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43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

PORT OF MONTREAL OPERATIONS ACT, 2021

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of operations at the Port of Montreal.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights entitled “The Shadow Pandemic: Stopping Coercive and Controlling Behaviour in Intimate Relationships”.

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present the fifth report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, “Main Estimates 2021-2022: Vote 1 under Invest in Canada Hub”.

In accordance with this order of reference of Thursday, February 25, the committee has considered vote 1 under Invest in Canada Hub in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, and reports the same.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to the motion adopted on Friday, October 23, 2020, regarding the challenges and issues faced by the arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

• (1005)

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC) moved that the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, presented to the House on Friday, March 26, 2021, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I will be sharing my time with the member for Red Deer—Mountain View, or, as I like to call him, the “Earl of Red Deer”. He deserves all of the credit for his work on this particular bill. He is the longest-serving Conservative member on the industry committee. I would like to thank him for his incredible and tireless work at that committee and for his contributions to this important study and the report that we are debating on that study today.

Today we are addressing “The Investment Canada Act: Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and facilitating Canada's Recovery”. With the economic calamity brought on by the government's mismanagement of the COVID crisis and with its mismanagement of spending regulations and taxes, the Investment Canada Act came to the forefront of debate one year ago and still resonates, as this piece of legislation gives the federal government the power to review foreign investments in Canada under two broad criteria: national security and the net benefit review.

Foreign direct investment reviews are critical in areas that are sensitive to national security, but they can be absolutely necessary, as it is important to protect industries that are linked to the security of the nation. With the growing phenomenon of rare earth and other minerals and resources that not only furnish us with our quality of life, but protect our security and our sovereignty, it is important to ensure we do not surrender these resources to hostile foreign powers. They include “natural resources, food and medical supply lines, infrastructure (telecommunications and transportation), media and culture, the health sector, the hotel industry (given the need to protect personal information), as well as some emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum information processing, and semiconductors.”

Routine Proceedings

It is clear these sectors should have the ability to operate in a way that allows for competition and customer choice, however it is equally important that they not become the successful target of hostile foreign powers that seek to acquire them not for any market-driven purpose, but rather to threaten the security and sovereignty of our nation. That is why this report is so important.

To that end, I will cede the rest of my time to the real expert on this subject, the member who has done more work than anyone on it, and that is the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must say I am a little disappointed in the Conservatives, but not surprised. Yet again they are moving a motion to prevent the government from being able to debate the very important issues before the House. I can understand there are certain aspects the opposition does not want to debate, for example, the legislation on net zero, which was one of the scheduled pieces of legislation for some discussion. After all, their position seems to be flip-flopping on the price of pollution. Today, I think, they are in favour of it.

Does the member recognize the importance of allowing the government to be able to deal with absolutely critical legislation at this time of year? Why do the Conservatives continue to want to frustrate the government's legislative agenda, when they themselves will ask why the government is not passing enough legislation?

• (1010)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, let me start by pointing out the obvious fact that everyone in the House recognizes: no one wastes more time in Parliament than that member. No one is, in fact, more capable of compressing so many words into so little substance as him. Indeed, I have had constituents say that they wish they could hit a fast-forward button when he stands up in the House. Perhaps the legislative agenda of the government would move more quickly if he would say a little bit less and do a little bit more.

I am also very sorry that the member does not want to discuss the protection of the sovereignty of our industries that are crucial to our national security. Maybe he just wants to sell all of our critical strategic industries to Communist China, which his leader admires for its basic dictatorship. We Conservatives actually think that Parliament should be discussing how we protect our strategic industries against hostile foreign takeover.

Finally, if the member is so concerned about moving Parliament along he should talk to his Prime Minister about why he shut the place down for two months straight.

That is how I would respond to his never-ending complaining about the opposition's use of Parliament to debate critical issues that affect the lives of Canadians.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, speaking of Liberal filibusters, we have finally gotten the documents from Victor Li, although his lawyer said that it was WE Charity, or maybe the Kielburger brothers, who answered the committee's questions.

I am very concerned. Basic questions were asked. In his role as CFO, what financial information was requested by the Government of Canada in its decision to order the CSSG? His answer, "I do not know." What assurance did WE give the government that it could handle the financial load? "I do not know." That was their CFO. Mr. Li's signature is on the service contract. Why was the contract retroactive to May 5? He does not know. What assurances was he given on May 5 onward that expenses would be covered? He does not know.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about this. This is \$500 million-plus that we were going to give to the Kielburger brothers. They just walked in, signed this deal, and yet their CFO cannot answer basic questions about due diligence.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member asked some very good questions. He is absolutely right.

The Prime Minister personally intervened to award a half-billion-dollar contribution to a group that had paid his family a half-million dollars, yet Mr. Li, supposedly the chief financial officer of the WE Charity, does not have the most basic information about this half-billion-dollar grant that he would have presumably been administering as the CFO. This particular individual has gone missing for roughly a year now.

When I originally asked for him to testify at the finance committee on the WE scandal, he wrote back saying he was too sick, so apparently he is still too sick to testify. We asked him to answer questions in writing and his answer is that he does not know anything about anything. I guess he is taking a page out of the ministerial playbook where the government has sent ministers to the committee whose top answer to the most important WE scandal questions has been, "I don't know".

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed an honour for me to speak to this motion this morning. I thank the member for Carleton for recognizing the number of years I have been associated with the industry committee, and I am honoured to present some of the findings in this particular report.

Few things are as important to my constituents and to all Canadians as how the government supports workers, families and businesses in these unprecedented times, and few things are as important as ensuring a strong and prosperous recovery.

Canada's Conservatives have worked tirelessly over the last year to address and fix many of the shortcomings of the ill-designed and flawed assistance programs introduced by the Liberal government. We stood up for Canadian workers who tragically lost their jobs due to the Liberal government's slow and inadequate response to the pandemic. We stood up for businesses that have struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic and will continue to do so over the coming months.

This is part of what the report from the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology is all about. The report's recommendations will help to ensure that Canadian businesses remain drivers of economic growth for all Canadian workers. They will help to ensure that our most important intellectual assets stay in Canadian hands.

Over the last year, many countries around the world have taken concrete measures to prevent the predatory acquisition of businesses within their borders by actors connected with authoritarian regimes or by state-owned enterprises. The countries that have acted are pro-investment countries, such as Australia, India, Germany and those of the European Union. They recognize that times of great economic difficulties for businesses leaves them vulnerable to predatory takeovers or acquisitions, which can jeopardize ownership of intellectual property and put jobs at risk. Canadian businesses are equally vulnerable, which is what the standing committee heard in testimony from many expert witnesses, but like everything else, the response from the Liberal government has been totally inadequate.

Shortly before the standing committee began its study, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service highlighted the risks posed by foreign takeovers in today's environment in a report. An article explains:

Specifically, CSIS warned that Canada's "economic wealth, open business and scientific environments, and advanced workforce and infrastructure" posed an enticing target to foreign investors.

The agency said that while most foreign investors are not hostile, those [investments] from state-owned enterprises and firms with close ties to governments or intelligence services need to be weighed very carefully.

The Liberal government's response to these very real concerns was to introduce a weak-kneed, vague policy statement last April that suggests the minister could request additional information or extend the timelines for the review of acquisitions under the Investment Canada Act's national security provisions. Last month, and in response to the standing committee's report, the Liberal government issued equally weak updated guidelines on the national security review of investments, which suggest, for example, that investments by state-owned or state-influenced investors will be subject to enhanced scrutiny regardless of the investment value.

As hon. members know, there currently is no investment value threshold for the review of acquisitions under the ICA's national security review provisions. Such reviews are conducted entirely at the discretion of the minister and with no requirements for consultations with security experts such as CSIS. Rather than strengthening the Investment Canada Act itself, the Liberal government's response to protecting Canadian interests in the current pandemic has been to engage in more smoke-and-mirrors excuses that accomplish nothing.

Routine Proceedings

Over the course of its study on strengthening the ICA, the standing committee heard testimony from several expert witnesses about the need to act decisively. For example, the committee heard testimony from Dr. Christopher Balding of Fulbright University in Vietnam. He said that Chinese state-owned enterprises in particular target assets, whether in natural resources or technology, that are prioritized by political leaders rather than by market forces. How did the Liberal government respond? It responded by issuing vague and meaningless guidelines and policy directives.

● (1015)

During testimony at committee, Dr. Charles Burton from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute stated that Canada should consider a complete moratorium on all investments from authoritarian regime state-owned enterprises pending the establishment of clearer criteria for these types of investments. Dr. Burton also noted that we need more awareness of where Canadian interests lie and more clarity on the idea of net benefit under the Investment Canada Act.

Dr. Burton also said, "I'd like to see a more open and transparent process that would give us more awareness of the basis for government decision-making.... The Canadian people should be more aware of what's going on and how our government is responding to it." How did the Liberal government respond? It responded by issuing weak closed-door guidelines and policy directives without any consultation at all.

During its review, the standing committee also heard testimony from Jim Balsillie, chair of the Council of Canadian Innovators. Mr. Balsillie noted that the Investment Canada Act is a critical regulatory tool for ensuring Canada's prosperity and security, but he also noted that it does not reflect the contemporary economy, where the most valuable national, economic and security assets are intellectual property and data. He suggests that Canada needs to go beyond reviewing acquisitions by SOEs of authoritarian countries because, if the assets are critical to Canada's prosperity, security and sovereignty, then we need to ensure they remain in our control, regardless of the foreign counterparty. How did the government respond? Quite simply, it did not.

Routine Proceedings

The recommendations in the standing committee report are balanced, appropriate and timely. They are based on the testimony we heard from experts about the need to protect our interests while also continuing to attract foreign investment to Canada. In line with the testimony we heard, the standing committee report recommends reducing the threshold under the ICA's net benefit test to zero dollars from the current level of \$428 million if the acquiring entity is a state-owned enterprise and that all thresholds be reviewed on an annual basis. It recommends that the government should take steps to improve the treatment of intangible assets under the net benefit review process of the ICA, and it also recommends that the government should implement legal measures necessary to block any transaction that would undermine Canada's national security by transferring a sensitive asset to a non-Canadian entity.

The report recommends that the Government of Canada take steps to protect our strategic economic sectors, such as natural resources, agri-food and the pharmaceutical industry. The committee also recommends that the Government of Canada immediately introduce legislation amending the Investment Canada Act to compel the minister to consult with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Communications Security Establishment in the national security process. Strangely enough, there is currently no provision or firm requirements within the act to do that, leaving everything up to the political discretion of the minister, and we all know the government's track record on that front.

There is no question that foreign investment helps drive economic growth and creates jobs. Interestingly enough, while pro-investment countries such as Ireland saw foreign investment double between 2015 and 2019, foreign investment actually shrunk by half a percentage point over the same period under the Liberal government in Canada. Conservatives have always understood the benefits of foreign investment and have taken steps to promote more. That does not mean that we should abandon any notion of protecting Canadian interests, as the Liberal government seems so intent on doing. It means that we need to remain open, but also vigilant.

I therefore urge all hon. members to support the motion before us today so that we can move forward to strengthen and modernize the Investment Canada Act to reflect both our present realities, as well as the 21st century economy.

• (1020)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I come from an area of this great country that has two copper mines, which have been funded by foreign direct investment.

We have also seen the Liberal government approve a transfer of senior homes in British Columbia to a Chinese state organization called Anbang, and that was a horrible mistake by the government. When members, such as the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo and I, raised it, the government said it is all up to the provincial government. We cannot allow the government to continue to approve such large-scale transactions and effectively say we should let the provinces figure it out.

Does the member have anything further to say about the need to protect both our critical industries and Canadian lives, like those of our seniors?

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, there are two aspects to what the member has asked, and the first is how are companies and businesses in Canada are supposed to be able to compete when they see investment dollars coming into our country from state-owned enterprises? That is really the critical aspect of it.

There are so many businesses that are just kind of get their footing underneath them, and then they start to have this extra competition. That is really a critical aspect of it. We have seen it in the health care system. I know the European Union was extremely concerned about what was happening there. That is why it took action.

The other aspect is that the government is pushing all the difficult decisions on the provincial government. We have talked about how the pandemic, vaccines and all the issues have been downloaded to provincial governments. I think it is something we need to be cautious and aware of.

• (1025)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. We are both members of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, and I really appreciate the work that he does.

My colleague mentioned in his speech that it is particularly important to reduce the threshold for triggering a review to zero dollars. Could he tell us more about this recommendation?

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the good work he does on committee.

One of the key considerations is to look at what is actually happening, and not having some arbitrary number that triggers the review. When we are talking about national security, this is one of the main parts. Quite frankly, although the Liberals suggested it does not matter, the testimony we heard indicated that CSIS and national security folks would actually have the right to access and look at all of these acquisition potentials, so that is really an important aspect.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member could tell the House why the Conservative Party, as the official opposition, has chosen today to raise that issue when it has opposition days? It has had many other opportunities to be able to raise it. Why raise it today, when we have other legislation we want to debate? Why does the Conservative Party continue to want to frustrate the government's House business?

Mr. Earl Dreshen: Madam Speaker, usually when anybody gets up to speak, the member has a question of process. I go back to what the member for Carleton indicated, which is that the current government does not seem overly serious about passing any particular government legislation. It spent two months hiding from Canadians this summer under prorogation. We continue to see its members adding more and more types of legislation that really do not advance the betterment of this country, as we are trying so hard right now to look at the economy and make sure Canadians are going to do better.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it truly is amazing when we stop and think about it. In the last number of months, we have seen the official opposition, the Conservative Party, continue to behave in an irresponsible manner and play a very destructive role in the House of Commons. Even in the question that I just finished posing to the member, he tried to give the impression that the government is not passing legislation.

The Government of Canada has been very much focused on Canadians and the pandemic, and bringing forward legislation that is going to have the backs of Canadians in terms of supporting them, whether it is legislation like Bill C-14 or the budget we just voted on yesterday. That has been the priority for Canadians.

There are other important issues that the Government of Canada has been trying to get through the House of Commons. For example, today we have legislation on net-zero emissions. That is something that is important to our environment. I realize that the Conservative Party, as a group, has said that the environment is not an issue. However, recently we had the Conservative leader saying that the price on pollution is a positive thing.

Conservatives do not want to debate the important issues that need to be debated and that Canadians want to see leadership on. The Government of Canada is prepared to provide that leadership. The official opposition, I believe, will be found in need and lacking in its performance.

The issue within the report today is important. There is no doubt about that. There are lots of reports out there that are important, but it is time that we see the official opposition recognize what Canadians want us to recognize, which is the important issues of the day that the House of Commons needs to deal with, and stop playing the destructive force it has been playing for the last number of months. I believe there is a need for us to get back to an agenda that deals with the issues for Canadians.

Therefore, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

• (1030)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Banff—Airdrie.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (1115)

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

(Division No. 97)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
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MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
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Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald

Routine Proceedings

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Gray
Harder
Jansen
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kusie
Larouche

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition this morning from residents throughout Saanich—Gulf Islands and beyond the constituency, recognizing the climate crisis, recognizing an urgent ecological crisis in species extinction, and calling on the government to bring in-to place federal legislation to ensure that every Canadian has the right to a healthy environment.

FARMERS' PROTESTS IN INDIA

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting petition No. 11208878 today on behalf of constituents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country. The petitioners are calling on the government to take a number of actions due to farmers in India peacefully protesting the implementation of farming legislation by the Parliament of India, as Canada has always stood for the protection of fundamental freedoms at home and around the world.

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, today, I am presenting a petition calling on the Government of Canada to deploy all legal sanctions, including the freezing of assets, and barring of entry to Canada, against foreign officials who are responsible for gross human rights violations in China under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, or the Magnitsky act.

For years, Chinese officials have orchestrated killings, torture and forced organ harvesting for the purposes of trade and transplantation. The victims of this abhorrent practice include political prisoners, Uighurs, Tibetans and religious minorities such as Falun Gong practitioners.

The persecution of ethnic and religious minorities in China needs to stop and the leaders responsible must be sanctioned.

[English]

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting four petitions in the House today.

The first petition is about Bill S-204, forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The petitioners are in support of that bill, which would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without consent. The petitioners want to see Bill S-204 passed as quickly as possible.

• (1120)

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is highlighting the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to be engaged and active on that situation to a greater extent.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the third petition highlights the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. The petitioners call for the use of the Magnitsky act, the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, to sanction officials involved in these human rights abuses, and further action from the government on forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the fourth and final petition I am presenting today is on Bill C-6.

The petitioners who have signed this petition are supportive of efforts to ban conversion therapy. They are concerned about the definition of conversion therapy used in Bill C-6, in particular that the definition does not apply narrowly to practices that actually amount to conversion therapy and that it would substantively end up restricting private conversations, conversations that happen out of any kind of pseudo-clinical or therapeutic context.

Government Orders

The petitioners are calling on the government to fix the definition and work towards legislation that simply bans conversion therapy, noting that such a bill would certainly get the support of all members of this House.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

BILL C-12—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That, in relation to Bill C-12, an act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the bill; and

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 67(1), there will now be a 30-minute question period.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, since this bill has been introduced, the government's climate change plan has changed at least three times, while the bill has only been up for a couple of days of debate, no more than 12 hours in total. How can the government say that debate is done when it changes its plans and gives us no ability to debate the bill in this place?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the bill is now up for its fifth day of debate since November. We have already had important conversations since the bill's tabling and we are very much looking forward to having further debate at the next stages of the bill.

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I would note that the Conservatives have reversed their stated position in the House of Commons to support Bill C-12, with their motion last Friday to effectively kill the bill, and they did not include a 2050 net-zero commitment in their climate pamphlet. They announced that they would cancel Canada's new nationally determined contribution, and today, they tried to block debate on the bill yet again.

It is time for us to move to committee to ensure that we can have a robust discussion of how we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would echo the frustration that all of a sudden we find ourselves in a rush to push the bill through. The bill was brought forward last November and then only appeared for one hour of debate in March. Now we find ourselves in April and we are in a huge panic to get the bill through to committee.

We do support climate accountability. I wonder if the minister could explain to us why he is so reluctant to commit to a specific number of megatonnes of greenhouse gases reduced by 2025 on the path to 2030.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, as I said, the bill is now up for its fifth day of debate since November. I am a little surprised to hear that from my New Democratic colleague, given that my understanding has been that the NDP members support the intent of the bill.

Certainly we are focused on ensuring transparency and accountability, and we have been very clear with all members of the House very much, including my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, that we are open to the consideration of ways in which to enhance transparency and accountability going forward.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, talking about climate change is important.

Personally, I am still wondering why people keep asking for time allocation. I am sure the problem stems from the government House leader's management of the calendar. It is not okay to prevent and circumscribe debate in the House. This is an important bill, and we have talked about it four times.

Why is the government having such a hard time managing its legislative calendar?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, this is now the fifth day of debate on this bill since November.

We have discussed this bill at length since it was introduced, and we are very eager to move on to the next stage of debate. All parties, including the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and even the Conservatives, though they backtracked last week, said they wanted to send this bill to committee.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am afraid I find the Liberals' protestations that we are on

the fifth day of debate rather thin. They brought it forward in November. Did we see it again in December? No. Did we see it in January? No. Did we see it in February? No. It came back in March for three and a half hours, conveniently on a Wednesday afternoon with very little time for debate, and then, worse, we did not see it again until one day in April, when we had one hour of debate on a Friday afternoon. We have not yet arrived at a slot that would be available for anyone who is not a Liberal, Conservative, Bloc or NDP member to speak.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, as I said, the bill is now up for its fifth day of debate since November, and we have certainly had some important conversations, but there will be opportunities for additional conversations at committee. It is important to all members in the House, even the Conservatives, until last week, and they have suggested that they support the principles of this bill. We have said that we are open to progressive and thoughtful amendments at committee.

There is significant and appropriate time for consideration at committee. It is time for us to move forward. For those of us who think climate change is a priority, we need to move forward.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the last comment the minister made was “for those who think climate change is important”. Indeed, this is an important topic and we need to move on with it. We have seen over the last number of months procedural move after procedural move by the Conservatives to slow down debate on virtually everything. Nothing seems to matter anymore, other than proving that this government cannot do anything, and they will do whatever they can to make that a reality.

Would the minister not agree that given the current crisis in front of us with climate change, we need to deal with this now and move forward on this?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed to see the approach the Conservative Party has taken on this bill.

When it was first introduced, the Conservative Party critic said, “It may raise some eyebrows that my party will be supporting this bill at second reading, but if we are going to have any success, we need to find those things that we can agree upon and take action.” The Conservative finance critic, the member for Abbotsford, said, “Conservatives in the House support this legislation.”

Last week, they reversed their stated position in the House to support the bill and effectively tried to kill it. They did not include a 2050 net-zero commitment in their climate pamphlet. To be honest, I think Canadians find it very unusual that the Conservative Party is not willing to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): First, Madam Speaker, the minister is completely wrong. He says that the Conservative climate plan, which will achieve our targets for 2030, is a pamphlet. The targets that the government put out last week did not even have a napkin with a 40% to 45%. I take no criticism from the minister on this.

Generally, what is the urgency in pushing this bill forward? The government has already put forward a plan to hit existing targets, a terrible plan, but a plan nonetheless. It has appointed the advisory group and filled it with anti-oil extremists. However, I digress. It has been able to do many of the things that this bill purportedly says it would do. Why not let members have more input, particularly since the government has changed its own climate change goals three times since December of last year?

• (1130)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, there is a whole range of issues that probably should be addressed in what the hon. member said, but let me talk about the net-zero advisory body that will provide advice to the government as it charts the path to net zero. This group is comprised of exceptional Canadians, with a wide range of experience and expertise. This drive-by smearing by the Conservative Party is not only ridiculous, but it is offensive.

Some of the members include Gaëtan Thomas, CEO of Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick and the former CEO of New Brunswick Power; John Wright, former CEO of Saskatchewan Power; Linda Coady, who served as Enbridge's chief sustainability—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. His government has targets, but its plan is incoherent, illogical and dubious.

We agree about the accountability to Parliament piece and the periodic review of greenhouse gas reduction target achievement.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change does not want us to do that review in 2025. What is he afraid of? Why does he want to wait until 2030?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, I agree that there needs to be transparency throughout the process.

This legislation is all about accountability and complete transparency, including a binding legal process requiring the federal government to set climate targets, present an ambitious climate plan every five years between 2030 and 2050, and table a 2030 progress report by the end of 2027 as well as a 2030 assessment report within 30 days of the inventory report data—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is unilaterally imposing a gag order on Parliament, in

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other words, muzzling all the members who want to have their say, when this is such an important issue.

The Liberals have been in power for six years. Why is this minister forcing members to keep their mouths shut and not have this debate?

I would remind the minister of a Radio-Canada article published on April 26 that points out that partisanship must be set aside, since this is one of the most important issues for the future of our environment.

Why is the minister saying that it is important to get this bill to committee, but it is no longer important to discuss it in the House?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, it is time to do something about the climate crisis. The bill is now up for its fifth day of debate, and we have already had important conversations since it was tabled in November. We are very much looking forward to having further debate at the next stages of the bill.

Every party has said they support sending this bill to committee. The Bloc Québécois and the NDP agree, and even the Conservatives reversed their position last week.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like the minister's comments on the conflicting messaging that is coming from the Conservatives?

The member made reference to the legislation itself, but with respect to the environment, in general, the Conservative membership across the country does not recognize that climate change is real. Now the Conservatives seem to be taking a different position in their brochure, to which he made reference, where they appear to want to have some sort of a price on pollution.

Could the minister provide his thoughts on why it is important we have more clarity from the Conservative Party of Canada?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, it is very important that we have clarity from the Conservative Party on this issue. Certainly the fact that a majority of the Conservative Party's members voted to say, effectively, that climate change was not real is a cause for significant concern among the Canadian population. The fact that the Conservatives have put in place a carbon tax as part of the pamphlet they have released is a step forward, but the contents of the pamphlet are extremely disappointing and would make very little progress with respect to the climate issue.

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• (1135)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is disingenuous for the minister to pretend that the government is serious about climate change when it is spending nearly \$20 billion trying to ram through the Trans Mountain pipeline. It is also disingenuous for him to pretend that an hour of debate equals a day of debate. The fact is that over the last six months the government has not put this on the House agenda.

The minister says that he wants to have discussions at committee. The environmental movement, important environmental organizations and the NDP have all been pushing for 2025 targets. In the midst of this climate emergency, is the minister saying today that he will accept 2025 targets in the legislation?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, this government takes the climate crisis very seriously. We have developed Canada's first national climate plan. We have now enhanced our ambition with respect to the targets we are proceeding to address. We certainly support enhanced reporting to ensure that we and all future governments are on track to meet our newly announced nationally determined contribution for 2030. This is something we will be discussing at committee. It will be important, and I have been very clear, that we are open to constructive discussion about how we enhance transparency and accountability in this bill. We need to get it to committee and I look forward to doing that.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I echo some of the comments of my colleague for New Westminster—Burnaby about the minister's disingenuousness about having this in front of Parliament in the first place. Would he prefer to have this type of legislation, which my party would like very much to debate and have our input on, decided by his bureaucrats alone without any input from democratically elected Canadians? That seems to be his bent, particularly with the clean fuel standard. This is a way of addressing the climate debate and seeing what options the country has going forward.

Would the minister not agree this is something Canadians should have their elected representatives put their opinions on in public?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, as I said, this bill is now up for its fifth day of debate since November. I am not sure why the hon. member would not see that committee discussion and debate would further that debate in public.

I note the Conservative Party used to support this bill. The member for Abbotsford indicated Conservatives in the House support this legislation. The member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola said that his party would be supporting this bill at second reading.

The Conservative Party reversed its stated position in the House of Commons to support Bill C-12 with its motion last Friday to effectively kill the bill. It did not include a 2050 net-zero commitment in the climate pamphlet it released a couple of weeks ago. It is important for us to move forward. Canadians want us to address climate change. They would like to see a Conservative Party that actually believes in climate change.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to echo the thoughts of my colleagues who have talked to the frustration we are seeing on the

NDP side of the House. I talk to a lot of citizens concerned with climate action who have been frustrated for months by the lack of priority the government is putting on this. I spoke to this bill when it first came out in November. Here we are in April, five or six months later, and we are still talking about it. It has not even gone to committee.

The Conservatives have used various dysfunctional machinations to slow things down. We just had an hour of useless debate this morning. The NDP really wants climate action now. We really favour accountability in climate action. Jack Layton brought forward—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the minister an opportunity to answer.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member will remember when I introduced this bill I did actually speak to the fact that Jack Layton had introduced a bill some years ago. Unfortunately, it was killed by the Conservative Party of Canada.

As I say, we attach the same priority to moving this forward and addressing the climate crisis. I welcome the input from the hon. member and his colleagues, but we need to get this to committee so we can work to improve this bill. We need to get it through to ensure it is in place.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Environment.

Last week, we saw the government perform a magic trick with regard to the environment and fighting climate change in Canada. In the budget, the government proposed a 36% target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Then, three days later, on Earth Day, that target suddenly turned into 45%.

I would remind the House that Canada has never once managed to meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets, neither the ones it set itself nor the ones agreed to in international agreements. It has never happened.

What happened between Monday and Thursday that made the target go from 36% to 45%?

• (1140)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, in December, our government unveiled its strengthened climate plan to meet and exceed its climate targets. Our plan included 64 new measures and \$15 billion in investments to fulfil our commitments.

Last week, budget 2021 unveiled additional measures, including increased harmonization with our largest trading partner, the United States, to go even further. We will continue to work with Canadians, civil society organizations, the provinces, the territories and indigenous people to ensure that we meet our targets.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, this is, in fact, the first time I have had an opportunity to speak to this bill, so I find it completely disingenuous on the part of the government to say that we have had enough debate on this. This bill is completely inadequate. We have not met any of our climate targets in the past and this bill would not hold this government to account. It would not hold the next government to account. Our targets are inadequate for—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have a point of order.

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, there is a problem with the interpretation.

