happy Hanukkah; for those who celebrate Christmas, celebrate the birth of our Lord; and let it be said, Festivus for the rest of us.

I thank the Speaker and the House team for all of their hard work as well.

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: I will take this occasion to add my own remarks about the remarkable work of so many people in the House of Commons administration this past year in helping us function well in these really unusual circumstances. Their contributions have been nothing short of heroic.

[Translation]

I also wish to thank the House of Commons team, the people in IT services, the proceedings and verification officers, the Sergeant-at-Arms and his office, the pages and their coordinators, the clerks, the interpreters, the security officers, the language instructors and all parliamentary staff. I thank you for your professionalism, dedication and courteous service to all and to Parliament.

[English]

Finally, to all my colleagues in the House and in ridings all across the country, and on behalf of the Speaker and my fellow chair occupants, may I wish you and all your families a wonderful and appropriately socially distanced holiday season in the time ahead.

Safe travels, merry Christmas and happy Hanukkah, until we meet again in the new year.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BROADCASTING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the bill, there were three minutes remaining in questions and comments for the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I especially like about the legislation is that it reinforces how important Canadian content is. It is one of the ways for us to ensure that many talented individuals, in what is a large industry in all regions of our country, will have many more opportunities here in Canada. We can better celebrate our heritage by ensuring we have additional Canadian content.

I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts on how important it is that, as legislators, we work toward ensuring there will always be Canadian content in all forms of media.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question posed by the member opposite is similar to the question I had hoped to finish responding to.

One of the challenges I have with the bill, which has been raised by a number of my Conservative colleagues, is that it is ambiguous in what it tries to accomplish. I point out for my hon. colleague that the absence of language guidelines in the bill disadvantages francophone communities by failing to ensure that online broadcasters create content in both official languages. We have heard much in this debate regarding the importance of ensuring that the cultural significance of the French language is preserved in this country, and that is one of the challenges.

As I have just a few moments left, I will take this opportunity to wish all of my colleagues a very merry Christmas. May God bless each and every one of them as we head back to our constituencies and to our homes. Whatever the holidays look like across the country, it is certainly a challenging time for all Canadians.

I thank my colleagues, both within the Conservative caucus and otherwise, and all of those who make sure this place can run, including my constituency staff, whether it is in a pandemic or otherwise. There is a lot we have to be proud of in our parliamentary institution, and it is an honour to ensure that this legacy lives on no matter what the global circumstances are. I wish a merry Christmas to them and to all who are watching today.

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to discuss a bill that is close to my heart.

As I have been a professional performing artist for most of my life, I know that for these kinds of bills, the devil is in the details. I was very glad to see the union ACTRA endorse the bill. It said performing artists from coast to coast to coast will now be able to perform more, have their works seen on more screens and devices, and be paid for their work.

Government Orders

When I first started acting, I was 16 years old doing theatre in Nova Scotia at the Neptune Theatre in Halifax. From there, I moved on to doing theatre right across the country, including in Edmonton, where I played Marilyn Monroe in a rock opera on the life of Marilyn called *Hey, Marilyn!*. I was 19 at the time. From there, I went on to do my first movie at the age of 20 in Wilcox, Saskatchewan. It was called the *Hounds of Notre Dame* about Père Athol Murray. Anybody from out west might remember that. I then went on to play the fiancée of Colin Thatcher, a Conservative politician who ended up murdering his wife. I played his girlfriend, who helped turn him in to the police.

These were all heady days of the business. We also did live radio. I remember the Jarvis Street studio in Toronto. We did live radio plays, and sometimes we would need to be at the radio station at 6:30 a.m. to do a live one-hour or half-hour show. One of my favourites was about a politician. The amazing Gordon Pinsent played that role, and I played a cabinet minister.

I remember one day early in the morning we were waiting for the star of the show to arrive and he was not there. We were about to go on live radio. The producer was getting ready to take his part, and was pretty freaked out, when in came Gordon, in his pyjamas, at the last minute. He went on to perform brilliantly, of course, the role he was born to play.

I have lived through the times when radio was cut and cut and cut. We called it “death by a million cuts”. CBC was being cut. Radio was being cut. Dramas started to be cut down. This is the lifeblood for performers who do a lot of theatre but who also need to be seen on camera. To be honest, it is the cheapest and best way a government can invest in tourism. It brings people to a country and gets people around the world to see the beauties of our country and the stories that make us unique and different from any other country in the world.

That is why it is so important to look after people. It is so their work can be performed and seen all around the world, and now on many different devices.

Let us fast-forward to around the year 2005, when I was living in New York doing animation for PBS.

PBS wanted me to sign a contract, and I had never seen one that said work could be shown on all devices in the universe. PBS wanted me to sign away my rights for eternity throughout the universe. It was the first time I had ever seen that and the first time I had ever seen “on devices” in a contract. I had to ask somebody what that meant, and they said that pretty soon people would be watching things on their watches or their phones. I could not conceive of that concept. I thought it was crazy. However, if we fast-forward, where are people watching things now? They are watching them on watches, phones and all kinds of devices.

• (1640)

Currently, online undertakings that deliver audio and audio-visual content over the Internet are exempt from licensing and most other regulatory requirements. That is why Bill C-10 really aims to clarify that online undertakings are within the scope of the broadcasting regulatory system.

It would also provide the CRTC with new powers to regulate on-line audio and visual content. It would allow the CRTC to create conditions of service and other regulatory requirements under which those online broadcasters would operate in Canada, and update the CRTC's regulatory powers as they relate to traditional broadcasters as well. This is good.

The bill would ensure the act would not apply to users of social media services or social media services themselves for the content posted by their users. However, the bill aims to update key elements of the broadcasting policy for Canada to ensure the creation of Canadian content is reflective of Canadian society and accessible to all Canadians. This is what I am talking about. We need to get our stories told. We need to see more diverse Canadian faces and voices.

I have many friends in this industry who are Black or indigenous. We need to see them. We need to hear them. We need to hear the beautiful stories they have to tell. This is a great way to be able to open the door so that more of this content can be seen.

One of my favourite stations now is APTN, so here is a shout-out to APTN. It does some amazing work.

The bill would amend the act to take greater account of indigenous cultures and languages, and recognize that Canada's broadcasting system should serve the needs and interests of all Canadians, including racialized communities and Canadians of diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, socio-economic status, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, and age. Additional amendments would also serve to promote greater accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Is it not time we show more people and more different diverse stories? I think Canadians are open to that content now. The more we talk about different styles of living and cultural backgrounds, the more people will start to understand that we really need to walk a mile in people's shoes, moccasins and so forth, to understand where they are coming from, what their background is and what they have been through. At the end of the day, it is all about compassion and trying to understand where another person is coming from and putting ourselves in their place.

As a performer and professional actor for 30-odd years and now as a parliamentarian for 11 years, I have to say that being a performer was very good training for being a politician, and not for the reasons some people would think, such as that we can pretend and put on a stony face. It is because we can feel compassion for others. I think that is an important part of this job.

I am very glad the bill has been introduced and is hopefully going to be passed. The bill would also provide a flexible approach to regulation, allowing the CRTC to tailor the conditions of service and other regulatory requirements imposed on broadcasters, taking into account the act's policy and regulatory objectives, the variety of broadcasters in the system and the differences between them, and determining what is fair and equitable depending on the circumstances.

With that, I believe my time is up. I would like to express a merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah and safe travels to all of my colleagues and everyone across Canada. May everyone's families be safe. Remember to love one another because, in the end, all there is is love.

● (1645)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that concerns me is that there are a lot of unanswered questions here. The Liberals are passing the buck to the CRTC to deal with most of the bill. They are doing nothing for fair tax rules. Right now in our country, journalism is under threat. I just met with the Parksville Qualicum Beach News and the Comox Valley Record, and they talked about the fact that 75% of online advertising is with Facebook and Google, and they are having a difficult time surviving. Those web giants are using local journalism to advance their goals.

There was a promise in the Speech from the Throne to get big tech giants to pay for local journalism content. Australia tabled legislation yesterday to do so.

Does my colleague agree the government needs to take action and table legislation soon, so that local journalism is protected and the web giants using their content will pay their fair share?

● (1650)

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, this is also a concern of mine. I understand where the member is coming from, and I understand where journalists are coming from.

Right now, it is very difficult to make a living as a journalist. As we know, many of the newspapers are closing down. People are getting their news from Facebook or Twitter and other places. Sometimes that news is not correct, as we know. It is fake news or it is paid-for news.

This is a very good step, and it is something that my colleagues in ACTRA have been asking for, for a long time. I believe it is the right way forward, so let us see what happens after this. I still stay on this as well.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am just curious if the member would have any comments on the conversation around sexual exploitation and MindGeek and hosted content, which has been debated in the House as of late. There are some absolutely disgusting, quite frankly, abuses that are taking place, with children, victims of rape and assault, and their videos not being able to be scrubbed off the Internet.

Would the member comment on that issue and how it may relate to this conversation?

Government Orders

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for asking this very important question.

A few years ago, I was also targeted on the Internet by some folks who started to use a picture of mine from a television show I had done. They started to flash it around and refused to take it down. I started to get notices from constituents who told me that their daughters were abused in a similar fashion by former boyfriends who had sold pictures of them to Internet providers. We discovered that most of them were not located in Canada. They were actually overseas.