I believe I have the right to hear what my colleague is saying. Would it be possible to check that everything is working?

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Interpretation is working now.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, I will start again. The debate on this bill has been completely inadequate. This is, in fact, the first time that I have had an opportunity to speak to this bill. I have tried in the past to get up and speak, ask questions and raise comments. This bill is completely inadequate. The Canadian government has failed to meet any of the climate targets that it has committed to, nine of them in a row. This bill would not hold the government to account. It would not hold the next government to account. Our current target is inadequate—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will let the minister answer.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, Bill C-12 has a legally binding process for the federal government to set climate targets and bring forward plans to meet those targets. It has rigorous ongoing process reports, yearly reports by the independent advisory body and ongoing audits by the Office of the Auditor General. Additionally, we proposed embedding Canada's new NDC for 2030 directly into the act as the target for 2030.

With respect to the comments on the climate plan, I would ask the hon. member to have a word with former B.C. Green Party leader and leading climate scientist Andrew Weaver. Last week he said, "For the very first time, I am now hopeful that the world will come together to dramatically reduce global GHG emissions," and that the United States and Canada were providing important leadership.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, climate change and the need to have action now requires leadership. Leadership is not about waiting for public opinion to be on one's side all the time. We have to make bold decisions and move with them quickly, as we did five years ago when we started

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talking about putting a price on pollution. We now see that the Conservatives have suddenly come to the conclusion that it is necessary, most likely because they realize that public opinion is on the side of pricing pollution.

Can the minister comment on the struggles that he and the government have gone through over the last five years in fighting the Conservatives on this issue, although now they suddenly have come to realize it is the right thing to do?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party has opposed climate action at almost every turn. I found it somewhat ironic that the Conservative Party, in the pamphlet it put out in the past few weeks, endorsed the carbon tax and the clean fuel standard, both of which it has attacked this government on, day by day. Unfortunately, the plan it has put forward is very weak. It will make very limited progress and I think Canadians understand they cannot trust the Conservative Party—

• (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister was in this place and promised to work with all parties on Bill C-12. At that time, we gave the suggestion that perhaps there needed to be industry representation to make sure that critical industry voice was heard. What did the minister do? He promoted people who have said things on social media like, "At Davos we will tell world leaders to abandon the fossil fuel economy." Another one stated, "[Canada] must demonstrate how a major fossil fuels producer and exporter can transition away from these pollutants". He did the exact opposite.

If the minister wants to know why we have reversed our position, it is because he broke trust. No prime minister, and no government, should be divisive and try to tell a particular region or province that its aspirations have to take second to their own Davos crowd.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, let us be serious here. The members of the group were selected to represent the diversity of the Canadian population. This included representation from all regions of the country as well as gender balance, indigenous people and visible minorities. It included a range of perspectives. I would say to my colleague that he should have a look at the full list. It includes Peter Tertzakian, the chief economist for ARC Financial, a major energy player in Calgary; Dan Wicklum, the CEO of the Transition Accelerator and the founder and CEO of Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance; Linda Coady, who served as Enbridge's chief vice-president of sustainability; and Gaëtan Thomas, who is the former CEO of New Brunswick Power. Let us be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

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Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians look at all of the climate targets that Canada has set, yet we have met none of them. They look at that record and have a hard time trusting that we are going to meet the 2030 target.

Would the minister please clearly explain what is so difficult about the target-setting process that prevents him from setting a target for 2025?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, as I have said, we are open to constructive amendments to improve transparency and accountability with respect to this bill going forward.

However, with respect to the climate plan and the comments that my hon. colleague has made, certainly this is a comprehensive approach. It has been recognized by the former leader of the NDP, who called the plan absolutely marvellous and said that it would put Canada on track with respect to our Paris accord obligations. He also said that the Prime Minister and I had published a very bold, all-encompassing, frankly brilliant climate plan. I suggest that perhaps the member might have a conversation with Mr. Mulcair.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am wondering what the government's plans are to deal with Canadians who are at risk of slipping into energy poverty. The regulations on the clean fuel standards printed in the *Gazette* show a very clear picture that middle- and lower-income Canadians are at risk of slipping into energy poverty because of increases in transportation fuel and home heating expenses.

How is this going to address that concern?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, the clean fuel standard is an important part of reducing the carbon content of liquid fuels, and we certainly are working to ensure that it is implemented in a manner that is going to be affordable to all Canadians. That includes increasing accessibility to biofuels and hydrogen through the monies we have allocated to stimulate economic activity in those areas.

I find it a little bizarre that the hon. member is actually asking that question. He might want to review the Conservative Party pamphlet on climate change. It advocates for a more aggressive clean fuel standard, which will have other effects—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister likes to throw around words like “accountability” and “transparency”. The heritage minister said that the government would be putting the brand new 45% target into the bill, yet there has been zero debate on the bill since the targets were set.

How can we vote on the intent of the bill with zero debate on a significant change to the bill's goal?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, if the hon. member had read the bill when it was introduced, it has always been the case that Canada's nationally determined contribution would form the initial 2030 target for the accountability legislation. The nationally determined contribution was moved to 40%-45% last week, which is in line with the commitments that our country and all countries have made under the Paris agreement to ratchet up their

ambitions over time and bring our targets in line with the 2° and, ideally, the 1.5° target.

• (1150)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I still do not understand why we do not have a 2025 target. I do not understand how we can meet our targets when this government continues to pour money into the fossil fuel industry, including \$18 billion to the Trans Mountain expansion project and continuing to subsidize oil and gas.

How are we going to meet our targets, and how is the bill going to keep this government accountable when the first target is in 2030?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, certainly having a robust and comprehensive climate plan is the first step. Canada has that, developed through the pan-Canadian framework and the strengthened climate plan we announced in December. We have added to that with additional investments made in the budget, as well as with the work we are doing with the Americans on a continental approach in a couple of different areas.

Certainly, it is the most detailed climate plan, or one of the most detailed that exists in the world, and Bill C-12 is an important part of that. It would provide transparency and accountability. As I have said, we are open to constructive amendments at committee as to how we can further improve it.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, if the minister really wants to move this through the House and actually have some input on it, he may not have appointed all members of the board that should have resulted from this, as opposed to actually working with other members in the House of Commons in constructing that after this went through.

Is this legislation really just a hurdle that he has to get over as quickly as possible to implement a plan that he would rather implement in the dark corners than in public with consultation and input from other parties?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, certainly the focus of the climate plan has required input from Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We have made a commitment that we will stand up an expert independent body that will provide additional advice to the government, as it goes forward, into finding net-zero pathways. This needs to draw on perspectives from all different parts of society. That is why we launched the independent net-zero advisory body. It is a group of exceptional Canadians across various parts of this country from industry, labour and academia to help us to ensure Canada is moving forward in the appropriate way, and I would—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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 would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 98*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boulerice	Bratina
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
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Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos

Lametti	Lamoureux
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
O'Connell	Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms	Sorbara
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Allison	Arnold
Atwin	Baldinelli
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Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Boudrias
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Carrie	Chabot
Champoux	Charbonneau
Chiu	Chong
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fortin
Gallant	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladau

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Godin	Gourde
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Harder	Hoback
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Kelly	Kent
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Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukowski	MacKenzie
Maguire	Manly
Marcil	Martel
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
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McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Nater	Normandin
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perron	Plamondon
Poilievre	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shipley	Simard
Sloan	Soroka
Stanton	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Therrien
Tochor	Trudel
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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● (1240)

CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The House resumed from April 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-12, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is rather disappointing to see the government bring in time allocation to restrict, or even muzzle, parliamentarians in their debate on a very important bill.

The environment is very important. I have said this many times and I cannot stress it enough. I want all Liberals and everyone to understand that our party, the Conservative Party of Canada, recognizes climate change.

Our leader presented an environment plan last week. I am not sure if that is what provoked the Liberals, but I want to point out that in the week following the presentation of our plan the Liberals changed their greenhouse gas reduction target three times. On Sunday, April 18, they were at 30%. In the budget presented on Monday, April 19, they were at 36%. On Thursday, April 22, in a bid to impress the rest of the world, that figure went up to 45%.

Canada's greenhouse gas emissions will go down in 2021, but I assure Canadians that this will have nothing to do with the Liberals. The current health crisis has indeed caused a worldwide reduction in greenhouse gases, and I hope that the Liberals will not take credit for it.

The Liberals have been in power for six years and, unfortunately, nothing has been done. From 2015 to 2021, greenhouse gas emissions increased by 5% under this government, which had a majority for four years and is now in minority in its second term, which will last who knows how long. That is a fact. Nevertheless, the Liberals have the audacity to tell us to keep quiet about this important subject. That is a big problem for me because there has to be respect for the institution.

Let me get back to the bill “respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050”. This bill fundamentally has merit because it seeks to protect the environment for future generations.

However, I, and many others in Canada, think that the Liberals have a hidden agenda. There are five parts to the bill summary, and one very important one is both troubling and worrisome. In the interests of transparency, something that the Conservatives really value, unlike the Liberals, I want to share a quote from the bill. The bill:

(c) establishes an advisory body to provide the Minister of the Environment with advice with respect to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and matters that are referred to it by the Minister;

The bill itself says the following:

20(1) There is established an advisory body whose mandate is to provide the Minister with advice with respect to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, including advice respecting measures and sectoral strategies that the Government of Canada could implement to achieve a greenhouse gas emissions target, and any matter referred to it by the Minister, and to conduct engagement activities related to achieving net-zero emissions.

21(2) The advisory body is composed of no more than fifteen members, who are appointed on a part-time basis for a renewable term of up to three years.

● (1245)

The very next part of Bill C-12 has to do with the committee's terms of reference. It states, “The Minister may determine and amend the terms of reference of the advisory body”.

As I said at the outset, the liberal government has a hidden agenda. Based on what we know right now about its membership, the government has appointed—or pre-appointed, if I may be so bold—people to the advisory body. However, the bill has yet to be accepted. The selection of members is therefore a concern.

I am giving the second part of my speech today. In the first part, I mentioned that we do recognize climate change and that all Canadians must work together if we want to get results.

Canada has a wealth of natural resources in oil and hydrocarbons. Not a single person from this industry has been appointed to the advisory body. The government prefers to import foreign oil from places where it has no control over how it is extracted.

We must begin the energy transition, and that can only happen if we use the resources we have. We must act intelligently, in partnership with all stakeholders involved in greenhouse gas emissions, so that everyone can contribute. That is the problem with Bill C-12.

My colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent moved a motion calling on the House to decline second reading of Bill C-12 and do the following very specific thing:

(b) address the fact that, after committing to working with Parliament on the makeup of the advisory group, the government appointed climate activists whose influence, if acted upon, would lead to the destruction of the oil and gas sector, disproportionately threaten certain regions of the country and their essential industries, and weaken national unity.

The Liberal government claims to be very inclusive. Can we work together to come up with solutions? Considering this government's attitude, we do not get the feeling that it wants to find solutions. It has a hidden agenda, and that is unfortunate.

We all recognize the importance of taking action on climate change, and it is the Conservative Party that will deliver.

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

We agree that the principle of Bill C-12 on climate accountability is a step in the right direction. In fact, Jack Layton introduced a bill along those lines in 2006. However, there is a lot missing from Bill C-12. The government wants to conduct assessments and produce reports every five years, but, for the Liberals, “in five years” means 2030. The year 2025 does not exist. We do not know why the Liberals are putting this off for practically a decade.

What does my Conservative Party colleague think about the fact that government is putting off Parliament's responsibilities?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, with whom I have the pleasure of serving on the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

He is absolutely right about the fact that the Liberal government thinks this is so urgent that it has just imposed a gag order on us.

I want to take this opportunity to give my colleague a message. I think it is unfortunate that the New Democrats supported the amendment in question.

Let us get back to the facts. It is important to act now. I remember the Liberal government saying in 2018 that we needed to take action and that it was urgent we do so. Yes, it is urgent that we take action. However, as I already mentioned in the House, under Bill C-12, there will have been two majority governments and one year of a minority government before we begin to see results. That is ridiculous.

Government Orders

• (1250)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the CBC website today, I read that the union representing oil and gas workers supports ambitious greenhouse gas emissions targets.

I would like to know who the member is speaking on behalf of. Is he speaking on behalf of energy workers or someone else?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis.

Had my colleague listened to my speech, he would have known that I said we need to work with all stakeholders in the industries involved. Workers want to have an impact. They want to contribute, but they are not represented on the advisory body. Oil and gas industry representatives are not part of the process.

Your government says it is inclusive, so you should work with everyone around the table to come up with a unanimous approach and have a meaningful impact on the environment. That is what we have to do for our children and grandchildren.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member that he is to address his questions and comments to the Chair, not directly to the member.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

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

One of the Liberal government's key campaign promises was to plant two billion trees over about 10 years. That breaks down to 200 million trees a year. As far as we know, not that many trees have been planted, maybe 100,000. The government broke its promise.

What does my colleague think of the idea of planting trees to help combat climate change?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I want to apologize for my previous intervention.

In response to the question by my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, I would say that unfortunately, the government has broken its promises yet again.

Tree planting is a tangible measure. Carbon capture from planting trees has a positive impact. Every environmentalist and every scientist agrees with that.

I would like to inform my colleague that all the members of the Conservative Party of Canada have planted far more trees than the Liberals have in six years.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, we are indeed in a climate crisis. This Parliament voted to affirm that.

Government Orders

Does the hon. member think we should have a target for 2025? As well, should the government be responsible for meeting that target in 2025, whoever is running the government?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

We must act now if we want to have an impact as quickly as possible. We have had a health crisis. The current government was slow to react and to close the border, but it did react eventually. If we want to do something about the climate crisis, we must act very quickly.

[English]

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour and privilege to be a strong voice for the hard-working people of Mississauga East—Cooksville. I know first-hand just how devastating the impacts of climate change can be on their lives. My riding in the city of Mississauga has had to deal with some of the worst flash flooding in the country. Extreme weather events that used to happen every 40 years are now happening every six years. Canadian cities are facing two crises as they converge in a perfect storm, the combination of a rapid rise in extreme weather events, as a result of climate change, with growing deficits in sewer and storm-water infrastructure.

On that note, I want to thank our government for the millions of infrastructure dollars in assistance it has provided Mississauga to help mitigate future flood damage. Per year, there are now 20 more days of rain in Canada. That is up 12% since 1950. In 2012, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimated that replacement costs for Canada's sewer and storm-water infrastructure would be almost \$55 billion.

In Mississauga, we are seeing floods. Across Canada, we are seeing more intense fires, floods, droughts, heat waves and hurricanes tearing through communities, ripping away lives and livelihoods, and having increasingly dire impacts on our public health.

I say all this to make it crystal clear that climate change is the greatest long-term threat that we face as a community, both locally and globally. It is also our greatest economic opportunity. Members may ask how great it is, and it is a massive \$2.6-trillion opportunity. By taking bold climate action, we will create new jobs for the future, strengthen our economy and grow the middle class, while also ensuring clean air and water for our kids and grandkids.

• (1255)

Canada has become a global leader in clean technology, with 11 Canadian companies appearing on the 2021 global clean tech 100 list of the most innovative and promising clean technologies from around the world.

Our neighbour to the south, our greatest trading partner and friend, the United States of America, has resolved to take bold action on climate change as an opportunity to create millions of good-paying middle-class jobs. Going forward, Canada will continue to work closely with the United States and other countries to reach our ambitious climate goals, creating growth and improving the well-being of all people.

Members may ask how we will achieve all that. It is spelled out through our government's ambitious Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. The question will be posed, and it is a great question. Let me explain.

Let us look at some of this government's most recent investments. Since October 2020, we have invested \$53.6 billion to establish Canada's green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, create jobs and secure a cleaner future for everyone. On top of that, budget 2021, which was announced last week, also builds on that approach, including through a new investment in Canada's net-zero accelerator that will incentivize Canadian businesses and industry to develop net-zero technologies and build our clean industrial advantage.

Budget 2021 also includes new measures to make life more affordable and communities more livable by helping more than 200,000 Canadians make their homes greener and working toward conserving 30% of Canada's lands and oceans by 2030. These new measures will help Canada exceed its Paris climate targets, reduce pollution and reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

Since 2015, we have been committed to finding real solutions to help tackle the climate crisis while also creating jobs, strengthening our economy and growing the middle class and those working hard to join it. We have put a rising price on pollution that puts money back into the pockets of Canadians, made new investments in public transit and banned harmful single-use plastics to protect our oceans. Together, we will continue to take action in fighting against climate change and secure a better future for Canadians.

Canada has set an ambitious emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030. Bill C-12 brings the accountability and transparency that are required to achieve our goals. The bill has robust accountability and transparency included within it: a requirement to put in place a target and establish an emissions reduction plan, both to be tabled in Parliament within six months of coming into force of the act; a legally binding process for the federal government to set climate targets and bring forward an ambitious climate plan every five years between 2030 and 2050; a 2030 progress report, which must be tabled before the end of 2027; a 2030 assessment report, to be tabled within 30 days of the 2030 national inventory report data; an annual report detailing how the federal government is managing the financial risks of climate change and the opportunities; and a review by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development within five years of coming into force of the bill.

The very structure of the Paris Agreement is based on the year 2030. Our plans in provinces like B.C. are to be commended, as well as Quebec and those around the world. Bill C-12 includes best practices that we have found around the world, such as the creation of an advisory body.

• (1300)

This is consistent with the undertaking we have seen by our peer countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, New Zealand and France. An advisory body composed of up to 15 experts is established to provide the Minister of Environment and Climate Change advice with respect to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. This advisory body would engage with experts, stakeholders, indigenous peoples and the public to make sure its advice is grounded in the priorities and ideas of all Canadians. The advisory body would submit an annual report to the Minister of Environment with respect to its advice and activities.

Bill C-12 would provide an opportunity to secure a prosperous and sustainable future. By taking this decisive action now, we are creating the industries of the future, creating good-paying jobs, advancing innovative technologies and protecting our country and the world from the utter destruction of climate change.

I encourage my fellow parliamentarians to support Bill C-12 and its speedy passage. They are voting for a bill that would set a strong foundation for a healthier environment, economic growth and possibilities for today and beyond.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, this member just voted to have this steam-rolled through. I really hope he is interested in debating today.

The Minister of Environment has put forward an advisory council, and members of that advisory council have actually made comments against oil and gas, saying they want to phase it out, specifically the Davos approach. Does the member agree with that kind of rhetoric? Does he agree with the targeting of Alberta? Let us not forget Newfoundland and Labrador, which also has its own aspirations for oil and gas, as well as British Columbia, with liquefied natural gas.

Does the member agree with having that kind of division sown upon giving advice to the minister?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, I respect the hon. member, but I reject the premise of that question. That hon. member and the member's party, the Conservatives, have been obstructionists to any kind of climate change policy for the last six years. They have blocked, stymied and done everything possible to stop legislation in Canada from moving forward on real opportunity for meeting our targets. That member does not have the ground to stand upon. As well, members of the Conservative Party of Canada believe climate change is not real.

When it comes to the advisory council, it is representative of all of Canada, all sectors, genders, and indigenous people. It is the type of advisory panel one would want to see represented in the Parliament of Canada.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, passion is a wonderful thing. I was moved by the speech that my colleague from Mississauga East—Cooksville gave. It reminded me of the fine speeches given by Jean-Marc Chaput, the well-known Quebec speaker who unfortunately passed away last year.

In 2017, the Liberal government imposed new greenhouse gas emission reduction standards for highly polluting products used to manufacture insulation board.

These new standards were to be implemented in 2021. In January 2021, a few months before the new rules were to go into effect, these same Liberals granted exemptions to multinationals, while Canadian businesses like Soprema had invested millions of dollars in a new product. This has led to an imbalance in the market, and Soprema is paying the price, even though it did all the right things.

I would like to know if my colleague believes that this is the way to reduce greenhouse gases and help companies get through this crisis.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, I offer my condolences for the loss of the member's friend, who was passionate about climate change and the subject.

When it comes to looking at industry and understanding about jobs, industry has gotten behind this legislation. The forestry industry is just one example, as well as labour. Jerry Dias, Unifor national president, said, "Canada can meet [its] international climate change obligations and create good jobs at the same time." We are working together with all stakeholders to make sure we get this right.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am getting really bad flashbacks to 2005, when Stéphane Dion was standing in the House making the same kind of wild statements about making the world a better place, when in fact there were no standards, there were no plans, and year in, year out our greenhouse gas emissions were rising, as they have been under the Liberals.

Last year, the Liberal government put \$18 billion into the oil and gas sector. How is it credible that the Liberals can tell the world they are leading, when they are not putting money into alternatives and continue to maintain the 20th century economy as it was?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Madam Speaker, maybe the member did not have an opportunity to hear some of my remarks.

We have invested \$53 billion in creating jobs and securing a cleaner future for everyone. In budget 2021, there are a number of initiatives for more affordable communities, more livable communities, helping 200,000 Canadians make their homes greener, and working toward conservation, with 30% of Canada's lands and oceans being protected by 2030. The targets are there, the numbers are there and the dollars are there, I say to the member.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to debate the federal government's climate ambitions and the Liberal Party's commitments in Bill C-12.

We are in quite a predicament. On the one hand, the Liberals want to accelerate the debate because they have just realized that they did not give Bill C-12 enough priority in their parliamentary calendar. On the other hand, the Conservatives have tabled a motion in amendment seeking, not to modify Bill C-12, but to draw the debate out and have “the House decline to give second reading to Bill C-12”. That is something.

It is ironic that the motion to amend asks the government to “implement a plan that recognizes climate change is real”, when the Conservative Party does not even recognize climate change exists. I would like to remind members that, at their convention a few weeks ago, 54% of Conservative members rejected a motion to recognize the existence of climate change. Regardless of what the party leader said to try to rectify the situation, the members were clear and, as a result, the environmental plan they tabled a few days later has no credibility at all.

The Conservatives want the government to fight climate change “while also ensuring that economic development and job growth can flourish all across Canada”. We understand that that is the Conservatives' greatest fear; for them, a green shift means an economy in tatters. Just last week, a Conservative member moved a motion asking that the government recognize that “replacing oil and gas with more environmentally sustainable options is not technologically or economically feasible”. That is rich. Not only is it excessive to ask the government to do something like that, it is also irresponsible to make such a statement unequivocally. I fear that people will be misled.

Quebec is living proof that polluting fuels can be replaced by clean energy and that the green shift is good for the economy. Quebec is a champion for green energy and the reason Canada enjoys an enviable position on the world stage. We have an advantage over the 50 U.S. states and the other Canadian provinces thanks to these investments, and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry said as much recently. The green technologies developed in Quebec are already being marketed outside the country, and the benefits for Quebecers are significant. For example, Hydro-Québec has signed agreements with New York, Vermont and Massachusetts.

There is much to reproach the government for, but it has understood one thing: we need to move forward with the development of green energy, because it is good for the planet and for the economy. We need to stop thinking about the environment and the economy as mutually exclusive, because they are actually complementary.

The Conservatives' amendment also tries to make the government admit that the members it appointed to the advisory group provided for in the bill included “climate activists whose influence, if acted upon, would lead to the destruction of the oil and gas sector, disproportionately threaten certain regions of the country and their essential industries, and weaken national unity.”

Once again, that is quite a statement. Of course, we are not surprised that the Conservative Party is defending the oil and gas sectors. Equally unsurprisingly, climate and environmental policy experts say that these two sectors are harmful to the environment. We cannot bury our heads in the sand. It would be surprising if the experts said that in order to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, we need to continue investing heavily in the oil and gas industry. That would be very surprising.

I expect that the experts are well aware that this industry is the Achilles heel of the government's climate ambitions, and that they are also aware that supporting the industry is not viable in the short, medium or long term if we want to meet our greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

The government is certainly being ambitious with its targets, but it is becoming difficult to follow. Since the Liberal Party came to power, its greenhouse gas emission reduction target has been 30% below 2005 levels by 2030, which was the same target established by the Paris Agreement and Stephen Harper's government.

The climate plan presented last December proposed to exceed this target. With the increase in the federal carbon tax, we could now expect a 31% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The target in last Monday's budget was a 36% reduction by 2030 compared to 2005 levels. This new target was soon superseded when, on the margins of the climate summit hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden last Thursday, the Prime Minister of Canada announced a new target, or rather a range of targets.

Apparently, the target is now at least 40%, the minimum target that countries had to commit to in order to participate in the summit, but it could reach 45% if all goes well. The problem is that the \$17.6 billion in green investments set out in the budget will allow us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 36%, not 40% or 45%.

● (1310)

Normand Mousseau, a physics professor at the Université de Montréal, says that if all of the greenhouse gas reduction measures work, in the best-case scenario, we would see a 23% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030.

In an interview on Friday, he said that based on what is happening in other countries, a carbon tax alone is not enough to meet our targets. We need to create new standards or new regulations to decarbonize certain industries.

The federal government announced several billion dollars in investments, but the amounts are not aligned with the recently announced greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

We believe that this 40% or 45% reduction is more hot air than a real commitment. We believe that a real commitment would be ending support to the oil and gas industries. We believe that a real commitment would be announcing that we will never again finance a pipeline. We believe that a real commitment would start by incorporating the new target, whatever it is, into Bill C-12, which has not yet been done.

As the bill now reads, the minister must set a target for each milestone year, and the targets will be set one at a time, five years before the beginning of the milestone year to which they relate.

The problem is that the government refuses to include 2025 as a milestone year, because it is too soon or, more likely, because it would be unable to meet the target.

That means the first milestone year in Bill C-12 is 2030, and the target is a reduction of at least 40% in greenhouse gas emissions. I find it odd that the government is setting such a high bar for 2030 without establishing a means of measuring its progress before 2030, since that is the very purpose of the bill.

During question period last week, I asked the Minister of the Environment if the new Liberal target would be included in Bill C-12. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who appears to be acting as the new minister of the environment, answered that yes, it would be included.

Before I get too excited, I wonder whether the actual Minister of the Environment endorses this commitment and whether he will propose an amendment to his bill to fulfill it. I sincerely hope so, because it is ridiculous to have a climate act without a greenhouse gas reduction target. It is also ridiculous to say that the minister will set the target once the act is in effect, and it is still more ridiculous to say that he can change the targets as he goes along.

Bill C-12 must show Canadians that Canada is truly meeting its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The act must be transparent and include a real accountability and reporting mechanism, because we are talking about climate accountability.

Seeing the Prime Minister make a commitment on the international stage is encouraging. It seems promising, and it is cute to do it on Earth Day. However, we must not forget that Canada has never succeeded in meeting any of the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets it has set over the years. Kyoto, Copenhagen, Paris: the Government of Canada has failed lamentably each time.

Moreover, Canada is at the bottom of the class. It is the only G7 country where greenhouse gas emissions have increased since 2015. Why? Because it is an oil-producing country and it is incapable of stopping.

All this makes me think of the concept of “doublethink” from George Orwell’s *1984*. I am not saying that this government and the regime in Orwell’s novel are anything alike, but the Liberals’ environmental discourse is a perfect example of doublethink. According to Orwell, doublethink is the ability to hold two conflicting opinions simultaneously by suspending critical thinking. In Orwell’s words, doublethink means “to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic”.

Government Orders

In my opinion, that perfectly describes the Liberals’ strategy when it comes to climate change. The Liberals know they have to act, so they talk about a green recovery, the electrification of transportation and bioforestry. At the same time, however, they continue to subsidize the oil and gas industry heavily. They spend billions to buy an oil pipeline and even allow companies to drill for oil without environmental assessments.

The unbelievable thing is that they are convinced that they are doing the right thing, precisely because they are applying doublethink to climate change. The Liberals know that they are contradicting themselves, but they still believe in the virtue of these two diametrically opposed visions. They are not fooling anyone. Most of us actually have more confidence in Joe Biden, the new U.S. President, whose intentions are clear.

President Biden has announced that the United States will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% to 52% by 2030. Remember, the U.S. is also an oil-producing country. In fact, it produces more oil than Canada and has a larger population, but its target is more ambitious than ours. This is not a competition, but at least the United States has started working harder, and it even had to pressure Canada to do the same.

I sincerely hope that the Liberal government hears this message and that it is serious about its ambitions and commitments, because we are in a climate crisis. Time is running out.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know this is a topic my friend from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia is very passionate about. However, I will note to her that it is Canadian industry that in many ways is leading the way in the fight against climate change. Whether it is energy, forestry, mining or cement, we are seeing Canadian industry reducing GHG emissions by measures the government can only dream of right now. Why do the member and her party continue to follow the Liberals in their quest to destroy Canadian industry?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I do not believe the liberals are destroying Canadian energy sectors such as the oil and gas industry. On the contrary, they are continuing to subsidize it, give it tax breaks and invest to ensure that these huge industries contribute to reducing greenhouse gases. In my opinion, however, we need to invest more in green energy and other such opportunities.

Government Orders

To meet the ambitious targets that have been set, we must move forward with the energy transition. I would say that the oil and gas industry also has to make this transition, while continuing to provide well-paying jobs. However, we must keep in mind and acknowledge that the oil and gas industry does generate pollution.

● (1320)

[English]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have chosen to continue the trend of putting off climate action and left out any real accountability for the next 10 years. Does the member agree that back-loading climate action is the wrong approach and that accountability should start now, not in 2030?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I could not agree more. In fact, Bill C-215, which I introduced in the House, compels the government to be transparent about its climate ambitions, to have accountability mechanisms and to be accountable if it fails to meet its climate targets. The House, however, defeated my bill. We will try to improve Bill C-12 and ensure that it includes accountability measures.

The government cannot wait until 2030 to be accountable. It needs to begin by 2025. Time is running out, and we need to know whether its commitments are actually being met.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about the Conservative convention. The motion that the member is referring to contained many items. Members agreed on some but not all of those items. The same thing could be tried with the amendment that we are proposing today.

The amendment recognizes that climate change is real and makes other recommendations that members can either accept or not accept. I agree that we can support economic growth and environmental action at the same time. We also need to support our existing industry.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for making an effort to speak French. I also thank him for his question.

Unfortunately, I disagree with everything about the motion. First, as parliamentarians, we need to work to pass a climate accountability act. Canada still does not have climate legislation. It is all well and good to make commitments at the international level by setting targets that change every two or three days, but we still need to work together if we want to pass binding, transparent and responsible legislation.

That does not mean putting an end to any industry that is good for Canadians and Quebecers. Rather, it means changing that industry, helping it to evolve and making a transition to something greener, which will help us meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets.

According to statistics and scientists, as it now stands, we are not going to meet those targets because of our polluting industries. We

need to change our way of doing things and move toward greener energy production. Unfortunately, that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize for interrupting the member, but her time is up.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, today, I am speaking to Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act and to some of the bill's flaws, not least of which is the vital role our oil and gas sector plays and the role it will play in getting us to net zero.

When the Liberals first introduced the bill to the House back in November 2020, they introduced it primarily as a political wedge. I want to be clear that although we are opposed to this legislation, the Conservatives do support the aspirations of reaching net zero by 2050. We proposed an amendment to the legislation to recognize the importance of the role of oil and gas in reaching net zero. This position is also consistent with the Liberal Minister of Natural Resources's comments. Without this amendment, I cannot support the legislation.

The reality is that the Conservatives want to reduce our emissions, as most Canadians do, and we join Canadians in the goal to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Where we differ from the Liberals is how we get there.

While the Liberals are content to raise taxes on Canadians, making everything like home heating, groceries and driving to work more expensive, the Conservatives believe there is a better way, one that does not penalize the average Canadian, the very people the Liberals are claiming to help.

The Conservatives are the party of conservation. We want to conserve low tax rates for future generations, we want to conserve economic opportunity and we want to conserve our environment. These are all elements of our plan to secure the future.

When I talk about conserving the environment, I mean that on a number of fronts. The overarching goal of this legislation is to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, and balancing carbon emissions from industry is at the forefront.

However, another aspect less talked about is the environmental conservation of our national parks and protected lands that, when properly taken care of, also help us in lowering emissions by acting as carbon sinks. The leading cause of emissions coming from our national parks is forest fires. Unfortunately, forest fires devastate large areas of land far too often and when fires erupt, they exponentially emit carbon as the fire grows.

One thing that contributes to the large size of forest fires when they occur in the western part of the country is the infestation of mountain pine beetles. These beetles are an invasive species that destroy thousands of pine trees every year. When these trees die, they naturally emit carbon and the dried brush from standing or fallen trees will rapidly burn in the event of a forest fire. Mountain pine beetles are causing great damage along the eastern slopes of the Rockies and the government must take action to control this invasive species and save our pine trees.

With investments in forest fire management and technology to extinguish these fires when they do occur, we can help curb emissions from forest fires and protect our parks. My riding of Yellowhead is home to Jasper National Park, one of the largest and most beautiful parks in Canada. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.

There is often a misconception that the Conservatives do not care about the environment when, in fact, that is not the case at all. My riding, by percentage, in the last election was one of the most Conservative in the country, and voters were interested in our plan for the environment. The narrative that the Conservatives do not care about the environment must change, because it is simply false.

Recently I visited Enhance Energy's carbon sequestration wells in Clive, Alberta, and was beyond impressed with the emerging technology it was using to safely sequester carbon. This one company alone has sequestered enough carbon in its wells that is equivalent to the carbon emissions saved by every electric car on the road in Canada today. Any of my colleagues who are listening and are intrigued by this, post-COVID, I encourage them to visit and see the carbon sequestration wells in person.

This technology has huge benefits and is very exciting. This Alberta homegrown innovation will change the world in how we safely sequester emissions and store carbon.

The path forward to achieving net-zero by 2050 will not be an easy one, but with the political will, innovative science and smart investments, it is a worthy goal we can achieve.

● (1325)

My riding has business owners, environmental stewards, farmers, oil and gas, and other natural resource workers. It does not matter what line of work they are in, even the vast majority of resource-sector workers I meet deeply care about the environment, because they know that sustainability is important. As we transition to a greener economy, these workers must not be left behind.

I recently have noticed a change in the Liberals' messaging on our oil and gas sector. The throwaway line that they used when talking about oil and gas, and to justify the purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline, was that the economy and environment went hand in hand. Now they are not even using that line. Instead, they are avoiding talking about the economic benefits of our natural resource sector altogether.

As exemplified in our new Conservative plan to secure the environment, the Conservatives know that the economy and environment go hand in hand, which is why our plan is to cut emissions without cutting jobs.

Government Orders

My colleague, the member for Edmonton Manning, recently put forward his Motion No. 61, which I am proud to jointly second and support. I mention this, because I believe my position on both Motion No. 61, a motion calling on the House to support oil and gas, and Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, are intertwined. If we achieve net zero by 2050 by simply transferring our emissions to other countries, potentially adding to worldwide emissions, commonly known as carbon leakage, destroying our economy in the process, what have we really accomplished?

Canadian oil is extracted with the highest environmental and labour standards in the world. If we phase-out our oil and gas industry but continue to import oil from other countries with lower environmental and labour standards, we are hurting both our economy and the environment. It just does not make sense. Instead, we need to champion our oil and gas industry and recognize the vital role it plays within our economy now and the vital role it will continue to play into the future.

Fooling Canadians by offloading our emissions to other countries through carbon leakage is a serious concern for the Conservatives. Addressing it is an important element of our plan to safeguard the environment. As we work toward net zero by 2050, we must remain conscience of not only the goal of reaching net zero, but cutting the 1.6% of global emissions for which we are responsible. The Conservative plan to introduce carbon-border tariffs aims to stop carbon leakage and ensures we are truly cutting our emissions and not transferring them elsewhere.

When I read Bill C-12, I read the word "accountability" eight times within the bill. However, for a bill that talks so much so much about accountability, it lacks it. The bill would ensure the accountability for future governments, but what about the current government?

The Liberals have failed to meet their 2020 targets by 123 million tonnes. The aspirations of the bill to achieve net zero is clear, but the Liberal plan is not working. The Auditor General's report revealed that the Liberal's carbon tax was in fact not revenue neutral, and the federal government collected \$225 million more than it paid out in carbon tax rebates. Under the Liberals, we see higher taxes and higher emissions. We need an environmental plan that works for Canadians, a plan that puts more money back in their pockets, while reducing emissions, and a plan that creates jobs in emerging sectors.

While I agree with the aspirations of the bill to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, I cannot vote in favour of it without recognizing the importance that our natural resource sector would play in getting us there.

Government Orders

• (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to touch on two points.

First, I agree that one of the problems with Bill C-12 is that there is no accountability mechanism and no obligation to deliver. Does my colleague know of a mechanism that could be added to the bill to create an obligation to deliver?

Basically, talking about targets is all well and good, but we need action.

Second, does my colleague agree that we will have to gradually wean ourselves off fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy sectors, or does he think we can continue to throw our lot in with fossil fuels and bank on using carbon capture mechanisms to fix things?

[English]

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, I think there is a lot of misconception as to the future of our oil and gas. Are we going to completely eliminate it? Probably not. There are many sides of it that we need to consider, such as using it as a lubricant in the future. We know that we still need to have lubricants, whether it is for our car transmissions, car rear ends or even ball joints, for grease. Could we start looking at other alternatives such as blue hydrogen coming from our natural gas sector? There are other potential alternatives.

Will we start looking at minimizing the amount of consumption? Absolutely. However, we need to look at some of the other positives that we get from the oil and gas industry in the future. It is just not that simplistic that we will be able to remove it completely. That is a big misconception.

• (1335)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, we all know that it is easy to say we have a target for 2050 of net zero, which is a long way away, but we have had experience in the past. The Conservatives have already let people down. The Harper government got rid of the Kyoto accord targets. The members talk about 2050, but we do have a scientific imperative standing in front of with 2030 coming up.

Does the member agree that there needs to be a firm target of at least 40% for 2030? We can argue about how to get there, but do the Conservatives agree to that kind of target?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, definitely we need to start looking at targets. I am not so certain as to whether it should be defined as 40% or what number we should look at, but to start reducing our emissions and getting to carbon neutral by 2050, we need to have a plan that is going to adjust and we need to ensure it is a reasonable plan. As we have seen from the Liberals in the last few years, they have not come anywhere close to their emissions targets. Therefore, to set targets that are not realistic does not help.

To ensure we have a realistic target, we need to have a proper plan that can show how we will get there. One of the problems with the bill is that it does not show any plan to reach any of these targets. That is the reason why I do not support it.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, in December of last year, the government, without any consultation with provinces, said that it would raise the carbon tax to \$170 a tonne, after it promised it would not do that in the 2019 election. Then, on Monday of last week, we had a budget that said it would increase the targets to 36%. Late last week, we heard about a range of 40% to 45%, and the minister specifically cited that the methane regulations may be a target for helping to bridge the gap.

Does the member find that the government has any credibility when it comes to working with the provinces or does he just simply not trust it with its plans on the environment?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, it is very easy to say no, because the government has failed on so many attempts. These are nothing more than just election promise words for the Liberals to say, “Don't worry, we're going to have a plan, keep putting faith in us. and trust us.” That does not build any confidence whatsoever nor does it guarantee that they will meet any of these emission targets. All they are doing is throwing out numbers, hoping people will believe them.

No, I do not believe the Liberals have a plan that will reach any of these targets to which they are trying to get.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to finally be able to speak to Bill C-12, the climate accountability act to reach net-zero. It was introduced in November, and now we find ourselves with a time allocation. This really does need to be debated in this place.

I know how very carefully the parliamentary secretary and the minister, when they speak of all parties in this place ready to support this bill, somehow do not mention the Green Party of Canada, the party that is known and trusted by Canadians, more than any other, to put climate at the centre of what we do to ensure sustainability and that future generations have a hospitable climate, one that will sustain the human civilization going forward.

Therefore, when we hear the words “climate accountability act” and “net-zero by 2050”, we think they really do sound good. I know a lot of people will be stunned to realize that I, as someone who has worked on the climate issue for as long as I have, starting in 1986 on the early stages of negotiating the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and being at the Rio Earth Summit, and so many other conferences I do not even want to go back and remember them all, I am struggling with how I am going to vote on this bill. How is it that I could think that it could be dangerous?

I will explain how that is, and I will make my comments in two parts. The first will look to the science. This is all about the science. We have to get it right. There are such things as carbon budgets, which are not included in this legislation. We know that the Liberals are talking about net-zero by 2050.

Let me reference for a moment Greta Thunberg. We all know she is a very dedicated climate activist. Greta Thunberg says net-zero by 2050 is “surrender” because it gives politicians the illusion that we have time, we have a couple of decades, we can work toward this and we can figure it out. That is not the case anymore.

Let me quote someone the Liberals will have heard of. In his book *Value(s): Building a Better World for All*, Mark Carney explains carbon budgets probably better than anyone I have ever heard. On page 273 of the book, he writes, “The carbon budget to limit temperature rises to below catastrophic levels is rapidly being exhausted. If we had started in 2000, we could have hit the 1.5°C objective by halving emissions every 30 years. Now, we must halve emissions every 10 years. If we wait another four years, the challenge will be to halve emissions every year. If we wait another eight years, our 1.5°C carbon budget will be exhausted.”

How can we have a climate accountability act that has its first milestone year at 2030? Clearly, that is too late.

• (1340)

[Translation]

I would like to share a quotation from French President Emmanuel Macron. This quote is from a speech he delivered at last week's Earth Day summit hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden.

Here is what he said: “We have to drastically increase everyone's targets if we want to achieve the 1.5-degree objective.... 2030 is the new 2050.”

[English]

They cannot get much clearer than that: 2030 is the new 2050. We have legislation here that tells us we will be all right, we will have our first milestone year in 2030. That is past the time of any accountability for the current government and past any accountability for probably the next one too. What we need to do is make this bill work.

I think it can be fixed, but I am very worried because the Minister of Environment and Climate Change asked me and the Green Party to propose amendments back in December. We have proposed the key thing, and without consulting Parliament, without waiting until we got to second reading and committee, he has already negated one of the key things that needs to be fixed in this bill.

Turning now from the science to the policy, there are climate accountability acts in about 12 countries around the world right now. The gold standard is the law the U.K. brought in in 2008. It set up an expert, independent, arm's-length group, a climate accountability institute that actually advises government as a whole, not just the minister and not just a multi-stakeholder group, but an expert group with arm's-length capacity.

That was one of my key recommendations to the minister, to make sure that the group advising the minister is an expert group made up of scientists. Without waiting to go to committee to see if my amendment might pass, we now have an appointed group, and it is a multi-stakeholder group, without independence from government, advising the minister and creating delays in the way it negotiates and moves forward.

Government Orders

To have a 2025 milestone year, we need to do one thing and we need to know the minister is open to it, and he has already told the media that he is not open to it. We need to have the target for 2025 baked into the legislation before third reading. Now that the government says it is heading to 45%, which is far too weak if we are looking at the science, and I will get back to this if I have a moment, we need to at least say that by 2025 we will have a 25% reduction, or even 15%.

That needs to be baked into the legislation, so we have some accountability. The way the legislation works, it also says that two years before we hit the first milestone, we would have the first reporting event. That would be very consistent with the Paris agreement and the requirement for a global stock-take year in 2023. To get on the right page for that, we really do need a 2025 milestone year.

Again, looking at climate accountability legislation all around the world, something else they have in common is that the first milestone year every time is within five years. The U.K., as I mentioned, first passed legislation in 2008. It also passed legislation in 2019, and its first milestone year was 2025. New Zealand brought in its legislation, and within five years of it passing, 2025 was its first milestone year.

It is unfortunate that we hear Liberal after Liberal using talking points that mislead this House. I do not blame them personally. I think the bad advice is coming from within Environment Canada itself. I do not understand how the department is unfamiliar with what we negotiated in Paris.

However, I can be very clear that 2030 is not the only year referenced in the Paris agreement. It also has 2023 as the first global stock-take year, and under agreements negotiated in Paris, specifically the COP 21 decision document at paragraph 24, Canada was supposed to improve our NDC in calendar 2020. We ignored that requirement.

Now we are seeing improvement in Canada's stance based on the announcements the Prime Minister made last week at President Biden's climate summit, but they are clearly inadequate. The minimum Canada should be doing is 60% below 2005 levels by 2030.

Can we fix Bill C-12? I think we can, but the reality, and it is a harsh reality, is that the suggested amendments we have made so far have already been rejected by the Liberal government. Now we have a five-hour closure on debate. I very much fear that I will not be able to vote for Bill C-12 as is, not because I do not want climate action, but because, as Greta Thunberg says, without a near-term target that is meaningful, net-zero by 2050 is surrender.

Government Orders

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government, in bringing forward this legislation, is responding positively to what the population as a whole wants to see.

In the past, the government has indicated that legislation might not necessarily be perfect, and that is one of the reasons we want to go into committee, so we can listen to the amendments being brought forward to improve the legislation. However, the idea of net-zero and the creation of an advisory committee is very positive.

Is the hon. member familiar with some of the appointments that have been made to the advisory committee? If she is, could she provide her comments on the quality of the appointments?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I will not comment on the individuals involved. Many of them are colleagues or friends. It does not matter, the structure is wrong. This is not a time for a multi-stakeholder group. I strongly recommend, and I have done so to the minister, that the government bring back the national round table on the environment and the economy, which was killed by Stephen Harper in the omnibus budget, Bill C-38. We do like multi-stakeholder advice, and we like multi-stakeholders at committees, but this is not a place for a multi-stakeholder committee. This is a place for a panel of experts to make sure the government understands the science, because so far it does not seem to.

• (1350)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the member's references to Mark Carney's book, which I have recently finished reading. I have to say, concerning his call to more action on the environment and also greater fiscal responsibility, he seems to be putting himself outside of his chosen party on a number of issues. I hope the members who fawned over his speech at the convention would consider reading his book and absorbing at least some of his insights.

I want to ask the member about the Conservative amendment, which formally, under the rubrics of debate, we are considering right now. It is an amendment that calls for the government to take a second run at the bill. The Conservative Party and the Green Party might not agree on the precise conclusions, but the amendment calls for the government to implement a real plan that recognizes the challenges of climate change and also to come up with a way of integrating concern for the economy and the environment.

What is the member's take specifically on the amendment from the Conservative House leader?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I am afraid I tend to agree with the Liberals on this one in that it would have the effect of killing the bill. If the bill is not going to be fixed, we might as well kill it, but it is too soon to decide to do that.

I do note, by the way, that the Liberals managed to have Mark Carney speak to the convention without letting him give an actual speech. He was interviewed by the hon. member for Toronto Centre. I had looked forward to hearing his words on many things. I found the book *Value(s)* extremely significant. It would be worth

reading for every Canadian because it really speaks to a new way of governing to build our society back better on many levels. I regretted that he was only interviewed.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation, which was very interesting.

A Conservative member who spoke earlier seemed to really emphasize carbon sequestration and all the ways carbon can be stored underground. I would like to hear her comments on that.

Furthermore, a number of environmental organizations have pointed out the shortcomings in the bill, including the absence of any obligation to achieve results and the lack of binding measures. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about establishing accountability mechanisms and having the government's measures reviewed by an independent authority based on the achievement—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I apologize for interrupting the member, but I had asked for a brief question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for a brief answer.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, on carbon, there is never any harm in looking at speculative technologies, but this one so far has proven to be very expensive and does not work terribly well, whereas renewable energy works very well. We need to move fast.

As to the accountability mechanisms, there are none in this bill. If the minister fails 10 years from now, all he or she has to do is say sorry and give the reasons for the failure.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will advise the next speaker that I will unfortunately have to stop him, but he will be able to continue his speech after question period.

Resuming debate, we have the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak, albeit briefly, to Bill C-12 and the amendment the Conservative House leader has put forward.

We have been critical of many aspects of this bill from the beginning for a specific reason. It is because this bill is another signalling bill without substance. Too often, we have seen that on many important economic, environmental and cultural challenges facing the country, the government opts to signal its concern for the issue without putting in place a real or effective plan. The government's response to the environmental challenges we face has so often involved seeking to raise taxes and seeking to signal its concern through ever-changing evaluation metrics and targets without ever actually putting in place structures that would bind them or that would effectively address the global challenge this represents.

That is why Conservatives have put forward a constructive amendment, which recognizes the realities of the challenges associated with climate change. Certainly we would hope the government members vote for this amendment. To vote against this amendment would imply they do not believe in the science of climate change, since the amendment says right in it that it recognizes the challenge of climate change and the need to address it. Our amendment also highlights the need to integrate a commitment to economic growth with addressing the environmental challenges we face. Fundamentally, Conservatives believe we can do both: that we can work to respond to climate change and that we can build and strengthen our economy in the process.

We hear lip service paid to this idea from various parts of the House, the integration of a concern for the environment and a concern for the economy, but we very rarely see a plan that actually responds to the global challenge and strengthens our economy at the same time. From a Conservative perspective, we are looking at the challenge of climate change as a global challenge. We believe that the specific policy measures we take in response to this global challenge have to have some recognition of the global scope of that problem.

Importantly, that does not mean not acting. Recognizing that Canada represents less than 2% of global emissions is not an excuse to not act, but what it should impel us to do is act in such a way as contributes to the global problem of climate change. I think, most crucially, that should involve developing new technologies and working to promote the deployment of those technologies in a broader way around the world. We are not going to respond to the global problem of climate change by simply taking action that reduces our emissions here in Canada, if the effect of those emissions reductions is simply greater emissions outside the country.

What we have from the Liberals are policies that kneecap our own industries, but impose no restrictions or additional costs on companies that are producing the same products outside Canada and then exporting those products back to us. In other words, if we are taxing producers in Canada, and as a result of that taxation those producers go outside the country, produce the same products and sell those products to Canadians, we are seeing the same or greater emissions and there is no economic or environmental policy the government is putting in place to deter that practice, it very clearly does not make sense to, in the name of environmental policy, push producers beyond our borders without actually requiring those reductions.

The Conservative approach to this, as an alternative to this policy of pushing production outside the country but having the same pro-

duction take place, calls for the development and deployment of new technology that would allow the production of energy in a cleaner way and also for border adjustments. Also, there is a new idea which I think is a very important one, that says that if companies are moving outside Canada and selling their products back to us, there has to be some adjustment at the border to take into consideration that they may not be paying a price on carbon that exists here in Canada.

If we encourage the development of cleaner energy technology in Canada for export around the world, and put in place measures to ensure those who are outside the country selling their products to Canadians do not have some unfair advantage over domestic production, we are actually recognizing the global scope of the problem.

● (1355)

With over 98% of the world's emissions happening outside of Canada, the development and deployment of new technology here will really make that critical difference. We are not seeing a plan like this from the Liberals. They are content to impose additional costs and requirements on Canadian industry and Canadian consumers without treating the global nature of the problem, which is the companies from abroad that have lower environmental standards selling their products into Canada. That does not make any sense. It looks like we are going after Canadian industry to make a point, without actually targeting the global nature of the problem. That is why the Conservatives have presented an alternative plan. That is why we have presented a constructive amendment here at second reading.

The other issue our amendment highlights is this. In addition to not having a clear plan to address the global challenge we face, the Liberals have already put in place individuals on the advisory body that is contemplated in this bill. How disrespectful to Parliament can they be by already putting in place a panel that is envisioned by the legislation? That presumes the legislation will pass in its present form.

I look forward to continuing these remarks at the next available opportunity.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It will not be right after Question Period; it will be the next time the bill is before the House and the hon. member will have four minutes.

Statements by Members, the hon. member for Burnaby North—Seymour.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1400)

*[English]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to address complex issues like climate change head-on, not just for the benefit of our children but for all future generations on this planet. Our government has taken more action on fighting climate change and protecting the environment than any other government in Canadian history and we will continue to increase our ambition to do more.

We have introduced legislation to ensure Canadians have a right to a healthy environment, we have put forward a detailed plan to exceed our 2030 emissions targets and we are creating a credible path to becoming a net-zero emissions nation. In addition to our revenue-neutral price on pollution, we have invested more than \$100 billion on building a clean and green future.

I would encourage everyone to read Canada's ambitious and transparent plan for the climate, as it is now one of the most detailed plans in the entire world. For details on what we are doing in Burnaby and north Vancouver, please read my quarterly reports, which are available at terrybeechmp.ca.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, two years and another political scandal later, the Prime Minister finally tabled a budget. For Canadians across the country and British Columbians in my region, this budget was a massive letdown. Workers in our forestry, tourism, seasonal industries; workers who have lost their jobs or had their wages slashed, were abandoned and left behind once again by the Liberal government.

For Canadians struggling with mental health issues or opioid addiction, this budget misses the mark. Job losses and endless lockdowns because of a failure to vaccinate Canadians continue to worsen our mental health crisis. We are battling a third wave of this pandemic because of the Prime Minister's failures. The reality is this: fewer than 3% of our population have been vaccinated. The Prime Minister had to take from third world countries to secure what few vaccines we have today.

Sadly, Canadians are stuck hearing Liberal backbenchers take Twitter victory laps about how they have exceeded their targets. Canadians are angry and they are frustrated. Let us face it, all the Prime Minister is hoping for is a self-engineered pandemic election. Members want proof? Just look at the Liberal election platform, I mean budget.

* * *

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, violence in the home is an unfortunate reality for too many women in Canada, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more frequent and more severe. There has been much focus from

our government to tackle this tragic issue: having an emergency debate in the House, my tabling of a report with recommendations by the justice committee, and budget 2021 investments in combatting gender-based violence.

In my city, Peel police, under the leadership of Chief Nishan Duraiappah, has joined forces with Safe Centre of Peel and social service agencies to create a 50-officer strong intimate partner violence unit, offering greater support for survivors through a trauma-informed approach and aiming to reduce rates of violence. Collaborative initiatives like this are milestones in the right direction to combat intimate partner violence.

I thank the women and men of Peel police and Chief Duraiappah for their leadership in building safe communities.

* * *

*[Translation]***GASPÉ PENINSULA**

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the Léger happiness index for Quebec, the happiest Quebecers live on the Gaspé Peninsula.

The poll ranks the Gaspé-Magdalen Islands region as the best place to live. Obviously, no one back home is surprised to hear that. It is hard not to be happy when we spend every day with the sea-way, Chaleur Bay, the rivers, mountains, forests and, of course, the people of Gaspé themselves. The Gaspé Peninsula is more than just a beautiful place to go on vacation, it is a land where life is good and every dream is possible.

The pandemic has made us realize the importance of having access to open spaces and the benefits of staying close to nature, but back home, we have known that for a very long time. The Gaspé Peninsula is lively, spectacular, vast and teeming with young, energetic people whose top priority is quality of life.

Happiness does exist, and it can be found in my fantastic region.

* * *

CHÂTEAU DUFRESNE

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight the fact that Château Dufresne, a historic Hochelaga landmark, is 200 years old.

Château Dufresne represents 200 years of east Montreal history. In its current role as a museum, it is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the history and heritage of east Montreal.

Oscar, one of the brothers who built the Château, contributed to the area's development and played an important role in fostering francophone culture in Montreal. The other brother, Marius, helped develop an urban plan for east Montreal, which included the Maisonneuve market and the Letourneux fire station.

Both brothers made significant contributions to the economic prosperity and architectural heritage of east Montreal. In its recent budget, our government mentioned the long history of industrial activity in east Montreal, and we will continue our efforts to revitalize the area for the economy of tomorrow.

After renovations and a year of pandemic, Château Dufresne is finally open. I invite everyone from Hochelaga and Montreal to visit the museum and to discover and rediscover the history of east Montreal.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

DONALD HOLLOWAY AND SMILEY DOUGLAS

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Korean War was one of the most significant chapters in our country's proud military history, and I want to honour two veterans from our community who will be missed with their recent passing.

Don Holloway's lifetime of military service included time in the Korean War as a combat engineer. His dedication to veterans and the community was recognized with the Red Deer Honorary Senior Citizen of the Year award.