I contacted the former minister of justice at that point, Peter MacKay. I also talked to the province. I was an MLA at the time. We found that it was very difficult to get those pictures down. In the end, it was Anonymous who actually contacted me and said, "We see what you are trying to do and how difficult it is." They took it down. They took the website down.

I do not know why it is so hard for people to do it. I understand. It is a terrible thing, and we need to do something about it.

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by wishing all Canadians a very happy holidays, a merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah and a happy new year.

[*Translation*]

I would like to ask my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester the following question: What is her view of Bill C-10, in a context where we are trying to truly help the cultural community of actors and everyone in Canada's production and arts sector?

[*English*]

Ms. Lenore Zann: Madam Speaker, it is going to help because it is going to push people to do more content, more Canadian content, and for people who are having their content shown on other devices, they will be paid.

I am, as some people know, Rogue in the *X-Men*. I do not get paid for any of the times that people see me on Netflix or on any of these shows, or Disney. I do not get paid for any of that stuff. It would be nice if there was a way that we could have contracts now where people will get paid for their work. Some people are making billions off of Canadian actors.

● (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member, and I did not want to interrupt because there is not a lot of time between questions and comments, that she is not to use the name of ministers in the House by their first or last names. I just wanted to remind her of that, because she did mention the minister at one point.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saskatoon—University.

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Madam Speaker,

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There was an old lady who swallowed a fly.
I don't know why she swallowed a fly,
Perhaps she'll die.

There was an old lady who swallowed a spider,
that wiggled and wiggled and tickled inside her.
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly.

I believe that song, co-written by a Canadian, by the way, Alan Mills, in the 1950s, describes a little of what the government is trying to do here, and I think it is going to be ultimately unsuccessful. The Internet and the changing landscape of media in Canada is creating challenges for sure, but this bill would do nothing or, worse, make it worse for Canadians.

The worst part of the changes the Liberals are proposing is making the CRTC not accountable to elected members of Parliament. It would move the reporting process to the minister or, ultimately, the Prime Minister's Office. I cannot think of a situation where that would be good for Canada. The control the Prime Minister's Office would have over our media landscape would be detrimental to our ability to tell our stories.

I have listened closely to some of the speeches today and a value I hold is that we should be sharing Canadian stories. However, the current landscape has changed and what Liberals are proposing, as the Saskatchewan saying goes, is to rush to close the barn door after the horses have all left. If we play out the different scenarios of what the bill would do, it would cost the consumer or Canadians more and reduce competition. That is something I do not think anyone would support at the end of the day.

We must look at what is happening in the media landscape. Other members have talked about Google and Facebook, and some of the news stories out of the United States about the federal government and Facebook. If there is a problem of fairness, it is that taxation is not the same in Canada versus some of the Internet players. We are talking about massive organizations that impact people's perceptions and views, and can have political ramifications.

We have a problem and we have identified it is with a lot of these large international players, but this bill would do nothing. It does not mention Google or Facebook. Maybe that was by design because some of the indirect things we could do with pressure are probably more dangerous than what we could do with direct pressure. With Google and Facebook being threatened, in essence, that they would fall under a government organization such as the CRTC and taxation, this will change the policies and procedures of those two large companies and have a detrimental effect on Canadians.

There would be a massive increase in the powers and added responsibilities of the CRTC. How will the CRTC afford to do that under the current budget? The CRTC gets most of its funding, as far as I understand it, from fees. Fees are paid by consumers. Consumers have to earn that \$1, pay tax on that \$1 and then, with their freedom of choice, decide where to spend it. Would the CRTC collect it indirectly through consumers or would the Liberals go back to the taxpayer and ask for more money so that the CRTC can fulfill the mandate of what the bill would enact?

I do not know what country, maybe the Government of China would be one of the few, would admire what the bill would do. We all know the Prime Minister's view of the basic dictatorship of Chi-

na and its affection for all things controlled by government, and that is where I have concerns with adding more responsibilities to the CRTC.

● (1700)

Once again, the lofty goals of this bill are admirable, to a certain extent, but will it actually improve the landscape of media in Canada? I do not think this is going to happen.

The reason we are talking about the lady who swallowed the fly is that when we try to regulate things that cannot be regulated, such as the Internet in a free society, we will find other actors and other avenues that will pop up that will take the place of what we currently have. What is next? That is where I get to the Government of China reference: in order for this to be successful, we need to regulate everything in the world, and I just cannot see that happening.

On the example of the CRTC, we were talking about foreign companies. What if they have no assets and no footprint in Canada? How are we actually going to force foreign identities? Is the next thing we are going to be regulating what Visa or Mastercard could charge, so that consumers make a decision to support one platform over the other? The next one would be asking for credit card companies, and the next thing will be Paypal and then the next and then the next.

We are trying to fix a problem that needs to be addressed, but in the way that this bill is written, I do not think it is going to go anywhere near what we actually would need in Canada. Talking about the reduced competition, I think we would actually have fewer Canadian stories that actually have an impact on either our residents or internationally, if we go down the path of regulation to the extent that this bill would do.

I would like to also unwrap, just briefly, the changes on the CRTC reporting to Parliament versus the minister and how important it is that does not take place. If we live in the free society that I like to believe we live in, it is Parliament, not the minister and not ultimately the Prime Minister, that should have the final say on what is created for content. That flows over to an overarching concern I would have with a government having the ability to approve one thing over another, one platform over another or encouraging one story over the other. That, I believe, is not where Canada should be going. I do not believe that is the mandate of Parliament to enact such far-reaching abilities. The impact of that on a society would be a government controlling too much of people's lives.

I am against anything that encroaches on our freedoms, and if we are trying to be successful in the 21st century, I do not believe this is good for Canada. It is not good for competition, it is not good for consumers and it is not good for our creative industries. Where this might lead is where I will end our fable:

She swallowed the spider to catch the fly.
I don't know why she swallowed the fly,
Perhaps she'll die.
I know an old lady who swallowed a horse...
She's dead of course!

● (1705)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was certainly a creative way to finish it.

One of the things that I have noticed in the time since I was elected is that the preamble of a bill, or the press conference to an announcement, is very different from the entire text of a bill or the action related to any announcement. It seems to me that Bill C-10 is in line with that pattern. I am wondering if my colleague has further comments on how the intent of this bill, as it is presented, is very different from what appears to actually fill the full 13 pages of it.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, it is true that, of late in Ottawa, press conferences announcing the new bills are filled with virtue-signalling, buzzwords and creative phrases. They seem good on their merits, but when we look at the substance of the bill before us, as I have spoken about, where the CRTC would report, and what that actually would result in does not match the preamble of the bill, which is really a smokescreen for some questionable motives of why we are taking the CRTC approval process and reporting a responsibility out of Parliament and putting it in the Prime Minister's Office, which I think is wrong.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have three questions.

First, does the member believe that CanCon regulations on radio in the 1970s amounted to government control of thought in Canada? Second, how is it that requiring Canadian content, expanding the variety of content available to Canadians, reduces competition? Third, as the member said in his speech, how would requiring more Canadian content result in less Canadian content?

Could the member please address those three questions?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I hope I have enough time to get to all three questions before I get cut off.

I wonder if the member was talking about the 1970s in Canada, Soviet Russia, Cuba or China, because there are some parallels of governments having too much control.

On the competition aspect, if we restrict people's access to different streaming services or offerings, we will have fewer options for consumers. On the Canadian content, there are sites such as Brit-Blocks, a small streaming service for Canadians of British descent, which would just leave Canada, and so we would not be able to access its services and consumers would be less enriched from British stories. However, in return, does the member not think that other countries would restrict our content and our platforms if this is successful? We know that CUSMA has a regulation that could potentially cost Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars if an appeal process is granted and exercised on the impact of Bill C-10. There is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

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Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, as I raised earlier, Google and Facebook have over 75% of all web-based advertising. They are using a lot of local content. Journalists are losing jobs as local newspapers are feeling the crunch. Could my colleague speak about how important it is that legislation come forward, like they are doing in Australia this week, to make sure that Google and Facebook pay their fair share?

We know that the Liberals are very close in their relationship with Facebook and Google. Maybe the member could speak about the importance of protecting local journalism.

● (1710)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, he is right, there are some troubling concerns on how close the Liberal government is with Google and Facebook. Maybe that is why they are not mentioned in the bill, even though that was the primary thrust in changing the CRTC regulations.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to speak today on this important update to the Canadian Broadcasting Act. It has been 29 years since there has been an update to this legislation and it is long overdue.

I graduated from the Algonquin College broadcasting program the same year that the Broadcasting Act was last updated in 1991 and I have seen many changes in the field since that time. I am a big supporter of Canadian content rules. It is important to have platforms and spaces where diverse voices and stories can be shared. I have seen first-hand how the CanCon system has benefited Canadians.

During the 1990s I worked at Video In Studios, which is now called VIVO Media Arts. It is an artist-run centre that provides access to equipment and training to video artists and media producers. I trained a lot of people in the new digital technology of that time. Many of those people did not see themselves reflected in the mainstream content being produced: indigenous people, people with diverse abilities, people of colour, street-involved youth and members of the LGBTQ++ community. Many of these people I trained went on to develop careers in the broadcasting industry and utilized CanCon rules to bring their unique stories and perspectives to Canadian audiences.