Lance Corporal Smiley Douglas was awarded a military medal for saving his comrades' lives when he picked up a grenade and threw it clear of them. He was also a friend and a neighbour. He was my first recollection of what war was, juxtaposed against an infectious laugh and sense of humour over the hand he lost in battle. I remember my father saying that Smiley could do more work with one hand than most men could do with two.

In moments like these, we pause to humanize the courage of those who went, not without fear, into the face of war. May we honour these men in death through the examples they set in life with bravery, love of community, kindness and generosity.

Lest we forget.

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WATERLOO REGION NEWSPAPERS

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to recognize two local newspapers from Waterloo Region that are both celebrating their 25th anniversaries in 2021.

The Kitchener Citizen provides over 60,000 Kitchener households with local news each month. I want to thank editors Carrie Debrone and Helen Hall, and all the volunteers and contributors, for their hard work over the past 25 years.

Also celebrating 25 years is the Woolwich Observer, which serves Woolwich and Wellesley Townships in Kitchener—Conestoga.

Statements by Members

ga. It is an independently owned weekly paper that brings local content, news, opinions and a crossword puzzle. I thank Joe Merlihan and the whole team of the Observer, past and present, for their hard work and dedication to supporting our local communities.

Local journalism remains an integral part of our community here in Kitchener—Conestoga and across Canada.

Congratulations to the staff and volunteers of the Kitchener Citizen and the Woolwich Observer for 25 years of dedicated service to our communities.

* * *

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every three days someone dies a preventable death waiting for an organ transplant. We celebrate Be A Donor Month in April here in Ontario to raise awareness for organ and tissue donation.

By registering to become donors, we have the power to save lives. In fact, one organ donor has the potential to save eight lives and enhance 75 more through tissue donation. Although a little more than 90% of Ontarians are in favour of organ donation, only 35% have actually registered. This month, let us make sure that we change that.

I encourage the residents in my riding of Humber River—Black Creek and all the people of Ontario to show their support by registering their consent for organ and tissue donation. They can register in only two minutes by visiting beadonor.ca. All they need is their health card number.

We have spoken so much about what we need to do to protect each other during this pandemic. Now let us save more lives by registering to become organ and tissue donors.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today on behalf of the incredible people of southwest Saskatchewan, many of whom are continually asking for a plan to safely reopen the economy, get Canadians back to work and secure our future.

I was disappointed that budget 2021 included none of the above. Instead, it is proposing a reimagined Canadian economy that dabbles in risky economic ideas such as abandoning Canada's world-leading, sustainable natural resource industries, leaving our economy in a precarious position and alienating western Canadians even more.

Statements by Members

Canada is now sitting at over \$1 trillion in federal debt, meaning the average Canadian family owes over \$77,000 in federal debt. While the forecast looks grim, I want to assure my constituents that they can be confident with our Conservative recovery plan. We will bolster manufacturing at home, support the resource sector, get Canadians back to work and secure the future for them and their children without this Prime Minister's great reset.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

SENIORS IN ALFRED-PELLAN

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors in Alfred-Pellan have been hit hard by the pandemic. For many of them, it has been a never-ending year of lockdowns, isolation and lack of social activities.

Today, I would like to highlight funding totalling nearly \$509,000 for Laval through the new horizons for seniors program, which will help finance 41 new community projects. In Alfred-Pellan, 13 organizations will be getting a total of more than \$114,000 to host activities that will help our seniors boost their digital skills, meet up virtually and, most importantly, break their isolation.

During these trying times for our seniors, I would like to thank the organizations making seniors' well-being their priority. I thank the volunteers who bring joy to the hearts of our seniors, and I thank our seniors for their valuable contributions to our community.

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[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in what began as a mediocre attempt at legislation to level the playing field between Internet streaming giants and traditional Canadian broadcasters, the Minister of Canadian Heritage assured us that Bill C-10 was not some draconian tool of the state to limit Canadian freedom of expression on the Internet. He actually promised that his legislation was not interested in such things as when his great-uncle posts pictures of his cats.

In the original bill, there were exemptions to protect the freedoms of Canadians posting their online content, yet just the other day the minister ordered the section removed. The minister muses about granting himself the power to remove Internet content that he deems objectionable, and now he is granting authority to the CRTC to control what Canadians post online.

Conservatives will continue to fight for the freedoms of all Canadians, even for the minister's great-uncle's right to continue posting pictures of his cats, whether the minister actually likes them or not.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the recovery plan the Liberals put forward last week threatens Canada's future. Markham—Unionville residents are concerned

that the Liberal plan will only make things worse. We need a new plan that will recover the million jobs COVID-19 destroyed, return transparency to Parliament, provide stronger consequences for corruption and tackle the mental health crisis the pandemic has created, something the Liberal plan shamefully ignores altogether.

Any recovery needs to include looking ahead. That means getting the supplies together to fight the next pandemic and getting our debt in order so that we have the resources to help Canadians in their next time of need.

The Conservative Party of Canada has a plan that does all this. It is a plan to secure jobs, accountability, mental health, the country and the economy. It is a plan that will secure the future.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc for over a year. Canada has now lost 24,000 people: loved ones, friends and community members. In our region there is a ray of hope as people aged 18 and over can get the vaccine. First nations have been leading the vaccine efforts here. I acknowledge the leadership of chiefs, councillors, front-line workers and MKO.

In December, I joined the MP for Vancouver Kingsway in pushing for urgent federal action to get vaccines to indigenous and northern communities. The vaccine is critical, but it is also not enough. We need paid sick days for all workers.

The death of 13-year-old Emily Viegas must be a wake-up call. Many working people in industrial workplaces who are racialized or immigrants have paid for this crisis first with their lives, and now their children's. Coming out of this we need a different world where the elderly, first nations and the working class are not exploited and marginalized: a world where lives matter before profit.

* * *

[Translation]

LOÏC TREMBLAY

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a young and unbelievably courageous constituent of mine.

When a fire broke out in a building in Sacré-Cœur on the evening of April 7, 15-year-old Loïc Tremblay courageously stepped up to save his neighbour, who has reduced mobility. The building was almost completely destroyed, but thanks to him, no one was injured.

It warms my heart to hear about such selflessness on the part of one of my constituents. These kinds of situations show just how devoted human beings can be to helping their neighbours.

Loïc did not hesitate to save a life in the face of a dangerous crisis. I sincerely congratulate him and thank him from the bottom of my heart. The people of the North Shore will always need courageous role models like him to help strengthen the bonds between us.

Loïc is a true hero.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing pandemic has been hard on my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country and many Canadians.

Here in B.C., we are facing strong lockdown measures once again due to the Prime Minister's failures to secure our borders from COVID hot spots and procure vaccines. B.C. is now home to the largest outbreak of the Brazilian variant of COVID-19, outside of Brazil itself.

For over a year, I have listened to distressed constituents who have not been able to get a vaccine, rapid test or COVID test in a timely manner. They have been laid off or are on the verge of losing their businesses. They are very concerned about isolation and continual lockdowns affecting their elderly parents or children. I have listened to heartbreaking stories of loved ones committing suicide. Many people have lost hope.

Conservatives will establish a Canada mental health action plan to increase mental health funding to the provinces and provide employer incentives for mental health coverage for employees. Canada's Conservatives have a recovery plan to secure mental health, secure our economy and secure our future.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my start in politics was as a downtown Hamilton city councillor. It became immediately apparent to me that there was an affordable housing crisis. The problem dated back to a time when social housing and administration costs were downgraded by the provincial government. I personally met with constituents who were struggling to find housing, and those who were housed were often living in dilapidated unsafe units. This experience stayed with me.

Today I am proud to be part of a government that is making historic investments in housing across our country. Yesterday, we an-

nounced that Hamilton would receive \$145 million to repair and renovate over six thousand units of social housing. This is further to the \$97 million that will be used to create 1,942 units. These investments are city-changing, and are an example of how municipalities, provinces and the federal government can work together to change lives for the better.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence was aware of allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance in 2018. The Clerk of the Privy Council knew. The Prime Minister's senior advisor knew. The Prime Minister's chief of staff knew.

Did the Prime Minister know?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have been saying for some time now, yes, there was a complaint against General Vance. Nobody in my office or in the Minister of National Defence's office knew the nature of the complaint.

We clearly have to improve the process. We have to make sure we create an environment in which people who want to bring forward allegations feel supported. That is the kind of situation and the kind of system we are creating.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence was aware of sexual misconduct allegations against General Vance in 2018. The Clerk of the Privy Council was aware. The senior adviser, Mr. Marques, to the Prime Minister was aware. The chief of staff to the Prime Minister was aware in 2018.

Was the Prime Minister aware of sexual misconduct allegations in 2018?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is putting forward is simply untrue. While there was awareness that there was a complaint against General Vance, there was no awareness that it was in fact a #MeToo complaint of a sexual nature. These are issues that we have continued to work on seriously as a government.

I need to highlight that the leader of the official opposition had heard a rumour of misconduct back in 2015. He told his staff, who then told PMO, which told the Privy Council Office. It is the exact same process that played out in 2015 under the previous Conservative government as played out in our government, but we have taken far more actions to change the culture for the better of our military.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us explore those actions. For months, the Prime Minister has said he was not aware of specific allegations. Today, he just told the House that his office was not aware that they were of a #MeToo nature. The only trouble is, his team used the term “sexual harassment” in the emails about this incident in March 2018.

Will the Prime Minister be honest with this House, and with the women serving bravely in our Canadian Armed Forces, that he was aware and he failed them for three years?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have consistently stood up for survivors. We have stood up against harassment and intimidation in federal workplaces across the country, and indeed in the Canadian Armed Forces. We have made significant investments in improving systems and accountability, and we will continue to do that.

In 2018, when a complaint came forward, we forwarded it to the Privy Council Office so it could do the follow-up necessary, but unfortunately the ombudsman was not able to reveal the full extent because he did not have permission. We need to create a system in which people feel supported to come forward.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is now using the term “we”, so I take it he was aware in 2018 that his office was emailing with Mr. Walbourne with respect to sexual harassment. Does the Prime Minister, in the House of Commons, suggest that when Canadian women use the term #MeToo, they are not referring to sexual harassment?

The Prime Minister and his team were aware. Why did he cover it up?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning of my leadership, from the beginning of my time as Prime Minister, I have consistently stood up to defend people who are facing situations of misconduct or sexual harassment. I have always done that every step of the way, and my office has always taken that just as seriously. We will always stand with survivors. We will always ensure justice and support for them every step of the way. One needs simply to look at our record, and we will continue to do even more to do just that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am looking at the records from his office, where the term “sexual harassment” was used, yet today the Prime Minister—maybe he has new notes now—is suggesting they did not think it was a #MeToo allegation. His own team was describing it as sexual harassment. The Clerk of the Privy Council knew. The chief of staff—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt. We will let the hon. member start his question over.

An. hon. member: The chamber is on mute. We cannot hear the chamber virtually.

The Speaker: Can everyone hear now? We will return to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with this cover-up, it seems the country has been on mute with respect to these allegations for three years.

The Prime Minister knows that his own office was using the term “sexual harassment” with respect to this allegation in 2018. All of the senior members of his office knew, and used the term “sexual harassment.” It is embarrassing to suggest that he was not aware that it was a #MeToo-style complaint.

The Clerk of the Privy Council knew. His senior adviser knew. The chief of staff to the Prime Minister of Canada knew for three years. Why did she lie to him?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my office, and my chief of staff specifically, has, from the very beginning, always taken extraordinarily seriously any allegations of personal and professional misconduct, particularly allegations of a sexual nature.

We have consistently stood up in defence of survivors, consistently pushed back against cultures that tolerate and accept marginalization or diminishment of women or other minorities. That is something we will continue to stand up for. We will continue to defend anyone who comes forward with stories and allegations of misconduct. That is what this government has always stood for.

* * *

● (1425)

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying yesterday, special legislation is not the solution to the Port of Montreal problem, it is proof of incompetence. The Prime Minister could have spent five minutes on the phone and prevented the strike. The union made it clear that if the employer drops the shift changes imposed then there would be no strike.

The Prime Minister could have picked up his phone and told the employer to drop the shifts imposed or he would force them to do so through legislation, which he is not even doing. Can the Prime Minister pick up his phone to prevent serious economic losses to the Port of Montreal and avoid harmful special legislation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we often see the Bloc Québécois members rise in the House to say that they will defend the interests of Quebecers. This is an opportunity for Bloc members to put their money where their mouth is.

Will they support our bill to allow activities in the Port of Montreal to resume safely and to establish an impartial mediation and arbitration process that would resolve the disputes and lead to a new collective agreement? Will they accept it or not? Unfortunately, it seems like the answer is no and that they will not act in the best interest of Quebecers.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, would it be possible to tell the Prime Minister that the question is about the Port of Montreal, not the Bloc Québécois or the Liberal party?

He could have picked up his phone. He could have taken the workers' interests in consideration before he decided to become a Conservative dressed in red. He could have picked up his phone and prevented a strike within five minutes. Although the strike has been going on for just three days, it may have cost users of the Port of Montreal anywhere from \$30 million to \$50 million. Why did he not call the employer?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense. For years now, we have prioritized negotiations, and we encourage parties to find a common objective and plan. They were unable to do so.

Our decision to intervene and force impartial mediation and arbitration so that both parties can find a solution was made as a last resort, given that we could soon see some significant damage to Quebec's economy and to Quebecers.

The Bloc Québécois has the opportunity to take action by supporting this bill. Will it? It appears they will not.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the workers at the Port of Montreal want a collective agreement, and that is their right. Instead of helping them, the Prime Minister is going to force them back to work.

The president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees has written to the Prime Minister to point out that this kind of legislation will undermine workers' rights. Will the Prime Minister listen to the workers' demands and withdraw his back-to-work legislation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years now, we have ensured that negotiations between employers and workers take place at the bargaining table. We have encouraged and enabled this process. That is the government's role, and that is what we have done.

Now we have reached a point where negotiations are no longer working. Not only is this putting the Quebec and Canadian economy at risk, but it is about to hurt thousands of Quebecers and Canadians.

Yes, we are going to act, not by imposing a contract, but by allowing mediation and arbitration, an impartial process that will lead to a contract.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the most vulnerable people in our society continue to be those who get sick and end up dying. Experts agree that improving the federal paid sick leave program would save lives, but the Prime Minister seems content just to sit on the sidelines and not do anything to improve it. The government's own forecasts show that it is sitting on over \$4 billion of unspent money in its federal paid sick leave program.

Why will the Prime Minister not stop sitting on the sidelines, show leadership, improve the paid sick leave program and save lives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did move forward with federal emergency sick leave as of

last year, for two weeks at \$500 a week, and we added another two weeks.

The challenge is that the best paid sick leave is that which goes through employers, and we are working on that right now. The Minister of Finance is working with the Province of Ontario to help it bring in sick leave through employers.

At the same time, we brought in federally regulated employer sick leave in September 2019. Unfortunately, the NDP had voted against it in 2018.

* * *

● (1430)

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many countries are beginning to reopen, but the exact opposite is happening in Canada. We are back in lockdown, there are curfews in effect and hospitals are overrun.

We are in this situation because the government is having a hard time procuring vaccines. Only 3% of Canadians have received their second dose. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister is saying that he is not going to make any changes to his approach, despite the fact that he could have done a number of things differently to prevent the third wave.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, contrary to what he says, he failed to obtain vaccines on time?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' historical account omits some very key facts.

Vaccine production was ramping up in January and February. We exceeded our targets in the first quarter by 3.5 million doses. We are in the top three for administering vaccines in the G20.

It takes a multipronged approach to combat the virus: vaccination, procurement of personal protective equipment and public health measures.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, among other things, the Liberal Prime Minister could have done better when it comes to providing a stable, predictable supply of vaccines, enhancing border controls and procuring a sufficient number of rapid tests. Speaking of areas where he could have done better, there is also the budget. In the midst of a pandemic, he is refusing to give the provinces health care transfers with no strings attached. That was the provinces' main demand.

How can the Prime Minister explain the fact that he spends money hand over fist except when it comes time to help our provincial partners with their health care budgets?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have indeed been there for Quebec, as for all provinces and territories. Whether it was the \$19-billion safe restart fund and additional money for mental health and addictions support, or whether it was purchasing all of the PPE, all of the therapeutics, all of the testing and indeed all of the vaccines, we have been there for Quebec and for Quebecers, and we will not hesitate to be there until we get through this together.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's statement to the media today regarding what he knew about the nature of the allegations against General Vance contradicts everything we have heard so far. Multiple witnesses have testified at the defence committee that the allegations were sexual misconduct. The Prime Minister's staff were copied on emails from the Privy Council Office that specifically stated sexual harassment.

Does the Prime Minister really expect Canadians to believe he knew nothing about the allegations against General Vance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has absolutely no tolerance for any type of misconduct. That is something on which we have focused.

I find it rich that the leader of the official opposition and the member opposite are bringing this issue up when the Leader of the Opposition knew of issues like this with General Vance, but the previous government made the decision to select General Vance as CDS anyway.

We will take bold action for a culture change. We have a lot more work to do and we will get it done.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. The Prime Minister may say that he stands for women, but his actions show that he is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

His chief of staff knew about the allegations of sexual misconduct against General Vance, his defence minister knew, the entire senior leadership of his department knew, but he did nothing for three years.

Why did the Prime Minister fail to act on allegations of sexual misconduct at the highest level in Canada's military?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this matter, we followed the process that had been laid out by the previous government. I instructed my chief of staff to get in touch with the PMO and the Privy Council Office and they, in turn, to launch and look into this matter. A similar path was done in 2015, again, as I stated, by the leader of the opposition. In terms of taking action, we have outlined an additional \$236 million to combat sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

We are taking real action. We know that more work needs to be done and we will get it done.

● (1435)

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just as other countries are beating us when it comes to vaccinating their citizens, they are also beating us by giving their economies a shot in the arm.

The U.K. is investing in a massive infrastructure revolution, Italy is unveiling "the mother of" all regulatory reforms and France and Germany are cutting taxes. What did Canada's recent budget do? Run up generational debt, while neglecting strategic investments into long term growth.

Why is the government setting up our economy for post-pandemic failure?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to my friend, his argument is self-defeating. On the one hand, he says we should be spending more. On the other, he says we are spending too much.

The reality is that we have made targeted investments from the very beginning of this pandemic to make sure that businesses could keep their doors open and have workers remain on the payroll. Going forward, our recovery plan is making continued target investments to ensure that more women can take part in the economy, to make sure young people have an opportunity to take part in the economy and, yes, it will also invest in infrastructure to create jobs in communities from coast to coast to coast.

Canadians can rest assured that we have had their backs from the beginning and we will not take our foot off the gas until this recovery is complete.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for Canadians, this budget will not deliver economic growth. The growth we will see is not build back better; it is build back bigger, bigger debt, bigger spending, bigger government. With inflation around the corner, higher interest rates and higher taxes are a real worry for families that cannot afford housing or struggle with debt.

Why does the Liberal government not see the harm it is causing for ordinary Canadians?

The Speaker: We had a bit of a technical glitch. Normally we can hear the question, but I believe the question had a bit of a jitter there.

I will ask the hon. member for Abbotsford to ask the whole question again, please.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately for Canadians, this budget will not deliver economic growth. The growth we will see is not build back better; it is build back bigger, bigger debt, bigger deficits, bigger spending, bigger government. With inflation around the corner, higher interest rates and higher taxes are a real worry for families that cannot afford housing or struggle with debt.

Why does the Liberal government not see the harm it is causing to Canadian families?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with great respect, if the hon. member is worried we will build back bigger, I can reassure him that we will build back with bigger growth. We will build back with bigger prosperity. We will build back with bigger job numbers. The chief economist at RBC has described the upcoming year as one of profound economic recovery.

The reality is that we have put measures in place that are going to support Canadians through this pandemic and set the stage for a recovery that is robust, sustainable and inclusive. If the hon. member cannot get on board with that plan, then I would suggest he revisit things.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as early as August 17, Quebec's ministers of the economy and of labour wrote to Ottawa to demand that the federal government work on a negotiated solution to the labour dispute at the Port of Montreal. They asked that federal ministers exercise their leadership to help reach a resolution.

What has the federal government done over the last eight months to show leadership before resorting to special legislation?

How many times did the minister meet with the parties?

How many times did Ottawa publicly call for a resolution?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about jobs and economic stability. We are talking about the reputation of the Port of Montreal and the reputation of Montreal itself. We are talking about the economy of the entire province of Quebec. Therefore, we must act.

If the Bloc Québécois does not want to help, it should at least move aside and let us do the work. It is time to “un-Bloc” Quebec.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): What we are talking about, Mr. Speaker, is leadership. Had there been some leadership, things would have been moving again in Quebec. When they should have been working on that, the Minister of Labour had already thrown in the towel. The media are reporting that the minister was already planning to resort to special legislation and had presented an emergency plan to cabinet more than a month ago.

What did the minister do this past month to resolve the conflict?

Oral Questions

What incentives did the parties have to reach an agreement if the federal government had already revealed that it would introduce special legislation?

● (1440)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been collaborating from the beginning. From the outset, we have encouraged discussion, dialogue and a joint solution, but now we are going to take action. For once, the Bloc can make a difference, instead of just talking, talking and then getting upset. It can make a difference by supporting the efforts of the federal and Quebec governments and the whole economy in order to move forward. There are many industries that are asking us to take action. The Quebec government wants to take action.

Will the Bloc listen to the consensus in Quebec and defend Quebecers' interests or will the Bloc only defend its own interests and abandon Quebec?

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was quite a turn of events at the heritage committee on Friday during its study of Bill C-10, the broadcasting bill. Quite unexpectedly and without warning, the Liberals took out a major part of the bill, thereby enabling the CRTC to regulate social networks with no clear direction on how that power will be used.

We all know the Liberals do not like criticism, but why do they want to attack freedoms on social media?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read an excerpt from the Debates of the House of Commons. On November 18, 2020, the member for Richmond—Arthabaska criticized Bill C-10 when he said, “That is not covered in this bill though. There is nothing in it that would regulate social media or platforms like YouTube.”

I do not understand. One day, the Conservatives tell us we need to regulate platforms like YouTube, and the next, they tell us not to regulate platforms like YouTube.

Would the Conservative Party of Canada make up its mind?

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is being misleading by taking things out of context and omitting details. The Liberals keep telling us to listen to the experts. This is what Michael Geist, professor emeritus at the University of Ottawa, is saying. He says that this is the most anti-Internet government in the history of Canada.

What does Peter Menzies, former commissioner at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission have to say? This is a full-blown attack on freedom of expression and the foundation of democracy.

What does the minister have to say to these experts who are questioning his work and his attack against people who use social media and the Internet?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you will notice like me and every member of this House that the member for Richmond—Arthabaska did not respond to his quote calling on us to intervene with social media. It makes no sense. We have always said that the people who use the platforms would be excluded, not the platforms. That is exactly what we are doing. The platforms that are acting like broadcasters will have to subject to regulation. We have said that from day one and that is exactly what we are doing.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is misleading the House. Amendments are being proposed that change this legislation from what it was in the fall.

The current government has shown an ever-increasing disregard for the rights and freedoms of Canadians. Under Bill C-10, the Liberals are now wanting to amend the Broadcasting Act to allow for government censorship of video content on social media. According to the minister, it is all about restricting content that “undermines Canada’s social cohesion”, but what does that even mean? Soon they will create the ministry of truth, which just sounds like a weird call, let us be honest.

Why is the Prime Minister trampling on the rights and freedoms of Canadians and why is the minister choosing to mislead Canadians?

• (1445)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is very confused, because Bill C-10 is about the Broadcasting Act that has nothing to do with online harms, which is another bill that will be introduced. I am confused because the Conservative Party of Canada has asked us a number of times to intervene so we can prevent online child pornography, which is exactly what we want to do.

Are the Conservatives saying they are opposed to us trying to act on that?

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the minister is trying to mislead Canadians. It is incredibly inappropriate and damaging.

This is a quote, “It’s difficult to contemplate the levels of moral hubris, incompetence or both that would lead people to believe such an infringement of rights is justifiable.” That is what the former commissioner of the CRTC had to say.

Government control over user-generated content and apps is a complete violation of our charter rights. Is this the kind of country that the Prime Minister is trying to “reimagine” and, if so, then when will he reimagine a free society where our charter rights are respected?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it is the member opposite who is trying to mislead Canadians. We have said from the beginning, when we introduced Bill C-10, that user-generated content would be excluded, but that online platforms that act as broadcasters would be included in the legislation. This is exactly what the amendments that have been debated in committee try to do, and that is what we will do.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has encouraged unbelievable profiteering during this pandemic. Canada’s billionaire’s have increased their wealth by over \$78 billion, yet the government refuses to follow the lead of other countries and put in place a wealth tax. Now the parliamentary budget officer has released new figures on how much a pandemic profits tax would bring. It is \$8 billion, more than enough to put a roof over every Canadian’s head and eliminate homelessness in Canada, yet the Liberals refuse yet again to curb profiteering.

Why do Liberals always give a free ride to the ultra-rich?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me correct the record. I will remind the hon. member that in 2015 when we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could cut them for the middle class, the NDP voted against it. When we implemented the Canada child benefit, improved finances for nine out of 10 families and stopped sending child care cheques to millionaires, the NDP voted against it. When we increased investments in the CRA to combat tax evasion, the NDP voted against it.

The budget includes measures that will support vulnerable Canadians and will ask the wealthiest Canadians to pay more. I trust the NDP will buck the historical trend and support the budget when it has the opportunity.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is almost two years late releasing a national action plan to uphold the calls for justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. What do we see? Internal emails showing a continuation of a fragmented, uncoordinated response by the RCMP, a failure to address call for justice 9.5. COVID is not an excuse. Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQ2IA individuals continue to go missing and murdered.

When will the government release a national action plan to stop this ongoing genocide?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, our hearts are with the survivors, the families of the missing and murdered indigenous women, two-spirit and gender-diverse people. They are helping us develop the best possible effective and accountable national action plan.

In the response to the first-ever national public inquiry on this ongoing national tragedy, our government is working with all provincial and territorial governments as well as indigenous leaders, survivors and families to develop that national action plan that will set a clear road map to ensure that indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people are safe wherever they live and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Avalon.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do members know that 90% of Canadian seafood goes through small craft harbours, and Canada's fish harvesters depend on these facilities to support their livelihoods? My constituents do. Small craft harbours in my riding are the lifeblood of rural communities and industry hubs for shipping, trade, fishing, recreation and other marine sectors.

Can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans tell us what our government is doing to invest in small craft harbours?

• (1450)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his hard work with regard to his advocacy for fisheries and seafood workers right across the country.

There are seven million people living in our rural coastal communities, and we know how important our small craft harbours are to our communities. That is why our government is investing \$300 million through budget 2021 to make sure we can renew and revitalise these small craft harbours, which are so critical to our coastal communities. I am proud to be part of a government that recognizes how important this is to rural Canada.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week government members made more big promises about how they are going to retrain workers and get them back to work in droves, yet they have not told us what these jobs will be, who the employers will be or how long that retraining will take.

Can the minister please tell us what specific jobs Canadians are being re-skilled for?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the nature of work and the way businesses operate are indeed changing at an ever-increasing speed. That is why in budget 2021 we are investing nearly \$2.5 billion to help employers train and re-skill people and health workers transition to new jobs. This investment will

also enhance foundational and transferable skills, and create a new apprenticeship service for the trades.

We are creating 500,000 new training work opportunities, including 215,000 new job and training opportunities for youth; supporting businesses in the most affected sectors, such as tourism, and arts and culture; and accelerating investments in digital transformation of small and medium-sized businesses. This is how we are putting our government on track to meet our commitment to create a million jobs by the end of this year.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was all over the map. I will give a little advice. There are numerous energy projects across this country awaiting approval. These are real projects and real jobs. Thousands of them, in fact, are shovel-ready and employ those who already have the skills.