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In the late 1990s, I worked with Dana Claxton, a renowned first nations artist. Her sister Kim Soo Goodtrack was a teacher who had written a children's book called *The ABC's of Our Spiritual Connection*, which threads together first nations' spiritual beliefs from across North America. Kim had an idea for a TV show, and together with Dana and their brother Don, I co-produced the pilot for *Wakanheja*. It was the first preschool show on a brand-new Canadian network, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, APTN. We made 64 episodes of that series before going on to create 39 episodes of a pre-teen show for APTN called *Art Zone*. While these shows were targeted to an audience of children and youth, the cultural sharing and stories provided an education for people of all ages. This programming would not have been possible without CanCon rules.

Funding formulas are essential to ensure a diversity of content. If it was left solely to the market we would have nothing but Disney-style caricatures of indigenous culture and many uniquely Canadian stories would never be produced for film and television.

This bill is an effort to catch up with the new media reality that has been unfolding for the last two decades. In 2007, I uploaded my first video to YouTube. It was footage I shot of three Sûreté du Québec undercover police officers trying to provoke an attack on their own riot squad at a protest in Montebello, Quebec. We pulled the masks off their faces and when they were mock-arrested by their fellow officers we noticed that all of their boots matched those of the riot squad. The YouTube video went viral and became an international news story. YouTube has evolved into one of the most influential players in the media landscape and we have barely begun grappling with the implications of that.

One thing that Canadians really want to see is the Internet giants, Facebook, Google and Amazon, paying their fair share of taxes for the business that they do in this country. They should be paying not just the GST and HST on the advertising they sell in this market but corporate taxes on the income they generate from Canadians. One key thing that this bill does is create a new category of broadcasting under the act, the "online undertaking". This would ensure that the online streaming giants such as Amazon and Netflix are covered under the act. This would help to level the playing field. These multinational companies selling their services in Canada should be required to carry Canadian content and/or help to pay for the creation of Canadian content.

The health of our news media is another area of great concern, particularly local news outlets. Local news outlets cannot compete on a level playing field with companies like Facebook and Google. We need local media and the stories they cover in our communities. Their content is shared on social media platforms that sell advertising beside that content, but none of that revenue is shared with them. Our local media outlets are held to journalistic standards, but the social media platforms are not. This is another glaring omission.

• (1715)

Social media platforms are publishers who generate enormous profits from content, content which is often racist, homophobic, misogynist and misleading. Social media companies should be required to uphold the same standards as traditional broadcasters. The absence of these standards and the expectations of voluntary self-

regulation has brought us to a place where social media is negatively impacting our mental health, creating deepening divisions in society and having a corrosive effect on democracy.

We must take steps to ensure the survival of local media outlets in a media landscape where the playing field will never be level. Taxing social media companies on the revenues they generate in Canada and directing a portion of those funds to support local media production would be one way of doing so.

The Broadcasting Act should not limit the definition of broadcasting, but should leave it to the CRTC to determine what should be regulated. As we have seen in the last few decades, the media landscape continues to shift and the CRTC needs to be able to regulate emerging types of media dissemination. The CRTC should not just have the option to regulate Internet giants, it must be mandated to do so. The penalties for violations by these Internet giants also need to be substantial, so it is not just viewed as the cost of doing business.

There are concerns about the removal of the paragraph that reads in part, "the Canadian broadcasting system shall be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians." I understand the government is trying to bring the multinational Internet giants under the act, but we also need to ensure our existing broadcasting system is not opened up to foreign ownership.

As I emphasized earlier, the requirements for Canadian content are important. There are a lot of American productions shot in Canada using Canadian talent, but these are not Canadian stories.

I know we cannot expect Disney+ to create Canadian content based on Canadian stories, but it should be required to help fund Canadian content based on the amount of content it streams into the Canadian market.

Spotify does not create content, but it could be required to identify Canadian content on its streaming platforms and it should also have to contribute to CanCon based on the amount of business it does in our country.

Canadians need to be able to find Canadian content on these large streaming platforms. Companies like Netflix, Amazon and Spotify should provide the means for users to easily find Canadian content.

The Broadcasting Act must continue to protect the unique linguistic characteristics of Canada. We need to ensure that broadcasters create content in both official languages. Original French language content should not be sidelined by English language programs that have voice-over translations that are then passed off as French language content.

Bill C-10 proposes to replace the current conditions of licence with “conditions of service” to prohibit the appeal of any conditions of service to the cabinet. The public must have the right to appeal a CRTC decision that it considers unfair. While every decision of the CRTC should not necessarily be up for appeal, the process for appealing to cabinet should be retained in the act.

To summarize, this bill introduces changes to the Broadcasting Act that I am happy to see, but there are changes to the act that leave many stakeholders concerned. Some of the issues can be fixed with amendments. Some of the issues I have raised can only be addressed through regulation. Some can only be addressed through additional legislation, including proper taxation of multinational digital media giants.

I will be voting for the bill at second reading and I look forward to hearing what the witnesses have to say in the committee process.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the you, Madam Speaker, the House of Commons staff, my hon. colleagues in the House of Commons, my constituents and all Canadians a happy and healthy holiday season.

• (1720)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments the member stated throughout his speech. I want to pick up on something I have already provided some comment on, which is how important the is legislation in looking forward and how media has actually changed over the years. There is a necessity for us to go into the area of Internet in this fashion.

Protecting Canadian content is, for many of reasons the member cited, critically important for us as a nation. Could he provide additional thoughts with respect to the impact it also has on jobs? It is a quite significant number of jobs and it also feeds hope for a lot of talented Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I have worked in the broadcast industry and as an independent producer. I know that a lot of production comes into Canada from the United States, which helps to pay for the infrastructure and develops the talent of Canadians. That talent and that infrastructure are then used for Canadian content. It is really important to nurture that Canadian talent and ensure unique stories are told.

I am really happy to see, for instance, Eden Robinson create *Monkey Beach* into a film. Therefore, I am happy to see this development and this protection of Canadian content in the legislation.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill is 38 pages. It covers amendments to the Canada Elections Act, the Referendum Act, the Copyright Act, the

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Cannabis Act, the Access to Information Act, Accessible Canada Act, and the Broadcasting Act.

I have read the entire bill and I noticed that the vast majority of pages define and lay out how different offences would be prosecuted. I wonder if the member has a concern about the ground that would be covered in such a minimalist bill and the nature of how we actually put some, for lack of a better word, heft to this, so the House of Commons actually has some control in developing this new regimen, rather than being all in the hands of the CRTC.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, it is important to cover a lot of different ground with this act, because broadcasting affects all our lives. The Internet is affecting our elections. It is influencing our children. It can be an educational influence, but it can also be a detrimental influence. As I was saying, it undermines our democracy, it undermines our communities’ strength. It can be divisive.

Therefore, there is a need to cover a lot of ground in this bill and more ground needs to be covered. I am looking forward to the committee process and to hear what the experts have to say.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the member heard the question from my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni. However, I wonder if he could comment on this idea of Canadian news content that is put onto Facebook by Canadian newspapers that are struggling to stay afloat and Facebook gets that content basically for free. The Australians are putting forward a solution for this. Is the member aware of that and could he comment on it?

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, we need to work on creating a more level playing field. It is going to be hard for local media to compete with these Internet giants. We should be looking at the Australian model.

As I mentioned in my speech, we need to ensure there is revenue sharing for the content that is shared through the social media platforms and has advertising right beside it. There needs to be a system of fairness. We need to protect our local media sources and the important stories they tell. They are extremely important to our communities, to our democracy and to our identity as Canadians.

• (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As a direct result of the time it took for votes, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House at this time, you might find unanimous consent to call it 6:43 p.m, which would then allow us to begin Private Members’ Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Accordingly, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

REDUCTION OF RECIDIVISM FRAMEWORK ACT

The House resumed from November 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-228, An Act to establish a federal framework to reduce recidivism, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to participate in this debate on a private member's bill.

I am especially happy to support my hon. colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac's Bill C-228. He contacted me when he began drafting his bill and asked for my feedback and support. It is my great pleasure to support this bill, and I hope other members of the Black community will support it too.

I think this bill reiterates the government's commitment to ensuring public safety and preventing crime and recidivism. It can help us move forward on work we are doing to fulfill our throne speech pledge to address the overrepresentation of indigenous individuals and Black Canadians in the criminal justice system. This bill will help the government get a broad range of stakeholders involved in defining the framework and examining existing strategies and tools to reduce recidivism and prevent crime. It will help us learn more about this important issue. Lastly, it will help us identify the gaps we need to fill.

Overall, I think reducing recidivism would enhance community and public safety, which could in turn result in savings within the criminal justice system. This is a win-win situation, which is why I am pleased to say that the government supports this legislation.

One point that has come up repeatedly throughout this debate is the fact that indigenous peoples, Black Canadians and other racialized people face systemic racism and unequal outcomes in the criminal justice system. Any efforts to reduce recidivism must draw on the lived experiences of incarcerated people to reduce systemic barriers such as discrimination and racism. That is why my remarks will focus on that aspect.

The Prime Minister has said repeatedly that systemic racism exists in every corner of our great country. This includes our criminal justice system, our correctional system and our law enforcement agencies. That is an indisputable fact. I repeat, it is an indisputable fact.

It is not enough to simply look at the numbers, when we examine the Canadian prison system. Several studies conducted in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom have shown that Black people are no more likely to commit a crime than non-Blacks—or white people, to put it bluntly. The same is true of indigenous people: They are no more likely to commit a crime.

However, the proportion of Black people in Canada's prison system is three times greater than their demographic weight. That is terrible; it is serious. The situation is even worse for indigenous peoples.

• (1730)

Indigenous people represent nearly 30% of the male prison population in Canada at the federal level alone, while they represent not even 5% of the Canadian population. For indigenous women it is even worse. They represent 44% of the female prison population.

As I said in the beginning, indigenous and Black individuals are not more likely to commit a crime. Why, then, is their demographic weight so much more significant in our prisons in Canada? That is a very good indication of the systemic racism and discrimination that exists. When we look for problems we find them and when we decide not to look for them in certain communities we do not find them. That is why I think Bill C-228 gives us the opportunity to reduce the likelihood that people will reoffend after their incarceration.

I congratulate my Conservative colleague on his bill. I know that it is based on his experience. He is a man of faith who is very involved in his congregation and I am very happy that he is using his knowledge to introduce a very reasoned bill.

My only suggestion to improve or amend my hon. colleague's bill would be that, although it is commendable to introduce a bill that addresses what to do with people after they are incarcerated, I would also like us to look at other solutions to address this issue earlier on, to stop people from being incarcerated in the first place.

If we were to create relationships and partnerships with community organizations and non-governmental organizations, if we were to tell these young indigenous people or young Black people that their community is ready to welcome them, they would see that there is another path.

I think there is a lot we can do to counter the fact that these people are overrepresented in our correctional and criminal justice systems. I am not trying to saddle my colleague with all of this, but I hope that members from all parties who support this private member's bill will not stop at what happens after people are incarcerated, but also focus on what happens before incarceration.

I hope that will encourage all members to support bills that address this issue, and that includes government bills. We need to look at how to help people choose a better path, instead of allowing them into the correctional system. We need to find a better way to embrace them and support them, so that they can learn how to make positive contributions to our society. A federal framework to reduce recidivism, as proposed in this bill, could truly change things.

• (1735)

That is why I am proud to say that I support this bill. I hope my colleagues will follow suit.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Chair, like my colleague, I am going to speak to what is in the bill. I will even go a little further, just to give it a little more thought and plant some ideas.

I will obviously talk about pilot projects during incarceration, but I will also talk about what can be done after incarceration and what can also be done as an alternative to incarceration.

In terms of pilot projects during incarceration, one of the last places someone would want to refer to is our neighbour to the south, since the Americans do not necessarily have the best reputation when it comes to detention and the prison system.

However, in 1975, something quite extraordinary happened. One day, an inmate found an injured bird on his windowsill and began to care for it. It was later found that not only did the inmate have better social skills and behaviour, that he was less violent and less medicated, but that this had a positive effect on the entire cell block.

That experience gave rise to a series of pilot projects in the United States. There is now a project running in 290 correctional facilities across the 50 states to teach inmates to become dog trainers. An individual comes to train the inmates, and then they are assigned a dog. The inmates learn how to train the dogs over a period of 12 to 18 months, depending on the type of pilot project. In some cases, the dogs even live with them in their cells.

In the case of almost every inmate who participated in these pilot projects, there was a very significant reduction in medication needs, a decrease in suicide attempts and suicides in jail, a marked reduction in violence and, later, a decrease in recidivism.

This type of pilot project benefits not just the inmates, but the animals as well. The dogs chosen to participate often have behaviour problems and are not suitable for adoption. These dogs are assigned to the inmates, who train them so they can be adopted. In other cases, dogs with better social skills are trained by inmates to become service dogs.

In addition to helping inmates reintegrate, these projects benefit the community. Not only do inmates have a better success rate with the animals than outside volunteers, for example, but many inmates decide to continue training dogs after they get out of prison.

That is a success story that we can learn from, even though, as I mentioned, the United States does not necessarily have the best track record when it comes to prison conditions. The other good thing is that inmates have to exhibit good behaviour in order to qualify for this program, and that generally acts as an incentive for inmates to behave better while they are in prison.

That being said, the absence of recidivism does not automatically mean that an inmate has been rehabilitated. An inmate is not necessarily rehabilitated just because they have not reoffended. I have a rather striking example to give in that regard. One of my colleagues was walking down the street with a former inmate who had served

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a long sentence for murder. When they came to a red light with no one else around, she crossed the street, but the former inmate remained rooted to the spot. He did not want to jaywalk. The rule was clear: crossing the street when the light is red is not allowed. He absolutely did not want to break the rule. That shows that prison teaches inmates to follow many rules to the letter, but they may be losing some of the social skills they need to be properly rehabilitated.

Obviously I am not trying to say that jaywalking can be used to measure rehabilitation, but I wanted to show that when inmates get out of prison, they often do not have all the skills they need to perfectly reintegrate into society.

I said I would talk about post-incarceration support because that is just as important. The bill introduced by our colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac raises the possibility of joining communal and faith-based initiatives and getting support from various organizations, but that means being close to those organizations, which remains problematic.

It is a real problem for offenders who live in the far north, especially in Inuit communities, and who have to serve time in detention centres far from home.

• (1740)

Around Montreal, we often see a high proportion of Inuit and indigenous individuals in the homeless population. What are these people doing in Montreal?

In many cases, they are people who were sentenced to serve time in detention facilities near Montreal. The plane ride to jail is covered, but once they have served their time, nobody pays for the return flight, which is often prohibitively expensive.

Once these people get out of jail, they are thrust into another kind of prison, the prison of poverty and homelessness on the streets of an unfamiliar city, instead of being given the opportunity to get into rehabilitation and reintegration programs that could be offered in their communities.

If we want the pilot projects proposed in the bill to work, we have to make sure all the options and tools are available to run them. That is something else we will have to think about.

We also need to look at alternatives to incarceration, which is not always the appropriate solution. I have some more examples to share, including in connection with the indigenous community.

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The Gladue reports really emphasized the need to include indigenous peoples in the sentencing process. I had the privilege of attending a conference on indigenous law where it was explained that, in some countries, there are actually blended courts that take a blended approach by incorporating indigenous law.

I have an example of something fairly unusual that was done here, when a judge came up with an innovative sentence. Rather than imposing a custodial sentence on someone convicted of rape in his community, the judge made him live outside his community and become the designated hunter for a women's shelter.

For two years, that individual lived apart from his community and served another community by hunting for people who were essentially victims of the same kind of crime he had committed. At the end of his sentence, he was allowed to return to his community because it felt that he had paid the price for his actions. His reintegration was much easier because it was done in collaboration with the community, which would not have been the case if that individual had had a sentence imposed that did not align with the community's values.

Another example illustrates what can be done. It involves the PPTCQ, the drug treatment program of the court of Quebec. Section 720 of the Criminal Code allows for sentencing to be delayed in cases where people are struggling with substance use problems. Often, these people will not use drugs during their sentence. However, upon release, some will not comply with the conditions of release and will use drugs again at the first opportunity.

Rather than announcing the sentence immediately, this program examines whether the person is progressing well in detox and adjusts the sentence accordingly. The sentence may even be cancelled altogether if their progress has been good.

For these initiatives to work, however, there must be no minimum sentences. Minimum sentences are a barrier that can prevent some projects from being implemented, and they do not always work.

For example, at one time, during the famine in England, turnip thefts were common. The turnip growers asked the authorities to increase penalties to deter people from stealing turnips. The authorities made it a capital offence to steal a turnip. After that, there were more turnip thefts than ever, because no one was afraid of being sentenced to death just for stealing a turnip. Sometimes, instead of serving as a deterrent, a denunciatory sentence can have the opposite effect.

What I want to say is that I welcome the bill. I especially hope that we can learn from these examples that one-size-fits-all, universal solutions are not necessarily the ones that work best. I hope that this is what emerges from our future reflections on detention, on sentencing, and on criminal law in general.

• (1745)

[English]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to address Bill C-228, which was introduced by my friend and colleague, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac. I had the distinct opportunity

before COVID to tour this region and connect with organizations helping transition inmates to a new life after serving their time.

Ensuring a successful return to society is in all of our best interests and can help tackle the many systemic issues facing Canada. The ability for those who have served their time to succeed is an important issue. It is a poverty issue. It is an education and training issue. It is an opportunity issue. It is a program delivery issue and a public safety issue. As I have said many times in this House, the top priority of the government is the safety and security of Canadians.

As a former police officer, as a member of community boards and as a member of Parliament, I know that putting reformed criminals on a better path after serving their time requires many things. There are a number of strong organizations providing these different and successful approaches.

The theme that I have seen which often underlines these programs is trust. Trust is essential to a strong public safety and community safety system. Canadians need to trust that someone who breaks the law will be found, brought to justice, have a fair trial and will face the appropriate punishment. However, that they will be reformed and prepared to have a successful reintegration back into society is more important than punishment.

Today, Canadians have lost faith in our justice system. More and more Canadians see crimes unsolved. Victims see criminals go free. Accused persons are awaiting trial and are out on bail to potentially revictimize others. Dangerous people are being released from prison, despite being a serious threat to others.

Bill C-228 is a plan to find the best programs that restore the trust and support a transition from inmate to productive citizen. Reducing repeat offenders would reduce costs on social systems, and reduce burdens on the justice system and the backlogs that exist there. The criminal justice system, police across the country and the rising level of crime all tell us that action is needed today to tackle a growing crime rate and the heavy costs law-abiding citizens pay for these crimes.