While we are waiting for the government's great master plan to re-skill Canadians, can we at least get these Canadians back to work now?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, absolutely. In fact, that is why we are investing in sectors and communities in specific job transitions. We are investing in young people. We are investing in people with disabilities. We have a comprehensive plan that is not scattered or all over the map. It is just comprehensive. Perhaps the Conservatives have not seen such a plan before. We are creating jobs. We are training and upskilling workers, and we will continue to be there for Canadians.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Greg runs an auto service business in Calgary that opened in late 2019, just before COVID, and does not qualify for assistance. The government's continuing failure to deliver vaccines and rapid-result screening tests to safely reopen the economy means that more and more businesses are at risk of failing, and the ones that were brand new when the pandemic hit are among the worst affected. The budget contains nothing for these businesses, which are still being denied support because they opened just before COVID.

Why is this?

Oral Questions

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made a number of supports to help businesses from the very beginning, whether it is the wage subsidy, the regional relief and recovery fund or the emergency business account. We realize there continues to be challenges for certain businesses, but we have made investments to ensure their communities can open up safely and are continuing to make investments, as he mentioned, in vaccines. We have now seen more than 13.8 million doses delivered directly to the provinces.

We are going to continue to work to find solutions to support businesses to make sure they are here on the back end of this pandemic, so the recovery will help the economy come roaring back.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was nothing in that answer that will help Greg's business. I raised this issue in question period in February and the parliamentary secretary for small business said they were working on it. I raised the issue at finance in March, and the Deputy Prime Minister admitted they have failed businesses like Greg's. There has been a Speech from the Throne, a fall economic statement and finally a budget, and there is still nothing.

They have admitted there is a problem. That is the first step. When will they actually do something?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very aware of the situation. I want to thank my colleague for raising the important issue.

When we created the emergency relief programs, our government sought to support as many Canadian businesses as possible, as quickly as possible. At the same time, we knew that all of these programs needed to be designed so we could ensure their integrity, as we also ensured they were reaching as many businesses as humanly possible.

This can be a very challenging balance to strike, and we are working to find that balance so we can support new businesses, as well as those millions who have already received support.

* * *

● (1455)

[Translation]

LABOUR

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the press reported that the president and CEO of CN thought the strike at the Port of Montreal would have less of an impact than feared because everyone has seen this coming for weeks.

Businesses have diverted their cargo to other ports in places like Halifax, and the routes have been changed. Everyone is just waiting for things to come to a head since the federal government revealed last month that it was prepared to introduce special legislation.

Why did the government just give in and wait for the negotiations to stall?

Where was the Prime Minister?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there from the very beginning, for the past two and a half years, facilitating negotiations between the two parties. The federal mediator oversaw more than 100 days of negotiations.

There is a consensus in Quebec. Just ask the Government of Quebec, economic stakeholders, employees and families in Quebec. They all agree that we need to protect our economy and move forward.

This is an opportunity for the Bloc to stand up for Quebec, for once, and support the government's efforts to move forward together. The Bloc will not do that, though. It will want to make this a partisan issue. It is time to "un-Bloc" Quebec.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, where has the government been over the past few weeks? It was nowhere to be seen. Every time this government is involved in a dispute, it turns into an economic crisis.

Last year, the Liberals let the CN labour dispute drag on until a propane shortage threatened farmers. They let the Wet'suwet'en conflict drag on to the point where the Prime Minister even recommended sending in the police to deal with indigenous protesters. Now, the Liberals have been watching the Montreal port negotiations and waiting for them to hit a wall so that they could introduce special legislation.

Seriously, does the Prime Minister have any desire to lead this country?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seriously, does the Bloc Québécois have any desire to stand up for Quebec, rather than asking questions, complaining and picking fights?

We are talking here about jobs and economic stability. As I said earlier, we are talking about the reputation of the Port of Montreal and of Montreal itself. This situation has major economic consequences. The Bloc Québécois needs to listen to the Government of Quebec, economic stakeholders, families and people who are concerned about this.

If the Bloc Québécois does not want to help us, then it needs to get out of the way. We are going to do the work, and we are going to stand up for Quebec's economy. It is time to "un-Bloc" Quebec.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, home ownership is becoming impossible for Canadians to attain, a trend that has only grown exponentially worse over the course of this pandemic. The stats back this up. CREA reports that the national average home price rose 31.6% compared to March of last year.

Why has the Liberal government's 2021 budget completely ignored first-time homebuyers and the housing needs of young Canadians?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very good to see the Conservatives finally talk about housing. I remember a prime minister named Stephen Harper who told me once, when I was a reporter, to go read the Constitution because housing was not a federal responsibility.

Let me assure the member opposite that not only will we be taking steps to invest in first-time buyers and supporting them in crossing the bridge to home ownership, not only have we invested \$75 billion in a national housing strategy to make rent more affordable, and not only have we put a tax on foreign speculators in the Canadian housing market, but we are also not done yet. There are new steps to be taken.

We believe in making sure Canadians have a choice, and that choice should be safe, affordable and secure. We will get this done. We will not take advice from the Conservatives, who were missing in action for 10 years.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take no advice from the member opposite, who believes that foreign buyers should have more access to purchasing a home in Canada than a young Canadian. I could go on all day about the failures of the Liberal government to address young homebuyers.

The new housing program has not even made changes yet to address the rising house prices in Vancouver. Why is the Liberal government failing young Canadians? Why is the government losing hope for young Canadians, who just want a secure place to raise their family?

• (1500)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the party opposite misunderstands identifying a problem with being happy about a situation. The issue was described as a serious issue, and it is in the budget we just tabled. We are taking steps to address it. We are also taking steps to address money laundering and to strengthen FINTRAC to make sure foreign speculation does not distort the housing market and protects Canadians.

Our job as a government is to build a housing system based on a human rights approach that gives Canadians the choice whether they want to rent or own, and to support the choice of programs that facilitate the realization of that dream. The party opposite was not only missing in action. It may want to take a look at its role in income trusts and the role they play in the distortion of the housing market. Jim Flaherty might have a few words—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, exports are responsible for one in five jobs in Canada and nearly a third of our GDP. Robust trade not only provides economic

security for families and businesses but will also help reduce our massive federal debt. Despite being critical to our economic recovery, trade appears to be an afterthought in the budget. This is not a surprise. The same government missed a deadline to implement the trade continuity agreement with the U.K. and has still not negotiated a buy America exemption.

Why did the government fail to make trade a priority in its recent budget?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take this question, because only a few weeks ago Canada ranked number two in the entire world in terms of foreign direct investment attractiveness. We take our exporters very seriously in this country. They are an integral part of our economy and will form an integral part of our economic relaunch.

We are certainly going to continue supporting our exporters, and when it comes to having their backs, this government has consistently been there for them, as we will continue to be through to the other side of this pandemic.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government presented budget 2021 last week. This is one of the most significant budgets in generations. Our plan invests in those who are most vulnerable and in families from coast to coast.

Can the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion tell the House about the work our government is doing to bring employment back to pre-pandemic levels?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for the work she does for her community.

Our budget is a plan that invests in growth for all Canadians and an economic recovery that leaves no one behind. We are investing nearly \$2.5 billion to help train workers while also helping Canadians transition to new jobs. We are creating 500,000 training and work opportunities, including 215,000 opportunities for youth.

We are also extending the wage subsidy and creating a hiring program for Canada's economic recovery. We are delivering on our commitment to create one million jobs—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

*Oral Questions**[English]***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has stated that, because interest rates are low, Canada can afford this massive debt and enormous endless deficits. She seems oblivious to the fact that interest rates have nowhere to go but up.

Finance Minister Paul Martin stated, "The debt and the deficit are not inventions of ideology. They are facts of arithmetic. The quicksand of compound interest is real."

Future generations, who will have to pay off this massive debt, want to know if Paul Martin was wrong, or if it is the current minister who is wrong.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question the emergency measures we put forward to support Canadians during an unprecedented public health and economic crisis have been expensive, but doing too little would have been far more expensive. I point the hon. member to the report of the IMF, which indicates that, had we not put forward these measures, our deficit would be of the same scale, but our economy would have experienced economic scarring that would have hamstrung our recovery for a generation.

I point the hon. member as well to the recent reaffirmation of our AAA investment grade credit rating from the major credit rating agencies. It turns out those socialists at the credit agencies also believe that supporting families during their time of need and keeping workers on the—

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauce.

* * *

*[Translation]***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government failed on another front: foreign workers. This government gave a contract to a sole supplier, a Toronto-based unilingual anglophone company, to handle all its COVID-19 tests.

One business in my riding is on day 19 of what was supposed to be a 14-day process. The business has been trying to get a hold of someone for five days now, but nobody is answering.

I know the minister will tell me they signed another contract, but that does not solve the problem for those who are still waiting on Switch Health. What does she have to say to businesses in my riding?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all federal departments worked together to expedite and facilitate the safe entry of temporary foreign workers into Canada.

On April 26, we announced a new partnership with Dynacare to provide specialized support for testing temporary foreign workers

arriving in Quebec by plane. Starting April 28, Dynacare will be providing temporary foreign workers with specialized support in French, English and other languages. This agreement will help meet the increased demand for testing in the coming months.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, incoming temporary workers are taking longer to get to Quebec farms because they are still waiting for the results of their supposedly rapid tests from a company that, in addition to being slow, operates in English only.

This is a waste of valuable time and a blatant lack of respect on the part of this government for our francophone farmers in Quebec. What will the government do to speed up the process for those who are already waiting and to better serve francophones?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, effective April 28, Dynacare will provide temporary foreign workers with dedicated support services in French, English and other languages.

This agreement will help meet an increased demand for testing over the coming months, support essential sectors like agriculture, and protect the health and safety of foreign workers and Canadians.

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*[English]***COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Brampton has been one of the hardest-hit communities by the pandemic in Ontario. We have been on lockdown since November. Right now, we have a test positivity rate of 22% and the situation remains difficult. Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance tell this House how budget 2021 would help hot spots like Brampton get through the pandemic and help the community to recover once this pandemic is over?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her ongoing advocacy for the people of Brampton.

The uptick that we have seen in case numbers in her community and, frankly, across parts of the country is deeply concerning. I would point to the fact that we have invested billions of dollars now to expand EI sickness benefits and implement the Canada recovery sick benefit so families do not need to choose between earning a paycheck and protecting their health.

We have now implemented over 13.8 million doses of vaccines in Canadian communities, and we are continuing to make investments, like through the safe restart agreement with nearly \$19 billion to make sure that Canadians can return to work. As we go forward, we are going to continue to support Canadians in their time of need and ensure that their health and well-being is our first priority.

HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the housing parliamentary secretary admitted that Canada is “a very safe market for foreign investment but...not a great market for Canadians looking for choices around housing”. He also said that Canada's housing market is “driven by speculation”.

The cost of housing in Canada has increased by 31% over the last year alone. This 1% vacant homes tax for non-Canadians living outside of Canada is not going to cut it. Will the government increase this tax, bring in a foreign buyers tax, and put in new money for the construction of social housing for those in core need?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having just heard the NDP House leader talk about solving the housing crisis with an \$8-billion investment, I am a little reluctant to take the advice of the NDP on housing policy. After all, the New Democrats have already spent that money on pharmacare, fighting climate change and basic income. I am not sure how far one simple tax will stretch.

The issue is this. We are focused on delivering to Canadians housing that they can afford, is safe and is secure. We are working on rental housing. We are working on first-time homebuyers. We are working on making sure the market is regulated back to shape so that foreign investors do not find a home before Canadians do, because our goal is to get every Canadian a home. That is what the national housing strategy is investing in.

* * *

• (1510)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, climate targets are not about politics, they are about science, and even though Canada has improved our target last week at President Biden's climate summit, we are not aligned with the science. Speaker after speaker at that summit made it clear that we must achieve the bulk of reductions this decade if we are going to hold to 1.5°C.

Will the minister and the Prime Minister be open to changing Bill C-12 with a specific target due in 2025 baked into the bill?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we support enhanced reporting to ensure we are on track to meeting our newly announced national determined contributions for 2030. To this end, we have proposed embedding Canada's new target for 2030 directly into the act, which is 40% to 45% below 2005 emission levels.

Climate change is an urgent issue and we must work together on it. We hope the Green Party will support the bill at second reading so that we can continue to work constructively to further strengthen the bill.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have today for question period.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order.

Speaker's Ruling

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our rules of order and decorum, they refer to Standing Order 18 and say, “Remarks...which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order.”

During questioning of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, on a number of occasions it was referred to him as misleading the House. When someone accuses someone else of misleading the House, it certainly, at least in my opinion, would suggest that their integrity and indeed their honesty are being questioned in that regard.

I do not think it is necessary at this point to call out those members who were doing that, but it might be beneficial for you to remind members of that particular Standing Order 18 so that we can perhaps correct this moving forward.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to respond to the point of order by my colleague and I do agree with him. I would suggest to him to talk to the Prime Minister because the member for Papineau is always using that kind of argument when we are asking questions. He did that today.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. members for bringing that point up. I do want to remind the hon. members that in the chamber we are setting an example for Canadians, for children, for anyone who is watching and we want to set an example where we are arguing the ideas, not calling names. That is something that the rules point out. I understand that sometimes we forget and get caught up in the moment, but I want to remind everyone that the respect that we have here is something that permeates throughout the country and it is important that we set the example.

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POINTS OF ORDER

MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN ORAL QUESTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on April 14 by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, concerning the participation of independent members and members of non-recognized parties in Oral Questions.

Government Orders

Following up on the point of order that she raised on February 16, concerning their participation in Oral Questions on Wednesday, on which I ruled on February 23, the member focused on the number of questions allocated to them during each sitting week. Since the number of independent members and members of non-recognized parties has risen from four to eight since the beginning of this Parliament, she feels that the number of questions should also increase.

[Translation]

As the one responsible for keeping deliberations running smoothly, the Chair is aware of the number and distribution of questions allocated during question period. I should add that, while the member raised the question from a different angle, I am still obliged to reconcile the three fundamental elements to which I have already referred rather than to address it by limiting the matter to a simple mathematical formula.

[English]

The first element is complying with our established practice. In this case, that means the practice of allocating Oral Questions primarily on the basis of negotiations among the recognized parties in the House. I note that this practice has changed in recent years, which has made it possible to give independent members and members of non-recognized parties a larger share of the questions.

• (1515)

The second, and I find that this relatively recent development has certain limits, relates to the wording of Standing Order 30, since 45 minutes are reserved for question period. The Chair has to make every effort to ensure that this rule is respected as much as possible, similar to ensuring the rules of governing the management of speaking times during our deliberations are adhered to. Members have undoubtedly noticed, as I have, that for many years now, it has been difficult to respect this standing order to the letter.

[Translation]

The third is linked to my responsibility to protect the rights of all members and, as I stated in my ruling last February 23, to find “a balance between the rights and interests of the majority and of those of the minority. In doing so, the Chair must try to be equitable and fair, without tipping the balance too far on one side or the other.”

[English]

In keeping with my commitment as Speaker to encourage meetings to ensure that our institution has harmonious parliamentary procedures that are based on co-operation, and having always insisted on the importance of co-operation to improve the decorum, process and overall operations of the House, I encouraged the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to continue her efforts. I continue to believe that this is the approach most likely to produce a solution. In the meantime, I cannot unilaterally alter the agreement and practices already in place, unless the groups concerned reach an agreement.

Because this question has been raised in the past, and given the parameters of the Chair's authority in the matter, I reiterate my re-

quest that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs study the question.

[Translation]

I thank the hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[English]

PROCEEDINGS ON A BILL ENTITLED AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE RESUMPTION AND CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS AT THE PORT OF MONTREAL

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.) moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, a bill in the name of the Minister of Labour, entitled An Act to provide for the resumption and continuation of operations at the Port of Montreal, be disposed of as follows:

- (a) the bill be ordered for consideration at the second reading stage immediately after the adoption of this order;
- (b) when the House begins debate at the second reading stage of the bill, two members of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party may each speak at the said stage for not more than 20 minutes, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments, provided that members may be permitted to split their time with another member;
- (c) at the conclusion of the time provided for the debate at the second reading stage or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill shall be put without further debate or amendment, provided that, if a recorded division is requested, it shall not be deferred;
- (d) if the bill is adopted at the second reading stage, it shall be deemed referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed;
- (e) during consideration of the bill, the House shall not adjourn, except pursuant to a motion moved by a minister of the Crown;
- (f) no motion to adjourn the debate may be moved except by a minister of the Crown; and
- (g) upon completion of proceedings on the said bill, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging that I am joining members from the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabe people covered by the Dish With One Spoon wampum agreement.

I am here today to talk about our intention to take action to end the labour dispute between the Syndicat des débardeurs, also known as CUPE Local 375, and the Maritime Employers Association, or the MEA.

My maiden speech in the House of Commons discussed a proud history of the labour movement in Hamilton and Canada. I spoke to how our government was passing a bill, Bill C-4, that replaced the previous government's anti-labour bills: Bill C-535 and Bill C-377.

I have been a staunch supporter of the labour movement that has done so much for my home town and for Canada. I grew up in a community that was driven by labour values. Those values are what drive me today: hard work, fairness, safety and healthy and inclusive workplaces.

I want to be clear that neither I nor the government wanted the situation to come to this point. This legislation was always our least-favoured option. Our government believes in the collective bargaining process. The parties have been at the bargaining table for two and a half years. For over two and a half years, we have supported the parties throughout the collective bargaining process in the hope of them arriving at a negotiated agreement.

[Translation]

The Port of Montreal is essential for the economic prosperity of Canadians across the country, especially Quebecers and the people of eastern Canada. We believe that the government has no choice but to take action.

[English]

Let me be clear. The government will continue to support the parties and strongly encourages them to reach an agreement as soon as possible. Let me provide some context.

The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. Every year it handles over 1.6 million 20-foot equivalent units and 35 million tonnes of cargo, representing approximately \$40 billion in goods. It is also a major link in the various Canadian and American supply chains for raw materials and consumer goods.

The work stoppage we are seeing right now is causing harm. It has the potential to cause severe, immediate and lasting damage to the economies of Montreal, the province of Quebec and Canada. This work stoppage affects more than 19,000 direct and indirect jobs associated with transit through the Port of Montreal, including in the rail and trucking industry. In fact, it would affect the jobs of up to 250,000 employees in Montreal and 273,000 workers in Ontario employed in the production of shipping container products. Shippers that have been forced to reroute to other ports may not return immediately. They may not even return in the long term, meaning that the negative impacts on Montreal, Quebec and all of Canada could last longer as the work stoppage continues.

The Port of Montreal is a major link in many Canadian and American supply chains of raw materials and consumer goods. These goods are fundamental to the manufacturing, agriculture and health industries, among many others. Vital PPE arrives via the Port of Montreal. Important goods to various manufacturing industries do as well.

The August 2020 strike had a disruptive and protracted effect on the east coast transportation system. More than 21 ships were diverted to other ports, including Halifax and Saint John, leading to congestion, longer transit times and additional costs for shippers. The current work stoppage is leading to similar rerouting to other ports, including in the U.S. This is having a strong negative economic impact.

Earlier this year, long before the strike action took place, we heard from stakeholders such as the Shipping Federation of Canada, which stated:

The mere threat of a work stoppage by longshore workers at the Port of Montreal is forcing North American importers and exporters to divert large volumes of international cargo away from the port and is already causing havoc to supply chains...

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At that time, the Montreal Port Authority also confirmed that some of its clients had pre-emptively diverted container goods to other ports. Of course, it is important to point out that we are in the midst of the pandemic and COVID-19 has exacerbated this situation.

• (1525)

If these diversions to American ports become permanent, they could have long-lasting negative effects on the integrated transportation and logistics network around the Port of Montreal. A direct effect would be lower demand for rail and trucking services in Canada that support the movement of cargo between Canada and the United States. We also know that production and manufacturing in natural resource sectors, such as forestry, were seriously impacted during the strike last summer. These sectors are once again seeing major impacts to their supply chains with this latest action.

For example, the Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture has said that seed, fertilizer, crop protection and other important inputs arrive at the port destined for farms across the region that need them to successfully get their crops in the ground.

Small businesses that rely on the Port of Montreal for supplies will be especially hard pressed to absorb the extra costs associated with the work stoppage if it is left to continue for a long period. Many of these smaller businesses cannot afford high-cost alternatives, such as expediting cargo through busy ports along the east coast of the U.S. at the last minute. They often cannot afford to pay workers while their businesses remain idle as they wait for operations at the Port of Montreal to return to normal.

All of this comes at a precarious moment in Canada's economic recovery from the ongoing pandemic. Supply chains have been disrupted for over a year now. Industries are working very hard to recover from and manage these complexities. These industries employ workers who are not just numbers: They are people who depend on their jobs to take care of themselves and their families and all those who depend on them. For businesses in central and eastern Canada, this second major work stoppage at one of the main gateways to international suppliers and markets is a serious blow in the already challenging COVID-19 environment.

The impact on our economy of these disruptions to supply chains will be devastating. Ensuring the uninterrupted flow of commodities and goods to and from international and domestic markets through the Port of Montreal is essential to the economic well-being of Canadians across the country, particularly now as we enter a period of economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government of Canada has provided significant assistance to the parties. Over the last two and a half years, a federal government mediator has supported over 100 bargaining sessions. Despite our best efforts and this support, there is no agreement in sight as the parties remain unable to find common ground. This has now resulted in yet another disruption at the port with very real consequences for multiple industries that depend on access to international markets.

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Our government firmly believes that the best deals are reached at the bargaining table. However, intervention is sometimes necessary when the parties are at a significant and long-standing impasse, particularly when a work stoppage is causing significant harm to Canadians. We cannot allow the situation we saw in August 2020 to repeat itself, particularly in the midst of this pandemic. If the current stoppage continues, serious accumulated and negative impacts will continue to be felt all over Canada.

Canadians are counting on us to help the parties resolve their differences as quickly as possible to avoid a worsening of the situation. Stakeholders are counting on us as well, many of whom have already reached out directly to urge the government to do everything in its power to protect the economy, workers' jobs and the well-being of Canadians. As I mentioned earlier, the government will continue to support the parties in their negotiations, and it strongly encourages them to reach an agreement as soon as possible. We take the use of this legislation very seriously. It is our least-favoured option. I very strongly encourage the parties to reach a deal as soon as possible before this legislation is passed. The parties are at the table now. I hope the message continues to be heard loud and clear, but we cannot afford to wait.

We are committed to free and collective bargaining, and we believe in the collective bargaining process. Negotiated agreements are always the best solution. The parties began this round of collective bargaining in September 2018, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has been involved since October 2018.

• (1530)

In the last two and a half years, the parties have met over 100 times. This is a significant investment on the part of the government and clearly demonstrates our commitment to the process. The existing collective bargaining agreement expired on December 31, 2018. The agreement covers all approximately 1,100 workers employed by the member companies of the MEA engaged in the loading and unloading of vessels, and other related work at the Port of Montreal.

On October 11, 2018, the government appointed a conciliation officer from the federal mediation and conciliation service. On December 11, we appointed two mediators to attempt to help the parties resolve their differences and reach an agreement that worked for everyone. On February 4, 2021, I added two senior mediators to this file to assist the parties in their negotiations.

The Canada Industrial Relations Board has also been involved in this dispute.

On October 23, the MEA filed an application with the Canada Industrial Relations Board to determine which activities would need to be maintained in the event of a work stoppage at the port to prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety or health of the public. Neither party could initiate a work stoppage until the CIRB decided on the matter.

The proceedings before the CIRB and related litigation in federal court lasted over a year. During this time, the parties continued to bargain with the help of the federal mediators, holding 40 bargaining sessions between December 11, 2018 and June 8, 2020, the date the CIRB decision was rendered.

Ultimately the CIRB found that the parties did not need to maintain any activities in the event of the work stoppage beyond their statutory obligation under the Canada Labour Code to continue service for grain vessels. However, the CIRB did acknowledge the union's commitment to continuing servicing two vessels that supplied Newfoundland and Labrador. The parties were legally entitled to begin a strike or lockout as of the date of the decision, provided they gave the 72-hour notice.

Less than a month after the CIRB decision was released, with the support of 99% of its membership, the union commenced a partial strike on July 2, 2020. Four work stoppages followed that summer, each one increasing in duration and impact, ending an unlimited strike that started on August 10, 2020. There was also increasing tension around the port on August 13, 2020. Eight people were arrested and charged with intimidation, mischief and assault, following a confrontation between union members and managers who were brought in as replacement workers.

Eleven days later, on August 21, 2020, the parties agreed to a seven-month truce, during the period of which they would keep bargaining and assume all port activities. That truce ended on March 21, 2021.

Throughout these events, the parties have continued to receive intense mediation support from the federal mediators. I want to take this opportunity to thank the federal mediators for their support.

However, despite these ongoing mediation efforts, at the start of February, the MEA filed a bad faith bargaining complaint with the CIRB, asking it to order the parties to binding arbitration. The CIRB issued its ruling on March 17, finding that any determination of bad faith bargaining would be premature, as the parties were still working on the negotiation of a new collective agreement.

My colleague, the Minister of Transport, and I have also reached out to the parties directly to urge them to continue to work toward an agreement. Despite these efforts, negotiations remain stalled and no end is in sight.

On April 10, the employer gave 72 hours' notice of its intention to modify the conditions of employment for members of CUPE 375. According to the notice, employees would no longer be guaranteed a minimum weekly income and would instead be remunerated only for hours worked.

Later that same day, the union gave 72 hours' notice of its intention to no longer perform overtime, work on weekends or participate in training. The union committed to maintaining services for vessels coming to and from Newfoundland and Labrador, and services for grain vessels that must be maintained in accordance with section 87.7(1) of the Canada Labour Code, which specifies that in the event of a job action, the movement of grain must not be affected.

On April 13, the parties implemented the actions described in their respective notices. Recently, the situation has escalated. On April 22, the employer advised the union that it would be invoking the provisions of the collective agreement that imposed a specific shift schedule requiring workers to work the entire shift.

● (1535)

The following day, the union gave notice of its intention to stop all work at the port, beginning at 7 a.m. on April 26. On Monday morning, that is exactly what happened, a complete general strike, unlimited in duration, began at the Port of Montreal.

The parties have reached an impasse and it is clear that despite ongoing assistance from federal mediators for the last two and a half years, they remain unable to find a common ground. We urgently need to find a way to move forward, particularly in light of the recent escalation in job action, which has paralyzed the port.

Our government has done everything we could to help the parties resolve their differences without a stoppage. We believe in the collective bargaining process. There are, however, exceptional circumstances where the government must step in. This is one of those exceptional circumstances. The impact is vast and deep and the situation is dire.

When it is only the two parties at the bargaining table that stand to suffer grave consequences as a result of work stoppage, there is no justification for the government to intervene. However, when a strike or lockout is disrupting the economy to the degree that it has and has caused significant and permanent damage to the livelihoods and well-being of Canadians across the country, such as what we are seeing with this escalating work stoppage at the Port of Montreal, the government must intervene even if it is to intervene with a heavy heart.

Canadians are counting on medicines and medical equipment, farmers are counting on receipt of seed and fertilizer to grow crops and feed Canadians and Canadians are counting on products and goods, including food, medicines and medical equipment, specifically dialysis products. This is a concern in the best of times. Now, in the midst of a pandemic, these concerns are heightened.

I have heard messages from stakeholders loud and clear. This is literally a matter of life and death has been the message communicated to me. If medical products and life-saving medical devices do not get to hospitals and patients in a timely manner, the health of Canadians is at stake. We know there are ships currently with COVID-related products, pharmaceutical and medical equipment, that now cannot get through. The impacts are vast and deep. Ensuring the uninterrupted flow of these goods is critical at this time.

The parties could not reach a negotiated agreement after two and a half years of negotiations, and the help of a federal mediator at over 100 bargaining sessions. We cannot afford to wait any longer to intervene. There is too much at stake. We must act before irreparable damage is done to the economies of Montreal, the Province of Quebec and Canada as well as the health and safety of Canadians across the country.