In the face of this rising crime, fear and number of victims, we have seen little action from the Liberal government. Crime rates have climbed every year for the last five years. Violent crime continues to grow quickly across Canada. Rural crime is growing faster than urban crime. Gang-related shootings are at all-time highs. Addiction rates, no doubt affected by the anxiety of the current times, are way up. Also, Canada's opioid overdoses are only getting worse.

Police and communities are seeing a growing trend, a revolving door of justice, and it is returning. Criminals are being caught, and then they are back on the streets, sometimes within hours, by being released on bail to go back and commit more crimes and victimize more innocent people. Police rearrest the same people over and over again to just see them out the next day. I remember back in the days when I was policing, we said that 20% of the people commit 80% of the crime, and it is so true.

The last five years we have seen the approach of the current government fail and it will continue to fail Canadians unless there is a change. Canadians do want to see a response to crime, a response to addiction and an end to the cycle of violence and victim suffering. Part of that response is this exact legislation, which reforms those who have committed crimes from offenders into productive members of our communities.

That reformation of offenders starts in correctional services. If convicted offenders return to the community as a threat to others, the system has failed the victims, the community and everyone the system is supposed to protect. If offenders are not given the opportunity to prepare for life outside the prison walls, the system has failed them just as much as it has the rest of society. Instead of reform and transition, we have dangerous offenders out on early parole.

• (1750)

As we know, as many as 10 terrorists connected to Islamic extremist groups have been released on statutory parole from prison in the last two years, despite everyone knowing they are a high risk to reoffend and that they hold extremist ideologies. These are the exact people we should not be putting out into the community.

Last month, the correctional investigator again called for reforms to training and education in prisons. Training is outdated, and the government has essentially ignored all the warnings and recommendations. The results are clear: nearly half of all of those released from prisons return within a few years. There is a better way, one that meets with support from ex-offenders, police and justice system officials alike. It is not big government programs, but community-driven and donor-supported programs that are leading efforts to train, support and reintegrate.

In New Brunswick, as I said, I met with Harvest House, along with my hon. colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac. Harvest House holds to Christian values and reaches out to those who are working to rejoin society. It operates on the principle of three, which I found intriguing, and has had great success stories. In the first three minutes after getting out, offenders need someone to trust and support them as they re-enter society. In the first three hours, they need a place to call home. In the first three days, they need life skills and someone to help them access essential services, navigate the government and government programs, and adjust to a new life. In the first three weeks, they need to get training, education and a job, something that can be challenging when someone has just been released from prison and has a criminal record. In the first three months, they need support in making those real, permanent transitions, when their new lives have started to take hold and they are settling in to those new lives. In three years, once they have been shown to be successful, they can pay it forward and help others

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who are leaving prison themselves and are ready to remake their lives into something new.

Harvest House supports those committed to a good life through these challenges. Programs such as these may not be perfect for all offenders seeking better lives, but it is one of a few good examples by many who are developing programs to give inmates opportunities. They offer security, trust, stability and opportunity for those willing to work for it, and they perform much better than the existing federal program.

If Canada could cut those numbers, we would avoid much higher costs, both in terms of lives lost and money spent. The cost of prevention and successful reintegration saves many victims from lives of fear and pain, saves already stretched resources in the justice system, saves the costs associated with returning to prison and saves the costs of parole and offender monitoring. Equally as important, it gives an opportunity to those who want to turn their lives around. They just need a helping hand to do so.

In conclusion, organizations such as Harvest House are doing the work that big governments fail to do. Investments in these programs and prevention programs cost pennies compared with the dollars that they save. As a former police officer, I have had reformed offenders, whom I had a hand in sending to prison, approach me after they were released and thank me. In prison they got clean, were offered education and career training and had their lives put onto a new path, but that was many years ago. That was what the correctional system was designed to do, but that is not happening today as consistently as we would like or as we would hope. However, it is something that can happen again, with appropriate approaches to reducing recidivism.

I strongly support this bill. I commend my colleague for bringing it forward, and I hope to see everyone in the House rise to support this bill when it comes to voting.

• (1755)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, when I was reading through the preamble of the bill, I was really struck by some of the passages. For example:

Whereas the purpose of the correctional system is in part to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by assisting the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

Another one is:

Whereas people who have been incarcerated should have the necessary resources and employment opportunities to be able to transition back into the community and avoid falling back into their old ways;

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These passages gave me a sliver of hope that despite Stephen Harper's best efforts with the Reform Party, the Progressive Conservative Party was not yet dead and still lived on. The irony, of course, is that this bill is being introduced by a member of the Conservative Party, which previously prided itself on a "lock them up and throw away the key" approach to justice.

When in power, the Conservatives also had a love affair with mandatory minimum sentencing, which is also shown to increase recidivism. Evidence suggests that lengthier sentences increase recidivism rates, especially for lower-risk groups, which are the ones most affected by mandatory minimum sentences.

This is the same Conservative Party that, when in power, attempted to balance its budget in fiscal year 2014-15 with an order to the Correctional Service of Canada to make budget cuts, which were taken from the very programs that actually helped reduce recidivism. This is precisely what Bill C-228 attempts to achieve.

What programs am I referring to? Correctional Service of Canada's contribution to the Conservative deficit reduction action plan was long. It included the closing of prison farms and the elimination of CSC funding for lifeline and circles of support programs. There were additional deductions made from inmate pay for food and accommodation. It collapsed core programs into one-size-fits-all models. It eliminated incentive pay for work in prison industries. There was a reduction of library services. Three institutions were closed. The list goes on.

Again, the irony of bringing this bill before the House just eight years after the member's party slashed funding to many of the rehabilitation programs this framework may end up reinstating is almost too much. I thought it was important to point this out, because, as I have found in my five years as a member of the House, memories here can be very short.

Let me turn to Bill C-228, which, if implemented, directs the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, in collaboration with the provinces and in consultation with indigenous groups and other relevant stakeholders, such as non-governmental, non-profit, faith-based and private sector organizations, to develop and implement a federal framework to reduce recidivism.

The bill goes on to state that the framework must include measures to initiate pilot projects, develop standardized and evidence-based programs. It wants to promote the reintegration of people who have been incarcerated back into the community by ensuring that they have access to adequate and ongoing resources as well as employment opportunities.

It also wants the framework to support faith-based and communal initiatives that aim to rehabilitate people who have been incarcerated, but also to review and implement international best practices related to the reduction of recidivism. If we look at countries around world and how they administer their justice systems, there are certainly some very valuable lessons that Canada could learn.

We know that education, training, employment programs and services during and post-incarceration are absolutely key to rehabilitation. However, many of the programs and services available to inmates are severely under-resourced and in definite need of mod-

ernization. We also know that improving outcomes for inmates will require political will and funding reallocation.

In addition to programming during and post-incarceration, the government should look at sentencing policies and social and economic risk factors for reoffending, such as poverty, mandatory minimums and over-policing. Again, the reference to mandatory minimums has been mentioned during the government's five years in power on many different occasions.

● (1800)

While we definitely support the bill in principle, our intention is to strengthen and improve it at committee. In particular, we want the committee to hear from indigenous, Black and racialized Canadians as well as organizations working with inmates, to ensure that the bill is more than just good intentions and would actually help improve outcomes for inmates.

Recidivism rates tell us part of the story, but we would like to see the framework consider other metrics as well, such as graduation and employment rates and whether an inmate is living independently post-release. It is important to note that recent research has suggested that correctional services should transition away from a focus on recidivism and instead focus on supporting desistance, which is the process by which a person arrives at a permanent state of non-offending.

While recidivism is binary, either an individual does or does not recidivate, desistance allows for degrees of success even if there are occasional setbacks. I believe this is incredibly important, because many issues in our justice system are not black and white. There are many grey areas, and we have to allow some flexibility if our overall goal is to have successful reintegration into society.

We would like to see an overhaul of the risk assessment system in federal prisons, which are used to give inmates security classification and a reintegration score that follows them throughout their incarceration and determines almost everything about their time in prison. Among other things, the security classification determines which treatment programs an inmate will have access to, and the reintegration score affects whether they will be given parole. These assessment tools have been shown to be significantly biased against Black and indigenous inmates, thus reducing their odds of having access to the very programs and services that would help with their rehabilitation and reintegration back into the community.

I know this is beyond the ability of a private member's bill, given the need for a royal recommendation, but appropriate funding would also be an important part of implementing the effective framework. I would love to see a commitment from the Government of Canada to ensure that funding would follow the development of this framework.

I will close with a quote about Bianca Bersani and Elaine Doherty's 2017 article entitled "Desistance From Offending in the Twenty-First Century". It reads:

It's much easier to stop committing crimes if you have an income, a place to live, a sense of belonging and people who care about you. The stigma of having a criminal record can itself make it much harder to go 'crime-free'. ...recent research implies that contact with the criminal justice system, ironically, may have 'a causal role...in perpetuating criminal careers' rather than in helping to end them.

I would like to congratulate the member for Tobique—Mactaquac for bringing the bill forward for the House to consider. I look forward to supporting its passage to committee for further study.

• (1805)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate virtually in this debate on Bill C-228. This is an important bill. As my colleague from Hull—Aylmer already said, the government will support this bill and will recommend that it be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for a more in-depth study.

I also want to thank my colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac for his work on this issue. He is a perfect gentleman who worked with all parties in the House to draft and introduce this bill.

The idea of a federal framework to reduce recidivism makes complete sense. This bill is in line with our commitment to provide resources that support reintegration, to support community programs and community justice centres, and to address the fact that Black and indigenous people are overrepresented in our justice system. These priorities were recently reiterated by our government in the throne speech, as part of our plan for criminal justice reforms.

A framework like the one proposed in the bill will enable us to effectively address the various factors that play a role in recidivism.

[English]

Building on what we discussed the first hour, I think it is fair to say that we can all agree on a number of principles the bill presents. We need to make sure that we are doing all we can to reduce recidivism. Crime inflicts harm on victims and families. It impacts communities and threatens their safety and well-being, and recent history shows that as many as one-quarter of those released from federal custody were reconvicted of a federal or a provincial offence within a few years of their release. As such, we need to make sure that we are addressing the unique risks and needs of those incarcerated to support their rehabilitation and reintegration back into society.

I do not mean this as a criticism of the member opposite, as he was not an elected member at that time, but I would be remiss if I did not reference, as did my NDP colleague, the impacts the massive cuts under the Harper Conservatives' deficit reduction action plan had on the services and programs to inmates. Many programs that specifically worked to achieve successful, supervised and gradual integration into the community had their funding eliminated.

Dr. Zinger, the correctional investigator, said that these cuts were tragic and very unfortunate because they dismantled employment opportunities. I do appreciate the member for Tobique—Mactaquac

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is very sincere and genuine in his proposition of a practical deal that seeks to offer solutions toward our complex situation and complex problems. This is because we all know that at some point almost everyone incarcerated in Canada will return to the community. That happens either through conditional supervised release or at the completion of their sentence. They often have unique challenges and needs that, if left unaddressed, can impede their successful reintegration and increase the likelihood of their reoffending.

The challenge of recidivism is truly how multi-dimensional the issue really is. It is shaped by a variety of factors, both socio-economic and within the criminal justice system itself. That includes factors such as health, education and access to employment and housing. That is why I am pleased to see the bill calls for a broad, multisectoral approach to the issue. Should the bill be passed, it will be important to engage a range of stakeholders. We will need to hear from those who deliver services to those incarcerated or previously incarcerated, for example.

We also need to reach out to our provincial and territorial partners to share information and lessons learned and where possible, identify opportunities for future collaboration. We will need to hear from diverse groups of the incarcerated population, such as indigenous people and Black Canadians who continue to be sadly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. We will need to hear from those with lived experience, the victims and their families.

[Translation]

The bill recognizes the key role that the government plays in the success of reintegration and crime prevention efforts. We will bring in an effective way to achieve this objective, for example by eliminating the stigma associated with having a criminal record through an improved records suspension system, which is commonly known as a pardon.

We know that a criminal record can create barriers for those trying to reintegrate into the community. It can prevent people from securing a job, housing or access to educational programs. Pardons help facilitate that reintegration. That way, a successful reintegration has a positive impact on public safety and enables individuals to participate constructively in society and achieve their full potential.

• (1810)

[English]

Over the last decade the Criminal Records Act, which is the backbone of the pardon system, has undergone significant legislative change. Unfortunately, some of those changes had the effect of limiting access to pardons, and of lengthening the waiting period before individuals could apply. There was a significant increase of the application fee from \$50 to \$150 in the year 2010 and then to \$631 in 2012, which meant a further barrier to those seeking pardons.

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Our government remains committed to reviewing the program as a whole. Indeed, that commitment is reflected in the Speech from the Throne, which stated that we will introduce legislation and make investments to take action to address the systemic inequities in all phases of the criminal justice system, from diversion to sentencing, and from rehabilitation to records.

The Parole Board of Canada began by conducting online consultations on the user fee, and it is no surprise that most respondents found the user fee to be a barrier in applying for a pardon. Public Safety Canada consulted online with stakeholders, partners and the public on the review of the Criminal Records Act. The results of those surveyed found that the process for obtaining a record suspension was overly complex and the waiting periods were too long.

The follow-up to these consultations was in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security's 2018 report on the record suspension program. It recommended to reform the pardon system, including reviewing the process and making pardons automatic in specific circumstances. In its response, the government reaffirmed its commitment to a pardon system that is both fair and proportionate, and that achieves the goal of promoting public safety by allowing people who are living crime-free to be fully contributing members of society.

[Translation]

Making pardons more accessible would help some members of marginalized and racialized communities who face additional barriers when they have a criminal record. As I noted, all these measures are consistent with the Speech from the Throne, as is Bill C-228. The bill is also consistent with our commitment to maintaining public security and safety, particularly by reforming the criminal justice system and by facilitating the reintegration of incarcerated people.

Creating a federal framework to reduce recidivism would contribute to advancing the commitment of our government to remedy the systemic inequities that exist at every step of the criminal justice system.

That is why I encourage every member of the House to join me and the government in supporting Bill C-228 today and to recommend that it be referred to committee.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your attention, and while I have the floor, I wish you, all members and all the staff happy holidays.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I, too, would like to begin my speech by acknowledging the outstanding work done by all of our colleagues, regardless of their political affiliation. This was a difficult session and one that will not quickly be forgotten.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-228, which seeks to establish a federal framework to reduce offender recidivism. I am pleased to speak to this bill mainly because I did my first undergraduate degree in criminology, an applied science that seeks to analyze criminal behaviour and the rehabilitation of offenders.

This bill responds to the horrible murder of Marylène Levesque by recidivist Eustachio Gallese. Her murder shows that there are gaps in the existing mechanisms that show that the government

seems to have truly failed to protect this woman and the population in general. This is one case among many in recent years.

The October 27, 2020 report from the correctional investigator of Canada, Ivan Zinger, shows that the federal government is not doing a good job of managing the social reintegration of offenders. In fact, it is doing a very poor job of it. This is a scathing report for the government, and it brings to light a number of problems, one of which is the almost total lack of training for inmates in federal penitentiaries. The report notes that, although there are jobs in federal penitentiaries, they generally do not enable inmates to develop useful labour market skills. Inmates told the correctional investigator that they take those jobs to avoid spending time in their cells.

The report notes that there are very few opportunities for inmates to take post-secondary training in penitentiaries. It also indicates that, while there are libraries, the books available are out of date. In short, the federal government is failing miserably when it comes to the rehabilitation of offenders, because it is not giving them any useful tools to help them reintegrate into society. It is important to point out, however, that social reintegration is not easy, and it is not something that we have been dealing with for 100 years.

The Bloc Québécois supports the bill at second reading. However, we wish to warn the federal government against the temptation to impose a federal model in prisons that are provincially run. On this point, by the way, let's recall that the federal government manages sentences of two years or more, while the provincial government manages sentences of two years less a day. We must not tolerate in the slightest that a federal framework dictate to the provinces what they must do, as this government often does.

In addition, a recent study by the CIRANO research group finds that Quebec is doing much better than the rest of the world in terms of social reintegration. Of course, I am talking about advanced countries. Bill C-228 must therefore focus on reintegration in federal penitentiaries without dictating to the provinces what they should do.

In order to be constructive in the context of this bill, the Bloc Québécois believes that the framework of this legislation should take into account the following elements. First, pilot projects should be put in place and standardized programs should be developed to reduce recidivism. Second, it is necessary to promote social reintegration by ensuring that inmates have access to adequate resources and employment opportunities. In addition, the project should support faith-based and community-based initiatives aimed at reintegrating former inmates into the community.

● (1815)

Finally, it should study international social reintegration practices and, of course, implement only proven practices.

The Department of Justice should also work with the provinces to establish this framework because, even though we have concerns about interference, there are federal penitentiaries in all provinces, including Quebec.

Bill C-228 should also call on the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to table a report in Parliament in the year following the passage of this bill.

Again, according to a study by CIRANO, the Center for Interuniversity Research and Analysis of Organizations, social reintegration programs significantly reduce recidivism. Not only do programs that facilitate the social reintegration of inmates in facilities run by the Government of Quebec reduce recidivism, but, as I just mentioned, they do so far more effectively than all known countries with such programs.

CIRANO researchers obtained data on the programs at the prisons in Montreal, Quebec City and Saint-Jérôme. They compared these prisons to others under the authority of the Quebec justice department.

They found that over a period of five years, the recidivism rate in Montreal for inmates participating in these programs was 10%, compared to 50% for those not participating. At the two other institutions, the result was slightly lower at 6% and 35%. Implementing these programs results in extraordinary outcomes compared to not implementing them.

Researchers found that the more the inmates participated in programs during their incarceration, the less likely they were to reoffend. Given the results of this study, it is clear that the best way to reduce recidivism among offenders is to provide or expand social reintegration programs.

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank all my colleagues who are participating this evening and who have participated in our discussions and deliberations to this point. I am very thankful and have a lot of gratitude this evening to have had this kind of response from all parties. Very positive and helpful input and suggestions have been made, and I welcome that kind of feedback and input.

I am looking forward to hopefully seeing this at committee and continuing the work we have begun on this journey. I do believe it has been a journey we have all taken together, and I am very thankful for that. It has been an incredible experience for me and my staff, and I want to thank my staff for all their work behind the scenes in helping make this happen.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all the many volunteers who are continuing to do tremendous work with those who are on the pathway to full recovery and reintegration back into communities, who oftentimes are the unsung heroes of our communities. They do not get a lot of public recognition and oftentimes do it on a volunteer basis. I simply want to thank all of them.