We will continue to work with both parties in an effort to help them find common ground. The federal government will continue

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to support the negotiations between the parties. As I have said, the parties are currently at the table. We strongly encourage them, with the support of the federal mediation and conciliation service, to come to an agreement at the table.

We also have a responsibility to act in the interests of Canadians whose lives and livelihoods are affected by the work stoppage, which is the result of failure to reach a negotiated agreement after the two and a half years of federally supported negotiations of the Syndicat des débardeurs, known also as CUPE Local 375, and the Maritime Employers Association. That is why we are introducing this legislation today.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to pay my respect to the hon. minister, who said some sentences in French. I deeply appreciate the fact that she did that, especially since this is a conflict concerning Montreal. However, that is the end of my applause for her because it is anything but good.

● (1540)

[Translation]

Today is anything but a good day for Parliament, for the economy or for the social and labour movements. The government is unfortunately introducing special legislation, which is the worst way to deal with a problem or conflict.

My question for the minister is the following. The Prime Minister is the member for Papineau, in Montreal. Did the Prime Minister himself pick up the phone at any time in the past few days and call both the employer and the union in an attempt to show some leadership, both as Prime Minister and as a leader, and find common ground before we ended up in the unfortunate situation we are in today?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

I want to be very clear that the government has been there every step of the way for the last two and a half years. The federal mediation and conciliation service has supported the parties. They have been at the table for two and a half years, and over 100 mediation sessions.

In February, I took the extra step of appointing two senior level mediators to further assist the parties. There has been regular contact and engagement. I, the Minister of Transport, other ministers and MPs have reached out to the parties to communicate the important message of ensuring an agreement is reached at the table.

I want to assure the member that we have been there every step of the way and we will continue to be there to support the parties to reach an agreement at the table.

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Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech, but I disagree with her claim that the government did everything it could. Certain sections of the Canada Labour Code would have allowed the government to intervene in special circumstances. For example, the government could have forced mediation and the arbitrator would have issued a ruling. That was not done. The minister still had a card up her sleeve.

Why did the government not invoke these sections of the Canada Labour Code and act accordingly?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[English]

I want to reassure the member that we have absolutely been there every step of the way and have taken every measure we can. I want to remind the member that these parties have been negotiating for two and a half years. The federal mediation and conciliation service has been there. In February, I appointed two of our senior level mediators.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the mediators, who have worked very hard. I think the parties at the table would agree that those supports have been helpful. The message we want to reiterate for them is to please come to an agreement at the table.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Maritime Employers Association, since the truce agreement has expired, has flexed its muscle and has ensured it has increased the hours of work against the union's rights without having any kind of consultation with them. This is what has provoked the strike. These workers want their bargaining rights. They are saying, and this is from Michael Murray, the CUPE spokesman for 375:

...all it has to do is let up on its pressure tactics and the union will do likewise.
No overtime strike. No weekend strike. It's straightforward. We want to return to the bargaining table.

Why is the minister taking away these people's bargaining rights, ensuring they go to binding arbitrations instead of having fair collective bargaining power?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, this is the least favoured option, but our government has done everything in its power to support the parties to reach an agreement at the table. I want to remind the member that there have been two and a half years of negotiations. The federal government has been there every step of the way with mediators. Two additional mediators have been appointed. Despite this support, the multiple disruptions in the past and actions the parties have taken, there has been no significant progress made at the table. This is why we are taking the action we are taking today.

• (1545)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the minister is saying she is doing this with a heavy heart, but the fact is that she is doing it. In fact, from the discussions we have had, it is clear that she telegraphed that this was an option she was considering. Since she has done that, the negotiations have taken a real turn for the worse.

Therefore, I would like to ask the minister a question. Often deals are made under pressure. When either side uses the tools it has in its tool box to bring pressure to the other side, that is when deals get done. Does she not feel that by telegraphing this was coming, she has taken that pressure off and prevented the hard negotiations from happening at the table as they should be happening right now?

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, I would say that the hard negotiations continue at the table and the federal mediators are there to support the parties as they work through these negotiations.

We really have to look at the economic impact that has taken place with respect to the work stoppages and the initiatives that have taken place with respect to the past two and a half years, the economic harm. It is reported that \$600 million was lost with respect to the previous strike action that was taken.

In addition to this, it is the health and safety of Canadians. We are looking at workers who are impacted because their work relies on the supply chains, seniors who are waiting for medicines and medical equipment, farmers who are waiting for fertilizer and seed. Therefore, along the whole way we are examining all options. The situation now has come to the point where it is dire, and that is why we are taking this action, but of course we continue to encourage the parties to come to a negotiated agreement at the table, and we have continued to provide the support of a mediation service to do that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I still hold out hope that there will be a negotiated agreement. I know how passionate the minister is in terms of the bargaining process and she sees the true value of it. Different political parties and different levels of government, unfortunately, at times have to take actions. However, even though we take the actions, we still hope to see negotiated agreements.

I wonder if the minister could just provide her thoughts on still having some hope.

Hon. Filomena Tassi: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. I am definitely filled with hope. The message has been made very clearly to the parties on both sides. We recognize that negotiation is hard, but one comes to the table with two things: a spirit of flexibility and a desire to get the agreement done. Therefore, we keep sending that message to the parties.

I want to thank them for doing the hard work and thank the mediation service, which has been working so hard with the parties, and really encourage them to come to an agreement now. We want that deal to be made at the table, and I think the parties are listening to us. I encourage them to listen to that message, to come to an agreement. That, of course, would be the best result.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will find that I have the unanimous consent of the House for my speech to be considered a 20-minute speech and for me to share my time with the member for Chilliwack—Hope.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent have the unanimous consent of the House to share his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to be a member of the House and to have had the opportunity to duly represent the people of Louis-Saint-Laurent for nearly five and a half or six years now.

Normally, I am always pleased and enthusiastic to rise in the House. However, today, it is quite the opposite. Rising in the House to debate and pass special legislation to force employees back to work is the furthest thing from a victory. It is not a victory for workers, for the employer, or for the business people and companies dealing with the problems resulting from the dispute, and it is certainly not a victory for parliamentarians.

Parliament's job is to pass bills that help society move forward, not to force people back to work. Unfortunately, we are obligated to debate this motion, which will lead to the passage of special legislation forcing Port of Montreal dock workers back to work. Obviously, we have a lot to say about that. We are here because the Liberal government, and particularly the Prime Minister and member for Papineau, a Montreal riding, unfortunately failed to show leadership at the appropriate time.

Let us consider the facts. The Port of Montreal is extremely essential. It is the beating heart of Montreal's economy, Quebec's economy and Canada's economy because goods that go through the port end up everywhere. That is why we have to pass this bill, which will cause port operations that have been stalled for more than a day now to resume.

The Port of Montreal is a crucial economic tool. It is Canada's second-largest port. Some 40 million tonnes of cargo and two billion products go through the Port of Montreal. For that to work, the port has to be efficient and reliable. Unfortunately, it is neither at the moment. This dispute is tarnishing the Port of Montreal's reputation, and now 1,150 dock workers are on strike because of it.

This dispute has deep roots. For nearly two and a half years now, the Port of Montreal's 1,150 dock workers have been without a contract. Anyone working for an organization wants to know what to expect. Disputes may arise occasionally, and contracts have to be renegotiated from time to time, but when it takes almost two and a half years to reach an agreement, that does not fly, and that is when problems come up.

These workers have been without a contract since December 2018.

Members will recall the sad events of last summer, when the Port of Montreal was hit by a 19-day labour dispute. Over those 19 days, \$600 million was reportedly lost due to the work stoppage at the port. It took three months for economic activity to return to

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normal and for the backlog to clear. Since everything was shut down for 19 days, the containers piled up and could not be moved. The total economic impact of the dispute was \$600 million.

Given the pressures of last summer, in the middle of a pandemic, we would have expected negotiations to resume civilly so that the parties could quickly find some middle ground. Unfortunately, that is not what happened. Instead, there was a seven-month truce, but it did not last.

There was an attempt at mediation. Experienced mediators were called in to help move things along. We recognize that. More importantly, however, we recognize that it did not work. That is the problem.

The government claims to have goodwill and talks about how terrible this is. I heard the minister talk about her goodwill earlier. Incidentally, I want to congratulate the minister for speaking a few sentences in French. I do not doubt her goodwill, but we need to see some results. There are no results to speak of. That is why the Prime Minister should have shown some leadership. I will come back to the lack of leadership a little later.

Every day this strike continues is costing our economy between \$10 million and \$20 million, which is huge. This is the second day of the strike, so it is time to move forward. Using special legislation is messy. No one wants that. I used to sit in the National Assembly in Quebec, and I had to vote on special legislation. As an opposition member, I agreed with the government's approach, but I could not applaud the passing of special legislation.

• (1555)

Special legislation undermines confidence in Parliament since it must be adopted quickly. It also causes upheaval in society when the government forces unionized workers who are striking legally to return to work and negotiate with their employers.

From the outset, I will say that we want to keep the economy rolling. We want the workers at thousands of plants, primarily in Quebec and Ontario, to be able to resume work and have access to the goods that flow through the port. We want them to be able to ship their products through the Port of Montreal. For that to happen, the workers need to return to work.

In her speech, the minister said that this dispute would directly affect 250,000 jobs in Quebec and 270,000 in Ontario. As members can see, this conflict is not a local, municipal or provincial issue. It is a Canadian one. Companies in western Canada and in the Maritimes will be directly affected by this as well.

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Sadly, we will recall that during last summer's dispute about twenty vessels destined for the Port of Montreal were redirected to other ports such as the Port of Halifax. This has been happening again for the past several weeks. Why? It is because the government did not show leadership at the right time to prevent this dispute. Unfortunately, it was not prevented.

The Quebec government is calling for special legislation to be passed because Quebec's economy is being affected by this situation. Business people also want operations to resume. We completely agree. We also know that the unions think passing special legislation is appalling. That is true. Unfortunately, we believe that this government failed to show leadership. I will explain.

When such serious disputes arise, when positions are irreconcilable and there is no flexibility on certain aspects that could move things forward, that is when political leadership must be shown and unfortunately that did not happen.

I will never understand why the member for Papineau, who is from the Montreal area, the Prime Minister of Canada, who has all the authority to act, did not do anything about a dispute that is happening just a few kilometres from his riding.

The Prime Minister had a fundamental duty to pick up the phone last week and call the union and the Port of Montreal management, to encourage them to work things out and ask them what the issues were. That is a prime minister's job. That is where leadership is needed.

When every effort has been made to resolve a conflict but unfortunately nothing is working, the Prime Minister needs to step up and do something. Instead, this Prime Minister said the parties had to be left to their negotiations to see if that would work. That did not work for two and a half years. In a case like this, it is important to think outside the box. That is where leadership comes in, and that is where leadership was lacking.

The Prime Minister and member for Papineau, from the Montreal region, did not have the courage to do the right thing. That is why we find ourselves in this situation today, the same situation we sadly decried quite a while ago. I say "sadly" because we would have preferred not to do that. More than a month ago, when we felt no progress was being made, we asked questions in the House. The member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and the member for Mégantic—L'Érable rose in the House to question the government and ensure that it would take action to avoid a dispute. Unfortunately, that is what we are facing now.

We are currently suffering the repercussions of the third wave of the pandemic, which, as members know, were exacerbated by the current government's tardiness in procuring vaccines when it mattered. We are now suffering the consequences of the 10-day gap in January and February.

Business people were hard hit by the lack of access to supplies and equipment during the rail crisis almost two years ago. Then they were hit by the pandemic and eventually the third wave. On top of all that, they are now facing the labour dispute at the Port of Montreal. Thousands of jobs throughout Quebec, Ontario and Canada are at stake. Unfortunately, this government failed by not showing the necessary leadership. Now we have to debate this bill,

which has to pass so that operations can resume at the Port of Montreal.

• (1600)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many members of this House ever had the opportunity to sit at a bargaining table on the union side, but I did. The only power that labour ultimately has is the right to withdraw its services. Without that, it has no ultimate negotiating power. Here is something else: Strikes cause economic pressure; that is the very point of them. That right does not just exist for labour whose withdrawal of services does not produce consequences. It is like saying that workers with effective strike pressure cannot exercise that right.

At the Port of Montreal, the government is intervening before those workers even have a chance to exercise their right or exert pressure. My hon. colleague said that this is not a victory for employers or employees. Well, it is a victory for employers, because no employers sit at a table and bargain seriously if they know that a government will intervene and ultimately take away the right of the workers to strike, and guarantee an arbitrated result.

Why does the member not support workers' rights to strike and exercise the only fundamental constitutional right they have, or is that a right only for workers whose withdrawal of services does not actually impact anybody?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I want to pay my respects to the member for the experience he provides as a negotiator on the union side.

It is very sad what we have to address today, because there is no winner. The hon. member talks about how the Montreal Port Authority would be on the winning side, but there is no winner. A special law is anything but a win, but we have to address it.

I think about the thousands of people, union people, who are working in different shops in Quebec, in Ontario and from coast to coast who need their products to be offshore, and they also need products coming from the port in order to create wealth here in Canada. Yes, we are very seriously thinking about the 1,150 union workers who are on strike right now, but we are also thinking of the thousands of people who are working in many shops around the country and who are involved, by accident, in this situation.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for his speech.

Rather than talking about unionized workers, I will focus on employers.

Is the member aware that, from the moment an employer learns of the government's intention to introduce legislation, they will no longer negotiate because there is no longer any incentive to do so?

I would also like to know whether the Conservative Party, which is the official opposition, will vote for or against the special legislation.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

The fact is that by letting things drag on, unfortunately, the government has set the stage for the special legislation. The Prime Minister should have picked up the phone and taken action instead of introducing special legislation. I have said it before. That is what we believe.

Therefore, it is important to note that, in our hearts and minds, we believe that when the Prime Minister does not do his duty, we find ourselves in a situation such as this one. Instead of sending the signal that it was preparing a special bill, the government should have sent signals to bring about the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

● (1605)

[English]

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we hear from the government that every step of the way it hopes something is going to happen. Often we hear these words, with no action. Is this not all about leadership and getting something done, leadership from the Prime Minister?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, this is why we are here today, because of lack of leadership. There are times when we need more action instead of talking. This is exactly where we are today. A special law to get back to work is anything but good. It is not good for union people, not good for the business community, because we are all losers in that situation, especially we parliamentarians.

The point is that instead of talking about adopting a special law a few days ago, the Prime Minister should have talked about directly getting involved in this process. He should have picked up the phone, called both parties and tried to reach an agreement. We have not seen that, and this is a lack of leadership.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to speak to this House, this time from Chilliwack remotely. My hon. colleague, the opposition House leader, had excellent remarks. I am always pleased to share the virtual stage with him. He mentioned a few things that I want to build on.

Primarily, government members like to pat themselves on the back for their intentions. They always have good intentions and think that should be enough to get them kudos for how they operate. Good intentions do not equal good results. While the minister talked about having a heavy heart and she had good intentions to facilitate a deal, the fact is that they did not get it done. To quote Michael Ignatieff, “They didn’t get it done”, so we are here today.

That is disappointing. None of us are happy that we are here debating back-to-work legislation. Back-to-work legislation indicates a failure. It indicates that there has been a failure from the government to facilitate a negotiated settlement, that the bargaining has broken down and that this is, as the minister said, the last tool in the tool box, but here we are. It is being deployed. That is something we have heard. Certainly, I spoke to the union today. It said that once the minister telegraphed, some time ago, that back-to-work

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legislation was an option she was considering, the negotiations fell off the table. The negotiations started to get less serious and no longer were tackling the issues at the heart of this dispute, because one side could say it would wait to see what the government does before bringing forward ideas.

I think that has been really unfortunate. As was said by the member for Vancouver Kingsway, when the pressure is removed from a negotiation, there is no more impetus to come to the best deal. A pressure valve has been released by the government here. To signal that before a strike was even under way was truly unfortunate. From the reports that we are hearing on the ground, it did have a negative impact on negotiations.

We have seen that when there is a deadline, it seems the government fails to manage a file even more than usual. When there is a hard deadline, the government’s failures increase. We saw it last fall, when the CERB benefits were going to run out. We all got pushed up against the wall because the government had failed to manage the timeline. We saw it with medical aid in dying, where the government absolutely failed to respond to court deadlines. We saw it with the U.K. trade agreement, where the government has failed to meet deadlines. Now, with a seven-month truce period, the government has failed to facilitate a negotiated settlement between the union and the employer. Once again, this deadline was known. It is not a surprise, and neither is the situation at the Port of Montreal a surprise, but the government has failed to get a deal done with the parties.

We know that the Port of Montreal is extremely important to the country. It is the second-busiest port in the country and it has connections to more than 140 countries. It is the largest port in eastern Canada: 40 million tonnes of cargo were handled in 2019; 2,500 trucks a day go through that port, and 60 to 80 trains a week; there are \$2.6 billion in economic benefits, \$250 million in tax revenue, and over 19,000 direct and indirect jobs; a hundred billion dollars’ worth of goods go through there. We cannot overstate the importance of the port, and we cannot overstate as well the difficulty that has been felt around the world because of the uncertainty that is happening at the port.

● (1610)

We saw that with the August 2020 shutdown, when there was a \$600-million cost to the economy for a 19-day strike. It took three months after that strike for port activities to get back to where they were and for the backlogs to be cleared.

We know that, as we go forward, any work stoppage is going to have a massive impact on Canada’s economy, at a time when we can afford it the least. We already have some of the highest unemployment rates in the G7. We have seen the pandemic have a devastating impact on small businesses right across the country, and the last thing they can afford is a prolonged stoppage that will impact their bottom line again.

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We have also talked to the port itself, which is not the employer in this situation but is an interested party. It has indicated that since the truce ended, it has seen about a 10% drop in shipping volumes. That is before any action was taken by either side, before any work stoppage occurred. At the same time, ports in New York and New Jersey and Norfolk were seeing a corresponding increase in traffic as the shippers from around the world were making decisions on the reliability of the Port of Montreal.

That is what is at stake here: the continued questions about the reliability of the port. By failing to get a deal done, by failing to facilitate a deal, those questions remain, so people and businesses are making decisions that will impact workers not only at the port but right across the country. If the volumes do not come back and the 10% decline becomes a permanent decline, that will result in fewer union jobs. If we cannot get product across the country to manufacturing facilities, that will result in fewer jobs and the impacts will be felt all along the supply chain.

We Conservatives, too, believe in the collective bargaining process. This is the process that the government says it had good intentions to support, but it failed to help the two parties come to an agreement. We want these decisions to be made at the table, without the guillotine, if we want to call it that, of back-to-work legislation hanging over their heads. The best deals are made at the table between willing parties. Certainly we want to reiterate our support for collective bargaining, and that we are not celebrating today that the government has taken this action.

However, we do believe that Canada cannot afford a prolonged work stoppage at this port. We cannot afford to see companies choosing to temporarily or permanently shift their operations to other ports. As the CEO of the Port of Montreal has indicated, extra dollars to move a product using a different port are one thing, but reliability is non-negotiable. Companies cannot have their products tied up in port or be unsure that they will be able to get to the customers in a timely fashion.

It is unfortunate that we are here today. It is unfortunate that the government was unable to facilitate a deal between the two parties. We do not celebrate the fact that this is before us, but here we are. We have to make a choice, and we choose to support the Canadian economy and support the workers right across the supply chain who are relying on the products that come through that port.

• (1615)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, I see the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North potentially rising on a point of order. We will give the floor to her.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 5—NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed it is nice to see you. I wish I were there in person with everyone.

I give notice that with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 5, at the next sitting of the House a minister of the Crown shall move pursuant to Standing Order 57 that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The House appreciates the notice provided by the hon. minister.

We will now go to questions and comments. The hon. member for Mount Royal.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his always fair and nuanced position on how he approaches issues such as this. I wanted to mention something that he raised, which is the fact that a very significant percentage of work in the port relates to the Midwest of the United States. The port has already seen a 19% decline in goods that were originally ordered by customers in the American Midwest. If we do not see a final resolution, not a temporary one, but a final resolution to this uncertainty, it is highly likely that we will continue to see an erosion of the business the port does with the United States.

Is this a concern for the hon. member? How does he recommend we address that?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to work with the member on the special committee on the U.S.-Canadian economic relationship. He mentions that this issue is having an impact on our economic bottom line.

The real danger here is that, with a couple of work stoppages in such a short period of time, questions about the long-term reliability of the port are obviously raised. We cannot make a decision about shipping the weekend before something arrives at a port. The decisions have to be made a long time in advance. The uncertainty has caused a number of companies to make decisions to move away from the Port of Montreal, and to move away from the economic activity coming into that port and coming into Canada. We cannot afford for the temporary redirection to U.S. ports to become permanent. That is why we are supporting the effort to get certainty here because the long-term economic damage would be too great.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague from Chilliwack—Hope. He stated that he supports the bargaining process, but I would like to know if he accepts the mediation process.

The Canada Labour Code already has a provision that would have allowed the government to impose mediation without resorting to special legislation. Does my colleague approve of that existing provision of the Canada Labour Code?

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, the government should have used all the tools in its toolbox before coming to back-to-work legislation. It is obviously the hammer in that toolbox, and it is a tool that governments should be very hesitant to use.

As I have said numerous times, whether the government's intentions were good, whether it sat in on a number of meetings or not, the fact of the matter is that it did not get the job done. They have not yet reached a negotiated settlement. In fact, we are being told that in the last number of days, as the pressure has been released because of the threat of this back-to-work legislation, the prospects of a negotiated settlement have done nothing but decline. It is very unfortunate that the government failed to facilitate a negotiated settlement in this case.

• (1620)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives say that they support labour and union workers. If that is the case, I know that they will agree that a fundamental tenet of labour rights is free collective bargain. Back-to-work legislation tips the scale, as the member acknowledged, for the employer, and essentially robs the union of any chance of free collective bargaining in a fair way.

We still have a chance to do this. What it takes is for the Conservatives to vote against this back-to-work legislation motion and send a clear signal to the employers, so they know they need to get back to the table to negotiate fairly with the union. We also need to send the government back to do its work without wielding the hammer.

Will the Conservatives vote against this motion?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that this is truly unfortunate.

I would say again that telegraphing that this was coming has prevented the negotiation from occurring under pressure. That is often when deals get done, when both sides realize that the time has run out and it is time to get down to brass tacks. The minister released the pressure valve, which is unfortunate.

For a number of companies, in Quebec especially, there are no other options. The Port of Montreal is the only option they have to ship their products around the world. They have already been hampered by the pandemic. We simply cannot allow those companies to be negatively impacted long term because of the situation at the port, which is why we will be reluctantly supporting this motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

Before I start, I would like to apologize to the interpreters because I will not be reading a text. I know that they like to have a copy of our speaking notes, and I understand why. I will try not to speak too quickly.

I want to start by paying tribute to all workers because tomorrow, April 28, is the National Day of Mourning for those killed or injured on the job. It is an opportunity to remember that we must work together to ensure that workplaces are healthy and safe. This includes harmonious labour relations and good living and working conditions for workers.

Today is a dark day. It is sunny outside, but it is a dark day in the House when the government introduces special legislation to end

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negotiations and deprive workers of any means of action. No, it is not the last resort or the only option, and no, it is not inevitable. It would have been possible to take another course of action.

I am not going to spend 10 minutes going over all of the International Labour Organization conventions that Canada has signed, but I do want to point out one thing. The Port of Montreal workers and the employer are trying to renew a contract that expired nearly two years ago. This process requires free collective bargaining, a balance of power and the ability to take action, such as a strike.

In 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada constitutionalized the right to strike in a precedent-setting case involving health care, highway and other public sector workers in Saskatchewan. I will not read out the entire ruling, because that would take me until midnight, but the Supreme Court found that without the right to strike, the right to bargain collectively is meaningless. The court concluded that a prohibition on designated employees participating in strike action as part of the bargaining process amounts to a substantial interference with collective bargaining. Therefore, the right to strike is constitutionally protected.

The special legislation before us denies two fundamental rights: the right to free collective bargaining and the right to strike.

We are being asked to act urgently because action is urgently needed and there is no other choice. That is not true. There were plenty of signals during negotiations that should have alerted the department of labour, the government and the Prime Minister himself that this labour dispute would not be easily resolved.

The government cannot simply send in the best, most experienced mediators for 100 days, read their reports, and then decide that the negotiations are not going anywhere and that it will do nothing. Doing nothing is not an answer.

• (1625)

The latest signal came on April 9 when the employer sent a notice regarding job security and then changed work schedules a few days later. Those facts alone helped escalate the dispute.

Workers took job action, first with an overtime strike and then with a weekend strike before moving on to an unlimited general strike.

Not just one but four times in one week, the union stated publicly for all to hear that, if the employer were to walk back these two changes, which were a violation of the collective agreement, the union members would cease all job action. That was a strong signal. Did the employer just not hear them? Why did the employer not take action and try to strike a balance in order to pursue mediation?

That is not what happened though. The threat of special legislation has been looming for about a month now.

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How could free collective bargaining and a balance of power prevail when everyone knew the government would hand the employer special legislation on a silver platter before workers even staged an unlimited general strike, which is the most useful pressure tactic?

I want to make it clear that workers are never happy about getting to that point in a dispute.

This government could have shown leadership. When we look closely at what is happening with the labour dispute, we see that there were other signals. As I was saying during question period, there was a strike last August. Economic and labour force stakeholders were already sending signals that the government needed to do something to help the parties reach a negotiated collective agreement. They were worried about what had happened and the impact that those strike days would have.

At that point, the government could have thought about what conditions it should implement besides special mediators. When disputes start to escalate and it seems that no agreement will be reached, the Minister of Labour and the Prime Minister should at least show an interest in what is happening. They should at least make some calls, offer to listen to both parties and try to find ways to help bridge the gap between them. I will not talk here about the basics of good bargaining with good governance, but the government has let this labour relations issue go on for too long.

I would also remind the House that the parties have been negotiating for two and a half years, or 30 months to be exact. This is turning into a farce. In the first year of negotiations, the employer itself took the union to court to try to take away its right to strike. The employer lost, because the Supreme Court upheld the union's right to strike.

The bill before us negates that. The first clause of the bill extends the term of the collective agreement to include the period beginning in January. However, this does not guarantee that the union will be go back to work based on the agreement. Considering what has happened in the last few weeks, this would be like going back to work with the sword of Damocles hanging over their heads.

A mediator-arbitrator will have the powers and duties to select the terms of the collective agreement, depending on the final offer. We see this as another right being violated.

For all these reasons, we cannot support the special legislation before us. Instead, every possible effort must be made to ensure genuine negotiations, in order to remove this sword of Damocles from above the workers' heads. The government has a duty to do so.

• (1630)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville for her speech.

On the matter of defending workers' rights, we are on the same wavelength.

In her view, what is the meaning of the Liberal government's abusive and systematic use of special legislation that tips the scales at the negotiating table and always favours management?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I think that if we look at the history of labour relations in Canada there may be more special legislation than negotiated settlements. Just look at the special legislation the Harper government used to force Canada Post employees back to work.

Even though we cannot interfere in negotiations, we must take action as parliamentarians when there is a dispute and the economic or social situation is difficult. We have to put ourselves in dispute resolution mode instead of waiting and saying that it is impossible, that there are no other options.

The minister was saying that drugs will not get delivered. That is not true and it ignores the facts, because essential services are still being provided. All medical equipment and supplies are being handled.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her eloquent and heartfelt speech. We can see that she knows what she is talking about, thanks to her experience working for many labour organizations.

She criticized the government's complacency and lack of leadership with respect to measures that could have been taken in the past. Could she tell us what should be done now to prevent the situation from spiralling out of control, even though a special bill has been introduced? What solutions would she propose to the government to help prevent other special bills from being introduced in the future?

• (1635)

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I will not go back to what has been happening in recent months, but we could see, just in recent weeks, that the government could have taken action to prevent this situation. We said it and others are repeating it. The government could have made a call. There were things it could have done.

No one is denying the importance of the Port of Montreal's economic activity and positioning. The Port of Montreal is an asset. It is an important port. No one is denying that. However, turning a deaf ear when one of the parties threatens to leave the negotiating table shows a lack of leadership.

I think that, in future negotiations, it is important that the government not ignore these signs, that it not wait until a line has been drawn and there is a crisis to manage. Instead, the government needs to anticipate disputes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to repeat what my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville said, and that is that drugs and other COVID-19-related items are still being unloaded at the Port of Montreal, which means that the strike does not pose a threat to the health and safety of the public. It is important to remind people of that because there is a lot of misinformation circulating in that regard, and unfortunately, the Liberal minister is partly responsible for that.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville gave an excellent speech.

I think that we all need to learn from her compelling experience in organized labour, and the government would do well to listen to people like her.

The situation we are in right now is a little unusual. The strike at the Port of Montreal was not unexpected, since this labour dispute has been going on for months. Some time ago, there was an agreement to proceed with negotiations without a lockout or a strike. The government even appointed mediators.

Everything had been going well. There was even some hope that this dispute could be resolved. However, as the months passed, it became clear that things were not looking quite so rosy. Newspapers have reported that the employer unilaterally decided to change shift schedules. The union took that move as a sign of disrespect during the negotiating process. Tensions escalated, and workers started floating the idea of going on strike.

There were snubs from both sides throughout the months, yet the government was nowhere to be seen. Its only contribution was to say that it was thinking of introducing special legislation. It missed the point. The Liberals are constantly boasting about defending workers' rights and repealing some of the laws passed by the Harper government. There may be some truth to what they say, but, at the end of the day, it is just like everything else. The Liberals talk about climate change, but they keep subsidizing oil companies. What is more, they are not doing a thing to address the issue of tax havens.

I will get back to the Port of Montreal, but it is still interesting to see that, in the end, it is the same story with workers' rights.

The same thing happened with Aveos workers. Air Canada violated both the terms of the contract and the law when it shut down the aircraft maintenance centre in Montreal. The Liberal Party promised Aveos workers it would support them. What did it do once it came to power? It amended the act in such a way that Air Canada did not have to respect workers. Clearly, the Liberals can be counted on to say one thing and do the opposite.

The urgent matter here is not the Liberals. The urgent matter is finding a solution so the Port of Montreal can keep operating. We know there is a problem. In a perfect world, a work stoppage at the port should not have an impact on Quebec's economy. This is serious. The employer should not be allowed to rest on its laurels because of this special legislation. It should not be allowed to avoid negotiating because it is going to get special legislation that will give it everything it wants. That is not how it works, but the Liberals seem to think that is how it works.

When the Liberals talk, they almost sound like the NDP. When they act, however, they are more like the Conservatives. It is a little hard to figure out how they think. The fact is, we are always disappointed, and that is a shame.

There was a truce that lasted several months, so the government had time to see what was coming, and yet it did absolutely nothing.

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I myself have had discussions with the Port of Montreal. My colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville has had discussions with the union. What has the government done? When did the Minister of Labour talk to them? When did the Prime Minister talk to them? For them, the solution is simple. They just wash their hands of it, since special legislation will make sure there is not a single day of strike action. I have to say, that is weak. Everyone agrees that a negotiated agreement is better than one imposed by special legislation. Imposing special legislation is like dictating to them how things are going to go and telling them to just suck it up.

● (1640)

I am trying to imagine how the workers will feel the day after this vote, when working conditions are imposed on them. Do members think those workers will feel like going back to work? Do members think the workers will be happy about the situation? Do they think that the Port of Montreal is going to come out the winner in the end?

The way I see it, if workers do not feel like going to work because they do not feel appreciated or respected, then there is a good chance that they will be going in reluctantly and will not be as productive. Generally, after a labour dispute and difficult negotiations, and especially after being told by the government to suck it up, workers may need time to calm down. The situation needs to be defused. The parties need to find a way to open a dialogue and work together. It is impossible to do that when one side is saying that it has all the power and the other has none. The government has a strange way of looking at things.

I am also surprised that the government is using the strike argument. It is saying that avoiding a strike is crucial. If workers go on strike, it is the end of the world.

There is no hiding the fact that, as I mentioned earlier, there will clearly be economic repercussions that no one wants. The Port of Montreal, the maritime employers that employ the workers, and business people have all said that the port must not be shut down. The workers never said that they wanted the port to shut down. They said that there would not be a strike if the new shift schedules that were unilaterally imposed during negotiations were rescinded.

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It makes me wonder. I am not in the shoes of the port workers or the administrators. However, I imagine that if there were no special legislation, I would ask myself if I wanted to shut down my port. I could lose customers if the port shut down, and Quebec would not be in happy. If the government said that it would not pass special legislation, perhaps I would sit down, negotiate and try to keep the port open because I want goods to keep moving. Perhaps that is what would have happened. Perhaps the Prime Minister or the Minister of Labour could have picked up the phone, called the port representatives, the maritime employers and the union members and asked them if there was any way to lower the temperature a little, cool off, step back and for each party to give a little. Instead, the government is siding against the workers, and that is unacceptable. I hope that the workers will remember this.

This has happened before. The government has let conflicts escalate. It never seems able to take action or be proactive when issues arise. The conflict with the Wet'suwet'en went on for months, and the government was not even able to speak to them. It did not want to. The Wet'suwet'en were blocking rail lines all over the place, but the federal government claimed it was a provincial jurisdiction and that it did not want to get involved. It was mind-boggling.

The same thing happened during the CN strike. It took a propane shortage during that labour dispute for the government to wake up and realize that it should maybe facilitate dialogue. It is frustrating when a government does not have its act together and simply gives up. A government's job is to govern, not to constantly impose decisions or take sides. The government's job is to help improve these situations. That takes dialogue and a little moral authority, not just the government's usual heavy-handed approach.

Today, the Liberals have tabled special legislation, after waiting until negotiations hit a wall. I think that, although we are disappointed, it is not too late. I think the government could still change its mind. It still has a chance to recover its sanity and realize that if we really want a balanced society, that happens through free collective bargaining. A balanced society can only be achieved through dialogue, not through imposing work conditions or through a government taking sides. We need a government that can bring some common sense to all this. That is what I am asking of the government going forward.

• (1645)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. There is a lot we agree on.

Why does he think the Conservative and Liberal governments, which are one and the same on this issue, systematically use special legislation, back-to-work legislation, that dashes workers' hopes of having their rights respected and having truly free collective bargaining?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

It is clear that for the Conservatives, it is all about leaving it up to the market. The market is not so great when it comes to free collective bargaining. Then it becomes about leaving it up to management.

The Liberal Party engages in doublespeak. When it is time for action, it may have other interests. I do not know who is funding the Liberal Party, and I am not saying that it is the maritime employers, but it is disappointing to see that the government's real actions never really favour the workers.

This government always says it relies on the decisions of the courts. It loves the Supreme Court in particular. Perhaps the government needs to be reminded that it lost before the court when it was told that workers, specifically those at the Port of Montreal, had the right to free collective bargaining. Watching the government immediately do the opposite is hard to swallow.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sense that the member wants to see the issue become more politicized, as he makes reference to the Liberal Party. Why does he speculate about New Democratic governments at the provincial level and other parties at the provincial level? I am not 100% clear on this, and maybe the member could let me know what the current Premier of Quebec thinks. Why would they support back-to-work legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the Government of Quebec. He also mentioned some others, but I do not know as much about what is going on in the other provinces. I live in Quebec, I would like Quebec to be its own country, and I focus my attention on Quebec.

The member is picking and choosing the words that suit his purpose and focusing on those. Perhaps he did not listen to everything the Government of Quebec said. It actually also said that the best solution was a negotiated one.

No one is against that, so I do not understand why the government did not do everything in its power to reach a negotiated solution before introducing special legislation.

• (1650)

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech.

In the previous Parliament, when the same party was in power, Canada Post employees went on strike. That strike, too, ended with special legislation.

Would my colleague care to comment on that?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague reminded us about that. As the member for Thérèse-De Blainville pointed out in her speech earlier on, in Canada's recent history, more labour disputes seem to have been dealt with through special legislation than through negotiation.

In recent years, the government has been either Liberal or Conservative. That is disappointing because workers' rights have been trampled on every time.

Why say that workers have the right to bargain freely if that right is going to be violated anyway?

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, 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 Vancouver East, Canada Revenue Agency; the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain, Carbon Pricing; and the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, National Defence.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I want to explain the crisis at the Port of Montreal in clear and simple terms. The workers at the Port of Montreal want a collective agreement. That is their right, just as they have the right to negotiate that agreement freely. The Liberal government wants to prevent them from negotiating freely by introducing legislation that will force them back to work. That is the situation, explained in simple terms.

Workers have a right. It is a fundamental and essential right that allows them to do their jobs. It is essential that we support them and that we support their right to bargain freely. When the Liberal government, or any other government, prevents these negotiations from taking place, it hurts workers and violates their rights. To create a just society, we must support the process and support free negotiations.

What the government is proposing is exactly what former Conservative governments did. It is exactly what this government did with Canada Post workers. We clearly see once again that the Liberal government and the Prime Minister do not stand up for workers' interests. The decision to introduce back-to-work legislation is unfair and wrong and will harm society in general.

The Liberals have shown once again that they are no different than the Conservatives and that they are turning their backs on workers to the benefit of businesses. The government will say that is not true, that there is now a crisis and that if workers fight for their rights, that will negatively affect the rest of society.

However, the workers at the Port of Montreal want to defend their working conditions, not hurt our society. The spokesperson for local 375 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, or CUPE, stated, "We don't want to hurt the Montreal economy. However, we do want to exercise our fundamental right to bargain collectively."

The national president of CUPE wrote to the Prime Minister to tell him that it is impossible to negotiate fairly and in good faith under the threat of back-to-work legislation since such legislation completely destabilizes the balance of power between the parties. The legislation that we are debating will completely destabilize the balance of power between the parties.

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Workers are prepared to negotiate. The Liberals need to withdraw their back-to-work legislation and let workers defend their rights at the negotiating table. We are once again asking the government not to intervene and to let the parties freely negotiate in order to come to a better agreement. I repeat: It is their right to do so. It is only through bargaining that employees will be able to obtain safer and fairer working conditions.

• (1655)

[English]

What is going is very clear. Workers at the Port of Montreal want to negotiate a collective agreement. That is their right. They should be able to do that freely. The Liberals, the government and the Prime Minister are undermining their ability to freely negotiate. They are undermining the fundamental rights of workers to negotiate their collective agreement. This is absolutely wrong.

Forcing these workers back to work when they are in the midst of a negotiation would completely upset the negotiations. It completely undermines the process. It takes away the rights of the workers to fight for their basic rights. It is the wrong thing to do. It is obviously going to mean that the employer is not going to want to negotiate fairly when an announcement is made that there is going to be back-to-work legislation. What is the motivation for the employer to negotiate in good faith now? It is the wrong thing to do.

Workers at the Port of Montreal have been very clear that they do not want to hurt the economy; they just want to negotiate a fair deal. The national president of CUPE wrote to the Prime Minister and made it clear that by putting forward this legislation, it would directly undermine the negotiation and negatively impact the workers' ability to get a fair deal. The workers are ready to negotiate; they are negotiating right now,

The Liberals must withdraw this legislation. It is the wrong thing to do and it does not help anyone. In fact, the only way there are good conditions for all of Canada when it comes to the work done at ports is when the workers are respected, when they are given the dignity to have the ability to collectively negotiate and when there are free and fair collective agreements. When there are free and fair collective agreements and workers are respected and able to do their jobs, all of Canada benefits.

When workers are undermined and disrespected, it will hurt not just the process and the workers but everyone. It is not a good condition for work when workers are being disrespected like this.

Obviously, the New Democrats are opposed to this and are calling on the government and the Prime Minister to immediately withdraw the legislation.

Time and time again, the Liberals say they are the friends of workers. They are doing exactly what the Conservative Party would have done by bringing in back-to-work legislation so early in the negotiation process. It is so wrong to do, and is always wrong to do, but it is particularly heinous when they are in the midst of negotiations.

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I again want to be clear. We are asking the Liberal government and the Prime Minister not to intervene in the workers' ability to negotiate and work toward a collective agreement. That is their right and it should be defended and protected.

We know that when workers are able to freely negotiate their contracts and agreements, they are able to ensure that good protections, good work hours and safety are in place. We want to be leaders in ensuring that we set the precedent that at the federal level, workers are supported and protected and not being forced back to work. The New Democrats again call on the government to withdraw the legislation, to stop its undermining of workers and, instead, to stand up for workers and protect their rights. These are difficult times and in difficult times, we expect the government to stand with workers.

We have seen the Liberal government again and again side with large corporations. It said no to taxing the ultra-rich, it said no to taxing web giants, it said no to removing profit from long-term care, it said no to changing Revera, the second-largest long-term care home provider in Canada, from a for-profit company and making it public. It continues to show a pattern of behaviour. It said no to universal pharmacare, which, again, it stood up for big pharma. There has again and again been a pattern of behaviour where the Liberal government continues to defend the rights and interests of large and powerful corporations over the interests of people and workers.

Enough is enough. The government should withdraw the legislation and let the workers negotiate. They will be able to obtain a good contract that is in the best interests of workers and in the best interests of Canadians.

• (1700)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the labour dispute at the Port of Montreal, there is now a general strike. Is there any duration of a general strike at the port that the hon. member believes would require the government to intervene with back-to-work legislation? Hypothetically, let us say, for example, the strike lasted for a month. Is there any length of time in any strike that the hon. member believes the government should intervene in this way?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the reality is this. What the Liberal government is doing right now will directly undermine the ability of the workers, who have just started to fight for their rights and are in the midst of negotiations. Why would an employer negotiate with workers when the government has already signalled that it will bring in back-to-work legislation? It undermines the process, it undermines the rights of workers and it is the wrong thing to do.

We always need to find ways to support the process, support workers and their ability to come to a collective agreement, and to be able to negotiate freely. The role of the government is to support and encourage the resolution of these disputes through the process. The government should be supporting the process and workers, not by undermining it, which is exactly what the Liberal government is doing.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask a question. One of the things we are seeing is that

this is basically a shortcut. The easy decision right now to use a sledgehammer approach. However, what would be more profitable for business and for a long-term relationship would be to work together to find a solution and an agreement that both sides will respect. It even could be a longer agreement.

In the past, we have seen these forced negotiations lead to animosity. I would ask our leader, who is a lawyer, to talk about how when two parties come together and find a workable solution, despite how difficult it can be at the moment, that long-term relationship is enhanced versus undermined.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the member for Windsor West has a lot of experience when it comes to seeing good negotiations and how they work. He has been a strong defender of workers' rights.

That is exactly why we need to support the rights of workers. When we allow the process to happen, it results in long-term solutions that create better conditions for work, which will benefit all of us in the long term. Short-term fixes and using back-to-work legislation only creates strife, animosity and uncertainty. When contracts are freely negotiated, when people come together and are supported, we have long-term solutions that result in better conditions at work and, frankly, better outcomes for everyone.

• (1705)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the question by the parliamentary secretary, because the leader of the NDP did not answer it. The parliamentary secretary asked this very direct question: What is the threshold until one determines the legislation is required? Is there a threshold or does the member not have a threshold and thinks it should just keep going on forever no matter what? I would really like an answer to that question, directly.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the approach of the current government is a failed approach. It is exactly the wrong thing to do. We need to allow for parties to negotiate freely. Putting forward legislation like this undermines the process. Everyone on the Liberal benches know this. The members have met with folks in the labour movement and know that this is the exact opposite of what they should do. When negotiations are going on, this undermines the process. They know this very well. They can try to spin it, but they know they are doing the wrong thing. They are not defending the rights of workers. In fact, they are undermining that actively, and that is wrong.

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Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that we have two previous examples under the Liberal government: one with Canada Post, where it legislated workers back to work; and one with CN, where it was widely thought it would and when the government said it would not, the company and the union were able to quickly reach an agreement. What is happening at Canada Post? It is still struggling to come to a meaningful agreement and the workplace is toxic.

I wonder if the hon. leader of the NDP would like to expound a bit on those important examples.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for highlighting a really great example of recent history. We know exactly what happens when back-to-work legislation is used. We have seen it with Canada Post and the ongoing issues. It is exactly right to look at the contrary example with CN, which reached a resolution that resulted in a long-term, long-standing solution that will work and will result in a better outcome for everyone.

Right now, the Liberal government is undermining workers, which makes things worse in the short term and in the long run. It is wrong. It still has time to turn things around, withdraw the legislation, support workers and stop doing exactly what the Conservatives would do.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it gives me no pleasure to rise in the House to speak to not only a closure motion, but closure on a bill that violates the fundamental rights of workers. It is not a good day for our democratic life or our parliamentary life.

It was almost 10 years ago that I was first elected to the House to represent the people of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I remember quite well that the first battle we fought as an NDP team with Jack Layton was on back-to-work legislation for Canada Post, and once again we defended the rights of workers. A Conservative government was in power and it was violating the rights of postal workers. Ten years later, I am still standing in the House defending the rights of workers, which are now being trampled by a Liberal government.

This is proof positive that, when it comes time to take a stand, the government, whether blue or red, always sides with the employers, the bosses, the richest people in our society. It never sides with ordinary Canadians and with the workers who are just trying to improve their lives, to get by and to pay the bills. They simply want a chance to improve their living and working conditions.

I want to take a moment to remind everyone that social progress does not appear out of thin air. Social progress happens when there are men and women who join forces, organize and take action together, collectively, to change the ground rules and improve society in order to create more respect, justice and equality. This is done through various avenues, including community associations, citizens' groups, the women's movement and the environmental movement. There are a lot of things going on in our society, and there have been for a long time. There is also the labour movement, and we have come a long way in this area.

Unions were illegal in Canada until 1872. It was not just difficult to unionize. It was illegal. Workers had to fight for their rights and to improve their working conditions. They had to fight to go from poverty and exploitation to a situation where they were able to earn a decent living, support their families and have some hope for the future by building a legacy that would help their children to have a better life.

Labour laws and laws governing minimum wage, labour contracts and collective agreements did not appear out of thin air. People got together and said that enough was enough. They decided that they were going to use pressure tactics to fight for better working conditions. Overall, it has worked fairly well. If we compare 19th century working conditions with those of today, it is clear that progress has been made. Much of that progress comes from workers obtaining the right and the option to use pressure tactics and to make demands to improve their situation.

I have been saying this for years, and I will say it again. The Liberals say they are standing up for the middle class and those seeking to join it, but I would remind the Liberal government that much of the middle class owes its existence to the labour movement in our society. Broadly speaking, the middle class and the creation of unions, be it in municipalities, public services or private enterprise, go hand in hand. People fought to bring about what is essentially a middle class whose members can afford to buy a house, to buy a car, an electric one, ideally, and to go on vacation when travel is allowed.

Over time, the bargaining process has been fine-tuned. There have been ups and downs. Some years have been good for unions, others not so much. That is all part of the balance of power, but attempts have been made to create rules that are good for everyone, that level the playing field at the bargaining table and establish a framework for relationships that can sometimes be tense and adversarial, while remaining civilized.

● (1710)

Let us not forget that the union movement and workers relinquished the possibility of triggering a strike at any time, which was a historic concession. Now there is a process to be followed, notices to be given, laws to be obeyed and so forth.

In the case of the Port of Montreal, this process was meticulously followed and even resulted in a truce that lasted several weeks last year. The workers wanted to defend their working conditions—especially their schedules, which I will come back to—and did so by following the rules.

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Once again, the Liberal government is using a bazooka or a sledgehammer to deprive workers at the Port of Montreal of their bargaining power. I find that mind-boggling. All last week, union leaders said that if the port authority stopped meddling with their schedules and provided job security, they would not go on strike, they would stop using pressure tactics and they would return to the bargaining table to come up with a freely negotiated solution.

Before the unlimited general strike could even be called at the Port of Montreal, the Liberal Minister of Labour announced that special legislation would be introduced to force dockworkers back to work in the event of such a strike. The general strike had not even been called, but the government had already sent the employer the message that it could sit idly by and do nothing because, in any case, the government would be there to help, after having tilted the balance of power away from the union and the workers.

This Liberal government claims to be a friend of workers and of the labour movement of Canada, but every chance it gets, it sides with the employer and upsets the balance at the bargaining table. That balance, however, is a constitutional right, since the Supreme Court in 2015 ruled in a Saskatchewan case that the right to call a strike and use pressure tactics is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Why are the Liberals addicted to special legislation? Why do they attack workers at every opportunity? What is more, the Port of Montreal is doing well. It is not a company that is struggling, that is on the verge of bankruptcy or that is unable to fulfill its obligations. On the contrary, business is booming at the Port of Montreal, and so there is no reason for a labour dispute there. Why does the employer want so much flexibility and the ability to meddle with the work schedules of dockworkers? I do not understand that at all. There is no financial or economic reason to justify it.

Speaking of economic impacts, it is clear that pressure tactics have repercussions. That is part of the rules of the game. That is how our labour relations system is built. It enables workers to put pressure on the employer to force the employer back to the bargaining table so that a mutually acceptable compromise can be reached. That is how it works, and usually it works well, when there is no special legislation. The Port of Montreal is profitable. People need to know that and it needs to be said.

The other important thing that I found particularly inappropriate was the misinformation being spread by the Minister of Labour. She says the government is worried. She says port operations must continue because we are in the midst of a pandemic and medicines and public health are important.

Whenever there were labour disputes in the past, the dock workers' union has always made it very clear that medical supplies, goods destined for hospitals and items used to care for people would be unloaded and transferred even during an unlimited general strike. I think that is worth saying again and again, because people need to know that the strike will in no way jeopardize public health.

The Liberals are once again giving a huge advantage to management. Lucky thing both parties are still at the bargaining table. Let

us hope that a solution will be negotiated before this devastating bill is passed in the House.

Again we are seeing the Liberals and Conservatives walking hand in hand when it comes to violating the union rights of workers. In fact, and I think my colleague from Windsor West mentioned it, the use of such draconian parliamentary or legislative tools could spoil labour relations at the Port of Montreal for years to come. The Liberal government will bear some responsibility for that.

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not once, but twice, the leader of the New Democratic Party was asked a very straightforward question: Are there any circumstances whatsoever in which the NDP at the national level would support back-to-work legislation?

I think that is a very important question that should be answered, and I am asking the member to do so. Canadians understand that there are situations where provincial NDP governments have introduced back-to-work legislation.

Would the NDP, under any circumstances at the national level, bring in back-to-work legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting theoretical question. I look forward to being the labour minister to be able to answer the parliamentary secretary.

In turn, I would like to ask him if there are circumstances in which the Liberal government would not join forces with management to trample and violate workers' rights, for once.

Are there circumstances in which the Liberal Party would stand up for workers?

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in ethics, a value is said to be authentic when an individual has a chance to practise or apply it and chooses to do so. Otherwise, it remains only an intention.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions. This is certainly not the first time we have seen the Liberals trample workers' rights. We saw it in the Aveos case, where the court ruled in favour of the workers. The Liberals decided to pass retroactive legislation to undo the court ruling.

The right to strike is a fundamental right that has been granted to workers by legislation passed in the House. In addition, under sections 105 and 107 of the Canada Labour Code, mediation could have been given one last chance and then imposed. I do not understand why the government is choosing this path. The government ignores fundamental rights when that is what suits it.

I listened to the opposition leader. He is very eloquent, but I am not sure whether my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie understood his position. In order for a minority government to get legislation passed, it must have the support of one other party. I have a feeling the Conservatives will be voting in favour of this bill.

• (1720)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention and his comments.

Indeed, we are once again seeing the Liberals and Conservatives working together to undermine a fundamental right and the Quebec labour movement.

Daniel Boyer, president of the FTQ; Marc Ranger, director of CUPE Quebec; and Denis Bolduc, general secretary of the FTQ, spoke out today about the right of workers to take job action and to strike.

Sadly, the Liberals seem to think this fundamental right is a theoretical one. The right to strike means nothing if the government is going to keep shoving special legislation down workers' throats—using time allocation, no less.

That is what the Liberals are doing today, and it is shameful.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I want to say loud and clear that I completely agree with him. This is a fundamental right of workers. I think it is awful that such a bill should be introduced once again.

[English]

Every time back-to-work legislation has come before the House since I have had the honour to represent Saanich—Gulf Islands, for nearly 10 years now, I have voted no because it is not fair to the workers to have management know that they can count on the government to bring in back-to-work legislation.

I ask my hon. colleague this. Does he have any sense, as a Quebec MP, if we have a chance of seeing fair, open collective bargaining if this bill is defeated?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the member shares the NDP's position and that she will vote the same way we will.

The last time I checked, the two parties were in discussions. I hope they will be able to come to an agreement that will support work-life balance for all workers.

At the same time, let us be realistic. The sword of Damocles that the Liberals hung over the union's head has greatly benefited management and upset the balance at the bargaining table.

Because of the Liberal government's bad decisions, then, there is not much reason for hope.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I will let the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour know there are about seven minutes re-

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maining before we will have to interrupt for other business this afternoon. He will have the remaining time when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Port of Montreal is vital to the economies of both Canada and Quebec. It is the main point of entry for goods and materials that Canadians and businesses depend on, especially in Quebec and Ontario.

A partial work stoppage began at the Port of Montreal on April 13. On April 26, it became a full work stoppage. The Port of Montreal is the second-largest container port in Canada. Every year it handles over 1.6 million 20-foot containers and 35 million tonnes of cargo representing \$40 billion in goods.

[English]

The current work stoppage is impeding the flow of \$270 million per week in cargo through the port. It is also harming the transportation industry by imposing significant costs on Canadian businesses that use the port, for example through increased transportation costs and lost sales due to import and export delays, and it is affecting the livelihoods of thousands of Canadians whose jobs directly and indirectly depend on it.

Even before the strike action began, industries and businesses regularly shipping through the port began to make alternative plans. Due to this anxiety in the supply chain, there was a decrease in container volumes at the port worth \$30 million per week for the month of March 2021 compared with the previous year. The initial partial work stoppage further reduced port capacity by approximately 30%, representing a loss of cargo volumes worth an estimated \$90 million per week.

All of this comes at a time when industries are still struggling to recover from major economic disruptions over the past year. It is clear that the effects of this work stoppage, if it continues, would have an enormous impact on the Canadian economy. How did this happen? How do we find ourselves in these circumstances? Let me take a few minutes to explain how it came to this.

The employers here are represented by the Maritime Employers Association, or MEA. The MEA is a voluntary employers' association representing all maritime employers, including terminal operators, stevedoring companies and ship owners operating at the Port of Montreal. The MEA has the exclusive right to bargain on behalf of those employers in negotiations with the Syndicat des Débardeurs, also known as CUPE Local 375. CUPE Local 375 represents approximately 1,100 longshore workers. These workers are responsible for the loading and unloading of vessels and other related work at the Port of Montreal. Needless to say, their work is vital to the smooth operation of the port.

*Private Members' Business**[Translation]*

First of all, it is important to point out that the last collective agreement between the Maritime Employers Association and CUPE 375 expired on December 31, 2018. The two parties began negotiations to renew the collective agreement in September 2018, nearly four months before it expired.

The federal mediation and conciliation service has been working closely with the parties since October 2018. On October 23, 2018, the employer filed an application with the Canada Industrial Relations Board, or CIRB, under subsection 87.4(4) of the Canada Labour Code to determine which activities would need to be maintained in the event of a work stoppage at the port.

Neither of the parties could initiate a work stoppage while the board was considering what services needed to be maintained. Ultimately, the CIRB found that the parties did not have to maintain any activities in the event of a work stoppage beyond their statutory obligation under the Canada Labour Code to continue service to grain vessels. However, the CIRB did acknowledge the union's commitment to continue servicing two vessels that supply Newfoundland and Labrador.

The parties were legally entitled to begin a strike or lockout as of the date of the decision, provided they gave 72-hour notice. That is exactly what happened. Four work stoppages occurred in the summer of 2020, each greater in duration and impact than the last.