During my first comments at second reading, I talked about my friend, who has since passed, Monty Lewis, and his wife Lynda. After confronting his personal demons and struggles while in a

prison cell, with the help of a Salvation Army chaplain who happened to visit him at that time, he had an incredible change in his life and in the direction of his life as a result. Once having served time and paid his debt to society, he worked with his wife Lynda upon his release to help others who experienced similar pathways in their lives.

I remember visiting prisons with Monty at Christmas, in particular, and that was a very important time. He said to me that there was no greater time of loneliness than at Christmastime in prisons, not only for those who are on the inside but also for the families who are left at home. Oftentimes there is a lot of separation, a lot of reflection and a lot of loneliness.

I will never forget visiting near Christmas, just two or three days before Christmas, a prison in my region. I got to hear the story of a man who was there, and he had been serving time and was now kind of volunteering through the chaplaincy program. He was telling me his story and sharing his experiences. He said to me that when folks like me came to visit, we saw the brave exterior of the guys who were serving their time. He said that they put on their best fronts and that was what we saw. He said that what we did not see, and what they did not want us to see, were the tears that fell from their faces. At night, one could hear the sobbing that came from the halls and from within the prison cells. He said that was the side of the story many people did not see. They were living under the cloud of what once was and the regrets they faced, and I could sense that overwhelming loneliness.

This time of year not only provides loneliness for many people within prison and without, but it is also a time of hope. One can see that people are looking for hope during this time of year, and it can bring a lot of hope. I think this bill offers, for many people, hope for a fresh start, for a second chance and for freedom and peace. I can think of no better way to be finishing the second reading of this bill than during the Christmas season. We, today, can offer a light at the end of a very long and dark tunnel for many people.

Colleagues, this bill aims to give those who served their time the best possible chance at success post-release through effective partnerships between public sector, private sector, non-profit and faith-based communities, indigenous communities and NGOs. By working together, we can create a pathway and begin to move the needle in the right direction. We can take steps to end the revolving door of our prison systems and make positive changes to our criminal justice system.

I thank everyone, and I want to take this opportunity to wish everybody, their family members and all members of the House a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:26 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

Accordingly, the question is on the motion.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[English]

For the sake of clarity, I would invite a member present in the House to rise to indicate if the motion is agreed to on division or to request a recorded division.

Did I hear on division?

[Translation]

I declare the motion carried on division.

[English]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, in my question last week I highlighted three areas where the government and society are failing the disability community.

The first one I would like to highlight is the plight of disabled veterans in this country. Veterans Affairs Canada has a backlog of almost 50,000 disability benefit applications. Our veterans deserve far better. It is disrespectful to attend commemoration ceremonies on November 11 to honour the dead while we dishonour the living in this way.

For a number of years I worked with the disability community in Nanaimo—Ladysmith in employment skills training programs. It was my job to discover the talents of the participants, understand their ambitions and dreams, and learn what skills they wanted to share with an employer. I then sought out employers who were ready to create jobs that worked for those individuals. When successful connections were made it was rewarding for the participant, their family and the employer, as well as for me.

However, many employed people with diverse abilities live in legislated poverty. People who receive provincial disability benefits are only allowed to earn a certain amount per year before their disability benefits are clawed back. In British Columbia a single person can receive a maximum of \$14,196 per year in disability benefits. That person is permitted to earn an additional \$12,000 a year without penalty. Every dollar earned above that \$12,000 is clawed back, dollar for dollar, from that person's benefits. A person who earns too much money in a year can be completely cut off from disability benefits and has to go through the process of reapplying. This is legislated poverty.

Until this year, in B.C., if people on PWD lost their jobs and received EI, the EI they had paid into was clawed back dollar for dollar. This was also the case with the CERB, until I pointed it out to the provincial minister and asked him to have some compassion for the diverse ability community.

Applying for disability benefits can be extremely daunting. A whole industry has been built around exploiting people with disabilities who want to apply for federal benefits such as CPP disability. It is unacceptable that the Disability Tax Credit Promoters Restrictions Regulations have still not been implemented. I have a constituent with a traumatic brain injury who was charged over \$1,000 for assistance in applying for the DTC. The family could not manage the large payment, and a collection agency was sent after my constituent.

People with diverse abilities want to be connected to the community, to contribute to society and to feel the sense of self-esteem and satisfaction that comes from working. I know many people with diverse abilities who dedicate hundreds of volunteer hours every year to help those less fortunate. It is truly humbling to hear someone who faces a life of challenges talk about their dedication to serve and help those less fortunate. They should be recognized and rewarded for the contributions they make.

The Green Party believes that it is time for a national strategy to create national accessibility standards. We need to respect people in the diverse ability community as well as the contributions they make to society. We need to ensure they live lives of dignity, are free from discrimination and get the services they need, and that economic challenges do not lead to health challenges.

● (1830)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for his advocacy on behalf of the constituents in his riding.

As the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, we have the opportunity to work together to ensure that our recovery efforts are disability inclusive and leave no one behind.

[Translation]

At the beginning of the pandemic, we quickly created the COVID-19 disability advisory group, which ensured that the interests and needs of persons with disabilities were taken into account in all aspects of our decision-making and emergency response plan.

[English]

The Government of Canada implemented broad inclusive economic measures to insulate individuals, families and businesses from the economic shock. We also focused targeted investments in populations that were highly vulnerable during the crisis, including Canadians with disabilities. These included additional income supports for students with disabilities and a one-time payment for persons with disabilities to help offset extraordinary expenses. We also made investments in a new national workplace accessibility program to support employment opportunities and in an accessible technology program to support access to technological supports.

We know that our support systems were challenged and stretched. Significant systematic gaps were revealed and long-overdue conversations on systemic discrimination were centre stage. We are now taking significant action to address these gaps through Canada's first-ever disability inclusion action plan. Our disability inclusion action plan will have a new Canadian disability benefit, which is direct income support for Canadians with disabilities; a better process to determine eligibility for government disability programs; and benefits based on a modern and inclusive understanding of disability and a robust employment strategy.

[Translation]

Persons with disabilities in Canada are under-represented in the labour market and continue to face significant barriers to employment. Many are unemployed, underemployed or precariously employed.

[English]

Canada's disability employment strategy is the next step forward. This strategy will include a significant investment in training and will support individuals looking to enter the workforce, to re-enter the workforce after injury or illness or to advance in their current employment. It will support entrepreneurs with disabilities, as well as employers looking to build confidence, by providing inclusive workplaces. It will also promote the business case for disability inclusion and champion the innovation, creativity and problem-solving capabilities of the untapped labour pool that is our citizens with disabilities.

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that all Canadians can live in dignity, including persons with disabilities.

• (1835)

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear that some programs are coming forward. However, we need to do more for those in the diverse ability community. They stood by and watched everybody get their benefits during the pandemic and waited eight months to get a \$600 payment.

Many people with diverse abilities who received the CERB because they were self-employed are now being told they have to pay the CERB back. This is because the government was not clear that the eligible income amount was based on net income, not gross income. Self-employed people with home-based businesses write off a portion of their rent and utilities against their income. Small businesses receive rental assistance, but not home-based businesses.

Adjournment Proceedings

There is a total disconnect between how governments speak about people with diverse abilities and how they are treated, and we need a national strategy to correct that disconnect.

[Translation]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, persons with disabilities are affected by every decision and have the right to be included in every process and system from the outset.

[English]

This is why the Government of Canada is committed to a disability inclusive recovery that ensures that no one is left behind and that our systems are better able to respond to the needs of all Canadians. That is the spirit and purpose of the new disability inclusion action plan. I emphasize the word “action”. This is about action, about the concrete measures we are putting in place and the investments we are making.

I want to sincerely thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for his continued advocacy.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, on November 4, I asked the Prime Minister when the government would support much-needed upgrades to the Iqaluit post office. We know that everyday items are prohibitively expensive in northern Canada, particularly in Nunavut. As a result, many northerners have turned to online retailers that can offer lower cost alternatives.

Post offices in the north have been flooded with more than they are able to handle. Of course, the pandemic has raised a lot of those issues.

The Iqaluit post office has long been one of the busiest in Canada. As I mentioned, right now the capacity of the post office is being stretched, orders are being lost, packages are being misdirected and people are having to wait in line outside of the post office for hours to pick up their mail or essential items.

When I first raised this question in the House for the Prime Minister, I really did not get much of an answer from him. However, a few weeks later, I noticed that Canada Post announced it would be launching a consultation with northerners to understand how it could better serve northern and indigenous communities. I was very happy to see that. It shows why question period is so important and why Parliament is so important.

Adjournment Proceedings

Contrary to what the Liberals often claim, the opposition is not here to try to embarrass the government or to divide Canadians on issues. We definitely do not need to be embarrassing the government. It does a good enough job doing that. We are here to ask tough questions. We are here to ask the questions that Canadians are asking of the government. We are here to hold it accountable and hopefully, as a result, end up with better government.

I am happy to see the government move in that direction with the consultation. I am happy it has been able to admit there has been a shortfall there.

It is important to note that consultation is one thing, but meaningful action is another. Residents of Iqaluit and elected representatives in Nunavut have been calling on the government to make upgrades to this post office for a number of years. I would like to take this opportunity to ask, once again, if the government is able to commit to supporting those much-needed upgrades today.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Kenora for raising this issue, and to acknowledge that I am on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

I share the member's concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented crisis that has resulted in increased need, especially for the people of the north. Every Canadian, regardless of where they live, should have access to more affordable and healthy food, and the personal hygiene items they need. While the Iqaluit post office has always been one of the busiest post offices in Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent rise of e-commerce has increased parcel volumes beyond anything Canada Post had anticipated, and this underscores its capacity, of course.

Canada Post has begun making changes to its postal operations to systematically change how mail is delivered in Iqaluit. Canada Post brought together special teams from different departments, specifically dedicated to coming up with solutions in Iqaluit. In addition to extended hours, Canada Post is exploring ways to reconfigure the Iqaluit post office, hire more staff and review overall logistics to meet the unprecedented demand of the city's high growth.

Canada Post is proud to serve the people of Iqaluit, and thanks the community for their support and their patience. We have also, in response to the increased needs, on April 14, announced \$130 million in targeted funding for the north to address the immediate needs of northerners, related to health, the economy, food security, social services and critical air transportation.

In May, Canada transferred \$72 million to the governments of the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut to support their COVID-19 health and social services preparations and response. This included \$30 million for Nunavut.

Furthermore, in August, the Government of Canada announced the establishment of a \$75-million funding program that will continue to support the essential air service to the northern communities for the next six months. We understand the importance of ensuring that supply lines remain intact and have acted decisively to ensure that this happens.

If essential services in the north continue to be impacted by COVID-19 after the six-month period, they will be maintained by the investment of up to \$174 million over an 18-month period. These new measures will ensure that the minimum level of essential transportation services, continuity of food supplies, continuity of medical supplies and other essential goods and services remain available to the territorial north. This support is positive news for northerners and is a result of continued collaboration.

Additionally, our April 2020 investment also included a financial injection of \$25 million through Nutrition North Canada to increase subsidy rates in all eligible communities. By providing additional subsidies on the broad range of items, residents of isolated communities will be better able to afford essential goods and products.

As the pandemic continues to evolve, the Government of Canada will continue working with its partners, including provincial and territorial governments, indigenous partners, retailers and suppliers, and freight operators to ensure that the supply chain is not compromised.

● (1840)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I do realize that the government has been taking some steps to address the situation. What I worry about is that there are similarities in the parliamentary secretary's response and that of the Prime Minister, where they simply name everything they have done for the north, whether it is related to this issue or not. They throw out the big spending figures.

That is all great, but at the end of the day what really matters is getting these issues resolved. We know that this is a very important issue to the people of Nunavut. It is one that has been long-standing, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned. I would appreciate it if he could comment directly on whether the government will commit to making those much-needed investments.

Madam Speaker, as my time is running out, I would like to wish you a merry Christmas and happy holidays, as well to the parliamentary secretary and all Canadians.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, the government is taking significant steps to make life more affordable and to advance reconciliation and self-determination in Nunavut.

We have supported northern air services, and we continue to update and expand Nutrition North Canada to make it more culturally relevant to northerners.

In September 2019, we launched the Arctic and northern policy framework with our partners. Northerners have told us what the key priorities are, and we have listened.

We continue working with territorial, provincial and indigenous partners to co-develop priorities and federal investments for the north. We will continue to work with northerners as we move forward.

As well, I would like to wish all a merry Christmas, *Joyeux Noël*.

● (1845)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate today, and I am resubmitting a question I asked on November 17 during question period.

I speak for veterans, their families and their caregivers when I say that the backlog of disability benefit claims at Veterans Affairs Canada is entirely unacceptable. The backlog now stands at nearly 50,000. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the backlog has grown from just under 21,000 in March 2017 to 49,000 as of March 2020, and 22,000 of these applications were only waiting for a decision from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has also highlighted a significant decline in service standards. Only 37% of applications are processed within the 16-week time frame, which fails to meet the 80% standard.

Shawn Dean is an example of those only waiting for a decision from the department. He completed 28.5 proud years of service and applied for his pension over a year ago. He completed all paperwork in October 2019. He was informed that his application is now in the decision phase. Well, that decision phase will take up to 64 more weeks to process, a grand total of over two years since his paperwork was completed.

In the past two federal elections, this Prime Minister promised that he would expedite veterans' cases. I do not think it would be responsible to place blame for the backlog on any of the hard-working front-line public servants. I know that the vast majority pour their hearts out in making a positive impact on our veterans' lives. On the contrary, I continue to believe that the problem stems from an entrenched status quo that resists change. As a result, veterans are finding it increasingly hard to navigate the process of securing the assistance they need, and it is very demoralizing.

I am not alone in my thinking. Certainly many veterans and veterans service experts back up my claim. Their bravery in coming forward with their stories is commendable in itself.

At a disability rate of 93%, veteran Charles Scott was left to navigate the VAC system on his own. At the veterans affairs committee, Mr. Scott provided a frank assessment. He said:

The onus has always been placed on the injured and ill to advocate for themselves and to navigate a gauntlet of processes for these applications.

The processes are extreme. They subject the veterans and their families to sanctuary trauma by having them prove that they are actually ill and injured, when the documentation, for the most part, is there in the file.

Mr. Scott believes that the current service delivery system is broken and worsens veterans' injuries. Three benefits regimes and ever-changing policies, coupled with this backlog, prevent veterans from accessing benefits and services. Mr. Scott has told us that, in some cases, it leads veterans to abandon their claims altogether.

Adjournment Proceedings

Doreen Weatherbie, consultation president for The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, believes that the short-term hiring that is being suggested by this government will not solve the problem. It will only postpone the problem. She has called for proper resources to be in place so that cases can be resolved in a timely way.

The experience of Mr. Scott and Mr. Dean are only two of many personal testimonies that suggest the backlog and process are exacerbating the sanctuary trauma felt by our veterans. They have given all they had for Canada only to be faced with an entirely new battle with the government in obtaining the help they deserve.

Will the government do what needs to be done to make these changes happen for our veterans?

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the number of pending applications has never been 50,000. In fact, with the measures that have been taken to address the backlog, as of October, Veterans Affairs has reduced the number of applications outside of its service standards to under 19,000.

That said, this government absolutely agrees that the number of veterans waiting on a decision for disability benefit applications is much too long.

[Translation]

I would like to briefly outline the steps that our government is taking to reduce the backlog and ensure that veterans waiting on a decisions for disability benefit applications receive a response within a reasonable time frame.

First of all, the Minister of Veterans Affairs made the backlog his priority as soon as he was appointed in 2019.

● (1850)

[English]

Last June the government introduced a strategy to reduce wait times for veterans. It included overhauling how teams were organized, making better use of technology and reducing the time it would take to make decisions. This plan includes a \$192-million funding commitment to address the backlog. It is money to keep the 168 decision-makers hired since budget 2018 and to hire an additional 350 employees.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

Wait times are actually getting better thanks to the creation of veteran benefit teams. They shepherd applications through the process from the moment they are submitted until a decision is made.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report shows that the new employees hired with this new money will have a considerable impact on delivering decisions to our veterans as quickly as possible.

[English]

It is also worth repeating that since 2016, our government has invested \$10.5 billion of new money to support veterans and their families. That is money for educational opportunities, career transition services, tax-free benefits for caregivers and services for family. It is money to increase physical and mental health support and for research of new treatment for PTSD and related mental health conditions.

[Translation]

The government also recognized that the pandemic has put a lot of pressure on veteran support organizations. That is why, in November, the department announced a \$20-million emergency fund to support veterans' organizations.

[English]

Groups like the Royal Canadian Legion, the Allied Vets, True Patriot Love and VETS Canada do so much for our veterans, but in these most unprecedented times they are being challenged like never before.

So many veterans look at these organizations for advice and guidance and to give them the kind of support they need. The government understands just how valuable these organizations are to the well-being of the veterans and their families and is pleased to provide some assistance to help these organizations continue to operate at this difficult and stressful time.

[Translation]

Veterans are proud and humble. They are people who have placed the safety of their fellow citizens above their own well-being. We owe them so much, and that is exactly why the Government of Canada is doing everything in its power to ensure that veterans get the support and care they deserve.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, the heavy-handed removal of child benefits from Sean Bruyca is only one example of similar behaviour against other veterans who speak out about VAC's mishandling of their files.

The veterans ombudsman investigation is clear. A day after the former minister dragged Mr. Bruyca over the coals for his criticism of the department, his son's child care support was revoked. Mr. Bruyca has called VAC's decision both vengeful and retaliatory.

Given the timing, it is clear this was a political decision. I do not want the member to say to me that this is an issue with the public service. It is not an error or misinterpretation by the hard-working public servants; it is an egregious retribution on this Canadian veteran. However, as I have elaborated in my speech, Mr. Bruyca's case is just the tip of the iceberg.

Why does the government choose to attack veterans who disagree with it? After serving our country abroad, veterans are returning home only to live in fear for expressing their concerns: loss of service, harassment and red flagging of their files. Why are the government and Veterans Affairs contributing to veterans' sanctuary trauma?

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, Canadian history has been written in large part by the members of our armed forces, who have taken up the torch from previous generations and continue to inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps.

[English]

We are forever indebted to all those who have worn the uniform, for what they have given and what they have given up in the name of cause and country.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada is extremely grateful to our brave women and men in uniform past and present, and it will keep doing everything in its power to meet the needs of those who have served and continue to serve our country.

● (1855)

[English]

I wish everybody a merry Christmas, happy new year and happy holidays.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:55 p.m.)

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