• (1730)

An unlimited general strike finally began on August 10, 2020. There was also increasing tension at the port. On August 13, 2020, eight people were arrested and charged with intimidation, mischief and assault following a confrontation between union members and managers who were replacing workers.

Eleven days later, on August 21, 2020, the parties agreed of their own accord to a seven-month truce during which they would keep bargaining and end work stoppages. That truce ended on March 21, 2021.

Throughout that time, the parties continued to receive intense mediation support from federal mediators. On February 4, 2021, two veteran federal negotiators were assigned to help with negotiations.

The Minister of Labour also wrote to the parties, urging them to work with the mediators to reach an agreement—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have 13 and a half minutes remaining the next time the bill comes before the House.

[English]

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS*[English]***STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE**

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Deputy House Leader of the Government, Lib.) moved:

That:

(a) the House (i) recognize that science and research are of critical importance to all Canadians, including, but not limited to, improving the health of Canadians, improving the environment, driving innovation and economic growth, and improving the quality of life of Canadians, (ii) recognize that science and research are more important than ever, as the economic, environmental and social challenges we face are greater, (iii) affirm its commitment to science, research and evidence-informed decision-making;

(b) effective from the beginning of the 44th Parliament, the Standing Orders be amended as follows:

(i) That Standing Order 104(2) be replaced with the following:

“Membership of standing committees.

(2) The standing committees, which shall consist of 10 members, and for which the lists of members are to be prepared, except as provided in section 1) of this standing order, shall be on:

(a) Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics;

(b) Agriculture and Agri-Food;

(c) Canadian Heritage;

(d) Citizenship and Immigration;

(e) Environment and Sustainable Development;

(f) Finance;

(g) Fisheries and Oceans;

(h) Foreign Affairs and International Development;

(i) Government Operations and Estimates;

(j) Health;

(k) Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities;

(l) Indigenous and Northern Affairs;

(m) Industry and Technology;

(n) International Trade;

(o) Justice and Human Rights;

(p) National Defence;

(q) Natural Resources;

(r) Official Languages;

(s) Procedure and House Affairs;

(t) Public Accounts;

(u) Public Safety and National Security;

(v) Science and Research;

(w) the Status of Women;

(x) Transport, Infrastructure and Communities; and

(y) Veterans Affairs.”

(ii) That Standing Order 108(2) be amended by adding after the words “in sections (3)(a), (3)(f), (3)(h)” the following: “, (3)(i)”;

(iii) That the following subsection be added after Standing Order 108(3)(h): “Science and Research.

(i) Science and Research shall include, among other matters, the review of and report on all matters relating to science and research, including any reports of the Chief Science Advisor, and any other matter which the House shall, from time to time, refer to the standing committee.”;

(c) the Clerk of the House be authorized to make any required editorial and consequential alterations to the Standing Orders as may be required; and

(d) the Clerk of the House be instructed to print a revised edition of the Standing Orders.

She said: Madam Speaker, science and research matter. Our world-leading scientists and researchers and our outstanding students and research institutions deserve a dedicated voice in Parliament. That means a permanent standing committee on science and research beginning in the 44th Parliament. Not only is this long overdue, but it is critically important to building the future Canadians deserve.

Motion No. 38 seeks to create a standing committee on science and research in the 44th Parliament and parliaments going forward. This really matters because science has never been more important in our country's history.

This has been an unprecedented year for people and the planet. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives worldwide, and the climate emergency continues with record heat, devastating storms, wildfires and worsening droughts and floods. It is science that will bring the pandemic to an end. It is science and research that will fuel our restart. It is science that will charge our economic recovery. We must turn the recovery from the pandemic into a real opportunity to build a better future, a future driven by knowledge forged by curiosity and a quest for understanding.

To achieve this shared goal, all governments need reliable and solid science. They need strong collaboration with academia and scientific and research institutions to make evidence-based decisions that can tackle the greatest challenges of our time. In 2021, science will remain our most powerful tool in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

Let me be clear: Science and research have always mattered, and they will matter more than ever beyond the pandemic. Science holds real promise for people, society and our planet. Science impacts each of our lives. We must pay attention to it. That means valuing both the method and the results. We must foster children's natural-born curiosity through elementary school, high school and beyond, and we should inspire children and young people to wonder; to question; to ask why, what if and how; to build; to design; and to invent. They will be the future of science and the future of a society that respects and values the products of science.

Science saves lives through antibiotics, cancer drugs and vaccines, and through improved public health practices, such as masking and physical distancing, to prevent the spread of diseases like COVID-19. Science powers the solutions that make life easier, such as electricity, cars, computers, the Internet and cellphones. It helps us understand the mysteries of our universe, the world around us and our role in it. Science improves education and quality of life, and indeed extends and saves life.

Science and research also matter for their own sake. Research is about discovery, not just about solving human problems and developing new technologies. The reality is that science changes the lives of Canadians.

• (1735)

Canada has tremendous researchers and inspiring students who deserve to be formally heard about being better prepared for a future pandemic, about breakthroughs in science and technology that

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create powerful new solutions to address climate change, about the long-term health of science and research in our country, about ensuring that the benefits of science are fully shared across Canada and among all Canadians and about the challenges they face as scientists, researchers and students.

We are a country of discoverers, inventors and innovators. We have a long history of scientific achievement, including standard time, insulin, infant pabulum, pacemakers, stem cells, canola, Canadarm, double lung transplants and smart phone deep learning, just to name a few Canadian achievements. During the pandemic, our scientists at, for example, the University Health Network in Toronto or at the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization are continuing to do the critical work to protect the health and safety of Canadians. We should all be proud of our researchers' incredible achievements, and their work should be a source of immense national pride.

Although Canada has world-leading researchers and a long history of tremendous scientific accomplishments, the House of Commons lacks a dedicated standing committee on science and research. According to the Library of Parliament, there have been five House of Commons standing committees with either science or research in their titles, and science has been combined with such subject areas as industry and energy, industry and technology, and regional and northern development.

The United Kingdom has a science and technology committee to ensure that government policies and decision-making are based on solid scientific evidence and advice. They are reaping the benefits of this structure and focus. The United States has the House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space and Technology. In its early years, the committee was an important partner in the Apollo program that led to the first person landing on the moon. It strengthens science, education and research.

Let us think of what it took for astronaut Neil Armstrong to take the first step on the moon in 1969. Katherine Johnson had to calculate rocket trajectories. Engineers had to figure out how to escape earth's gravity. Supercomputers, which filled whole buildings, had to be scaled down. Spacesuits, helmets, gloves and oxygen-supplying backpacks all had to be developed. The lunar module had to be designed and developed. Nothing existed. Everything had to be imagined, designed and built from scratch. These inventions led to brand new sectors in today's economy. That is the transformative power of strong committee-backed science. Let us imagine the benefit to Canada of a strong dedicated committee.

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Over the past 50 years, it has been rare for Canada's Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology or its predecessor committees to produce a substantive science report. In fact, a very broad reading of the data shows only 12 substantive reports over the last 54 years. Even in the last Parliament, only two of 27 reports by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, or INDU, were linked to science and research. That is about 7%. The point is that the INDU committee rarely talks about science and research, yet they are so fundamentally important to addressing the pandemic, the climate emergency and our future. We will not create the future we imagine without science having a strong and ever-present voice.

If anyone is wondering why we lag behind other comparator nations in terms of the profile for science, this is surely an important reason. Our Parliament does not have a dedicated mechanism that encourages anyone to focus on science and research. We need to be better stewards of knowledge and the options it gives us.

• (1740)

The point is that science and research have largely been ignored, unexplored and merely tacked on to the House of Commons parliamentary committees in Canada. In fact, there has been no review of federal science funding in Canada for over 40 years until I commissioned the fundamental science review. Can anyone imagine any other sector having such little attention from and oversight by parliamentarians, all while playing such an important role in driving innovation, economic growth and a better quality of life for all Canadians? Science and research, if nurtured wisely, will be central to how we build the future that Canadians deserve.

This lack of oversight over science and research hurts us. If we want Canada to be the scientific and research powerhouse we have the tremendous wealth of talent to be, we need a standing committee focused on the long-term health of science and research in our country. By voting for this motion, we have a chance to acknowledge our responsibility to protect science and research and anchor them in one of our most important democratic institutions.

Science and research should have a permanent place where issues that are important to the research community, Canadians and the future of the country can be studied. There should be a place where scientists, researchers and parliamentarians can come to know one another; where parliamentarians can get a better understanding of science and research; where parliamentarians can learn about Canada's research strengths in such areas as artificial intelligence and deep learning, immunotherapy, nanotech, next generation genomics, personalized medicine, quantum computing and science; where parliamentarians can learn about what is needed to make improvements with real benefits for Canadians. It is time for scientists, researchers and students to be given the key to the people's House.

Imagine if the science and research committee had existed at the start of the pandemic. Parliamentarians could have heard directly from the chief science advisor and departmental chief scientists, or whomever else parliamentarians thought they needed to hear from. They could have heard the best scientific evidence on the virus, the pandemic, protective measures and what was needed to mobilize

the scientific and research community. After all, science is our best way through and out of the pandemic.

I should mention that we are all very grateful for the tireless work of government scientists, academic researchers and all those who provided scientific advice to all levels of government.

Science is not a club. It is not for a select few. Science is for everyone. Canadians should have better access to the science and research they fund because science and research provide our best hope for solutions to improving health, addressing the climate crisis, jump-starting economic growth and growing jobs. Canadians—

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We now have to go to questions and comments, for which we have five minutes.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Etobicoke North for her speech.

I agree that the pandemic has highlighted how little Canadian governments have prioritized science and research over the years. I would like to know if the need for independence in research is a priority for her government.

[*English*]

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I will say that science should not be a partisan issue. It is a fundamental building block of Canada that everyone in this House has a stake in. Everyone should fight for it. In a politically charged environment and in a polarized world, science, evidence and fact offer shared understanding and common ground.

We need all sides of this House, all members of Parliament, fighting for fundamental and applied science and research. We need to take a stand to say that we learned from COVID-19, that we have finally learned what we always learn following a pandemic, which is mainly that science, research and public health matter. Not just what—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for bringing this important motion before us today. She mentioned the Naylor report on fundamental science, which she commissioned and tabled in 2017. Now, four years later, only one of its 10 recommendations has been fully carried out. Six have been partially acted on and three remain completely ignored.

I want to know how the member feels about that slow rollout of the Naylor recommendations. Would it not be a great first study for a new science and research standing committee to study the implementation of that report?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I am very proud of the research investments that our government has made: the largest in Canadian history, at \$10 billion.

Having a science and research committee is long overdue. It is critically important to building the future we deserve. We all know this has been an unprecedented year, and that science and research are a way through and out of the pandemic. Unfortunately, science and research are rarely talked about at the INDU committee and we are missing an opportunity. Science and research need a permanent place where issues important to the research community, to Canadians and to the future of the country can be studied. This is not a partisan issue, it is a fundamental building block—

• (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to allow for more questions.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague who is a scientist, the hon. member for Etobicoke North, for her role as minister for science in commissioning the Naylor report. I strongly support Motion No. 38.

My only question for the hon. member is, as a scientist, why does she believe it is so difficult to get non-scientists to understand how critical it is to listen to the advice of science experts? Whether it is on the climate crisis, COVID or any number of issues, when we are guided by science and stand on evidence, we are less likely to make mistakes.

Hon. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I thank my long-time friend and colleague for her important question and I thank her for her support.

Science and research matter to improving our environment, health, quality of life, innovation and economy. If we look back over a half century, science has received a tiny proportion of the INDU committee's attention. We should all be asking ourselves how that can be good for Canadians. What opportunities passed us by? Now we have the opportunity to ensure that science and research have a clear place in the work of the House of Commons. A science and research committee could help identify how science will best serve Canadians' interests and all of us—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start by offering congratulations to my colleague, my hon. friend the deputy House leader, for putting forward Motion No. 38. She occupies the post of deputy House leader, which I occupied for the nine-year period between 2006 and 2015. Today, I will be drawing a little upon that experience in my comments.

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My hon. colleague's long history of scientific research is well documented. As evidence of the timeliness of her concern, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that it was nearly 20 years ago that she published her book, *Hunting the 1918 Flu*, warning that we might need to prepare for the next time a similarly deadly virus stalked the globe. That turned out to be a very prescient book indeed.

Motion No. 38 would amend the Standing Orders to create a new House standing committee on science and research, which would take effect permanently at the beginning of the 44th Parliament. Specifically, Motion No. 38 would amend Standing Order 104(2), which lists the standing committees, or permanent committees, of the House. It would add a 25th committee to the list of 24 committees already therein.

In principle, I support the creation of such a committee, and the real question is why none has ever existed thus far, given the importance of the subject matter. However, my remarks today focus not on the merits of the committee itself, but on the merits of creating this change to the Standing Orders with a simple majority vote in the House of Commons. I want to focus not on the merits of the substance of Motion No. 38, but on the merits of the process being used to change the Standing Orders with the adoption by means of a simple majority vote.

At first glance one might ask how else do we get from here to there if what is needed is a change to the Standing Orders. In a sense, this is true. We cannot have a new committee without changing the Standing Orders, and we cannot change the Standing Orders without having a vote on which majority rules.

The other side of the issue is that there is a higher standard. In addition to the formal rule that Standing Orders are to be changed by means of a simple majority vote, a convention in the process of developing is that these rules should not be changed except by the consent of the House leadership of all the recognized parties. This is not quite the same thing as requiring unanimous consent, but it is in the same neighbourhood.

It may well be true that the proposed changes to the Standing Orders contemplated in Motion No. 38 should be treated as an exception to this convention, but if so, it is necessary for us to carefully distinguish how Motion No. 38 is different in nature from other proposed changes that have required all-party consent, and therefore how Motion No. 38 may be properly distinguished from the practice laid out in the convention.

I am drawing upon the term “distinguished” from the law. A court may find itself dealing with a case that shares many features with some prior case or a set of cases. The precedence established in those prior cases ought, under normal circumstances, to apply to the case then being considered.

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However, it may be that the court concludes that there are materially different facts between the present case and the ones that had previously been considered. If so, the court makes it clear that the legal reasoning used in the preceding case does not apply to the present one, and the court forms its new ruling around a different set of reasonings, which appear to the court to be more appropriate to the current circumstances.

I will return to whether or not Motion No. 38 may or may not be properly distinguished from the general run of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders. However, first, I need to explain the reason why so many of us in this place take the need for all-party consent so seriously when Standing Order changes are being contemplated.

A number of changes to the Standing Orders that have in recent years either been contemplated or actually implemented have had the potential to change the power relations between the players in the House. Sometimes the decision has been for the rules to go into effect immediately, with the clear goal of increasing the ability of the government to control the legislative agenda or to strip away the power of the opposition to delay or challenge legislation.

There have been notable occasions on which the current government has been willing to move forward using its majority as a lever to change the Standing Orders without all-party consensus. My party and I have fought against this with all our might, and I am very proud of our record in this regard.

In March 1, 2017, the government proposed sweeping changes to the Standing Orders, which would have had the effect of altering the balance of power in the House. This was done by way of a government motion at the procedure and House affairs committee, to endorse a pre-written discussion paper, implementing a set of changes that would have greatly limited the procedural tools at the disposal of opposition parties.

• (1755)

The government's plan was to use its majority on the procedure and House affairs committee to cause the proposals in the discussion paper to be endorsed in a party-line vote at that committee and then have the House vote concurrence in the committee's report. My response, as the lead member of the Conservative Party on the committee, was to propose an amendment to the motion and then, with the capable assistance of some other MPs, debate the motion in a de facto filibuster [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. This remains the longest filibuster in Canadian history and makes the point that there are many here who believe deeply that any change to the Standing Orders that alters the power relations between parties or, for that matter, any other set of power arrangements within the House of Commons, including those between party leaders and backbenchers, ought to be decided by means of all-party consensus.

In a minority government such as the present one, the use of force majeure is not available in the same way. In the present Parliament, we have seen more widespread use of all-party consensus mechanism than was the case in the past. The mechanism seeking all-party consent has been used for the numerous temporary adjustments to the Standing Orders adopted in the course of the 43rd Parliament that allow us to meet in a hybrid fashion, to alter the seating plan for reasons of personal safety and to suspend the [*Technical*

difficulty—Editor], among other things. These changes have all been negotiated by the House leaders of the various parties behind closed doors.

I do not know how things work in the other parties, but in the case of my party, the House leader and whip have explained to our caucus at our regular caucus meetings what changes were being contemplated and have tried to ensure [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] change to the relevant Standing Orders take place without a mandate in the form of an internal party caucus [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]. This has made the negotiations slower than might have seemed ideal, but the arrangements that we have developed are vastly more inclusive than what existed at the start of the pandemic.

A similar process was [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] used in the 42nd Parliament to deal with my own proposal to amend the Standing Orders so as to elect the Speaker by preferential ballot. I mention this in part to make the point that the emerging consensus of all-party consent [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] that precedes a change of government. A convention is not truly a convention until it has survived a change [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and continues to operate now that all players have changed their positions. The committee considered my proposed motion, and its report neither endorsed nor rejected the proposal. It was really a way of communicating to the House the committee's view that each party ought to allow its own members a free vote on that proposed change to the Standing Orders. A free vote followed. Some members of each party voted against, some [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and the result was a change. The point is that the process itself was the product of a [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

The purpose of the foregoing comments has been to clearly articulate the emerging convention regarding the requirement to seek and obtain the consent of all parties in the Commons before making changes to the Standing Orders. To allow an apparent exception to this rule without articulating why this particular case is different and why it is permissible to move forward on a simple up-down [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] would have the effect of weakening that convention by showing a willingness to casually set it aside. What is needed, and what I hope I am providing here, is a clear distinction between motions that amend the Standing Orders in ways that affect power relations and those that do not.

I turn to the final presentation. It is my view that Motion No. 38 may be properly distinguished from the kinds of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders that have given rise to the convention. Motion No. 38 is materially very different from the kinds of proposed amendments to the Standing Orders that have given rise to the convention. It does not change the way the House of Commons operates and it does not alter power arrangements among the various players in the House. For example, it does [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] the number of members at the standing committees, it does not change how members are selected for those committees or how the committees operate or how chairs and vice-chairs are elected, including for the new committee.

Additionally, Motion No. 38 [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] into effect during the life of the current Parliament, which means we cannot be certain which party will be in power and which ones will be in opposition, the placing of a Rawlsian veil of ignorance between ourselves and the answer to the question: Who will be in a position to populate this committee, and will the governing party have a majority on the committee or only a minority? The Rawlsian veil of ignorance that exists helps to ensure that this change to the Standing Orders does [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] predictably shift power in one direction or another.

For this reason, I state confidently that I support Motion No. 38, and also that my commitment remains to the emerging convention of all-party consensus with regard to any changes that would have the potential [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] power relations between the government—

• (1800)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are having issues with the connection. It breaks up quite a bit. I am having trouble hearing what the member is saying.

Perhaps the member could go back to saying why he would support the motion.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I will be very brief.

I support Motion No. 38, and my commitment remains intact to the emerging convention of all-party consensus with regard to any changes that could have the potential to affect power relations between the government party and other parties.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have to say that it is with some reluctance that I rise today because I am fortunate enough to do so as vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

I believe that science and research are very important, and I often talk about this in committee. However, my colleague from Etobicoke North moved this motion and I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but could he place his microphone further from his mouth and lower it slightly? It is causing an echo.

The interpreters confirm that it is working better.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I was saying that Motion No. 38 moved by my colleague from Etobicoke North was important. I do not entirely agree with her that we missed opportunities to talk about science and research over the past year. Particularly in the context of COVID-19, there were several studies that raised these issues. However, I do see that we are having a hard time scheduling the many topics and witnesses we are interested in.

In that sense, creating a committee devoted to science and research could be very useful. The Bloc Québécois might serve as an example. I am the critic for matters related to the regional economy, industry, entrepreneurship and access to high-speed Internet, but my colleague from Jonquière is responsible for research and sci-

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ence. We share the work and team up quite a bit on all manner of topics, including vaccines, research, Synchronex, college centres for technology transfer, and the Industrial Waste Technology Centre. Our meetings with the academic community also allow us to reflect on how to do research and work as a team.

Regardless of whether this science and research committee is created, science, research and development will always be matters that I will raise at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, even if the research aspect is removed. I believe that building an industry requires research and development, and that is why it is important to invest in these sectors. I want to point out that I see a definite increase in the industry department's interest in investing in science since the change in ministers. It may be a coincidence, but we can sense that there is greater interest.

Motion No. 38 proposes to split the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in two effective from the beginning of the next Parliament. A new standing committee on science and research would study all matters relating to science and research, including any reports of the chief science advisor, and a new standing committee on industry and technology would address the rest of the topics studied by the current committee.

At first glance, the Bloc Québécois likes this motion. It is in line with the high priority that the Bloc Québécois attaches to science and research. The member for Jonquière is our critic for that file. The new committee will provide a scientific platform for the chief science advisor and will enable parliamentarians to access the best advice from government scientists. The committee will also protect them from any governments that are anti-science. The motion also lays out, quite broadly, the matters the committee will consider, which will look a bit like the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology's mandate. All those aspects look good.

I would also like to mention our COVID-19 recovery plan, which we tabled in September. The word “research” appears in that document 17 times. It is truly fundamental. When we talk about taking action, we do it through research. It is the same thing for our budget requests. We were very clear: investing in research and development, in Quebec's research centres, particularly those in the regions, and in colleges and universities will help us better support our SMEs. The co-operative work being done in that regard is very important.

Motion No. 38 will provide a platform for our chief science advisor and alleviate the workload of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, but the committee can still count on me to continue to make connections between science and research and industrial development.

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However, the Bloc Québécois would like to share a few caveats. A science and research committee must not be used as a pretext for interfering in scientific work, which must be kept at arm's length from the policy process. In many cases, basic research is done in universities, and maintaining the independence of universities is absolutely essential.

Splitting the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology should not create a silo where research and science are isolated from the rest of society. During the committee's study of vaccine manufacturing, we saw that basic research, applied research, pre-market evaluation, meaning clinical trials, and vaccine manufacturing are all links in the same chain. We would not want one committee studying the first steps and another studying the rest without communicating with one another.

A good policy has to cover and support all stages of production, or it is doomed to fail. Perhaps a science and research subcommittee that studies the scientific aspects and then reports to the Committee on Industry, Science and Technology with a broader vision of the applications and consequences would provide insight on that, but that is not what we are talking about right now.

• (1805)

We would be very happy if the member who moved Motion No. 38 is open to such a change. We plan to follow the debate closely, in the hope that the member has heard our concerns and is willing to be flexible and open to these good ideas. I reiterate that we support the idea behind the motion. We will likely support the motion even if it is not amended. I believe it is important.

This was mentioned briefly, but I would like to talk about the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and its mandate. This committee may be one of the most underestimated House committees. The committee studies topics such as business assistance, industrial policy, regional development, scientific research, domestic trade, competition, the effective operation of the marketplace, telecommunications, the functioning of federally regulated businesses, and tourism. That is a lot, and we realize that. Science can get lost in the fray.

Since the fall, the committee has undertaken studies on several topics: mobile and Internet coverage in the regions, which obviously involves a scientific component; vaccine manufacturing and research; the aerospace industry; foreign investment; the Canada Investment Act, which we discussed briefly in the House of Commons today; regulations that affect businesses; and the acquisition of Shaw by Rogers. Our scrutiny of our institutions is always productive.

However, we have to acknowledge that the list of topics that the committee turned down is even longer. Nearly every economic sector wanted the committee to address their specific circumstances. The committee was only able to study a few aspects, including the economic aspects of the so-called green recovery, which might turn out to be quite the opposite. In fact, that is the topic we are examining right now. Personally, I want the academic community to be present, and I plan to invite academics as witnesses to add the research and science aspect to our economic recovery. Then there is regional development, something the Bloc Québécois is interested in.

Except for the study of vaccine manufacturing capacity, which included scientific research, the industry committee did not really discuss science *per se*. We need to acknowledge that as well. Research comes up much more frequently than science.

Splitting the committee in two and assigning the topics of science and research to a new committee could help reduce the committee's backlog. It is a good idea at first glance.

However, it is important to support research. In the interest of taking a more scientific approach, I will give some statistics.

In Canada, Quebec alone accounts for 40% of exports with a high research and development component. Conversely, Canada is one of the OECD countries with the lowest research and development intensity, which means that our economy is not very innovative. It would be important for this initiative to improve this state of affairs, though not at the expense of the provinces and Quebec.

The societies that that rely on a green economy and innovation will have sustainable prosperity. We must ramp up scientific research and development. If creating a science and research committee does that, we will come out ahead.

The federal government supports research in different ways: through the research it conducts itself, through the research grants it provides, through the granting agencies, through the work of the National Research Council's research centres, through its industrial policy, and through the support it provides for research and development activities, especially those carried out by businesses. All these activities are important.

As we saw in our work on vaccines, scientific innovation is a chain in which every link is important. It begins with basic research on structure and molecules. I think it is important to mention this. If we split this up, we might lose certain aspects. Applied research allows us to reproduce the vaccines that come out of clinical trials. One witness even talked about research being translational, because it allows us to go from one stage to the next, from discovery to production. This brings us to the final step, namely production based on the scientific research. If a link is missing, the vaccine will not see the light of day. It is therefore important to see the big picture, to support research and innovation at every stage and to approach government programs accordingly.

I will close with a final point on two principles.

We must ensure equity, whether in the aerospace sector, artificial intelligence, information technology or transportation components. Quebec accounts for 40% of Canadian exports, as I mentioned.

Canada is much less innovative because its economy relies on foreign subsidiaries. Federal policy is designed to compensate for Canada's backward thinking rather than support Quebec's advanced thinking, which is taking the world by storm.

There are also 100 NRC research centres, including 50 centres in Ontario compared to nine in Quebec. Quebec is responsible for 40% of technology exports, and yet it has only 9% of federal research centres. It goes without saying that we are concerned. The same is true for super clusters—

• (1810)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time is up.

In addition, I would request that he speak a little more slowly the next time. The interpreters are having a hard time keeping up.

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak to Motion No. 38 today, which has been brought forward by the member for Etobicoke North. It calls for the creation of a new standing committee in the House of Commons, the science and research committee. I know the strong interest and deep concern that the member has for science and research. She is a scientist herself, and I had the pleasure of accompanying her to a G7 meeting on science in Italy when she was Canada's minister of science.

Science is important. Its impacts are pervasive in society, from cellphones to sewage treatments, from vaccines to velcro and from athletics to architecture. It is everywhere. Sometimes I think we forget that it is there, like not seeing the forest for the trees. We forget how much we depend on it for everything. Society in general takes it for granted, and politicians take it for granted too. In recent years, we have been seeing a steady rise in disinformation, especially on social media, about climate, the pandemic and vaccines. There is clearly a place for more support to science so that it can give us the facts on a myriad of subjects.

I am very pleased to see this motion before us today, and I am very pleased to say that I fully support it and the NDP will be supporting it.

Right now, when issues centred on science come to the House of Commons, they are studied in the industry committee, and because of that, the very few studies the committee undertakes that are directly related to science are focused on how science can directly help industry. I would like to emphasize that even though science is such an important topic, we almost never study it directly in any committee here. There is nothing that talks about what the federal government can do to stimulate basic science, nothing that talks about how we can make participation in science more inclusive and nothing that talks about how we could better use science in our policy development. I could go on and on.

For full disclosure, I come from a science background as well. I am a biologist. I worked at the University of B.C. for 17 years or so, and after that I was a consultant for 20 years before ending up here as an MP. I entered politics because I felt that we needed more scientific voices in Parliament. That feeling was especially strong during the last Conservative government, the Harper years. I personally saw my colleagues who worked as scientists in the federal

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civil service being muzzled and not allowed to speak about their work.

I remember one big webinar in 2012, a global webinar before COVID made that a cool thing, about a report on the state of Canada's birds. This groundbreaking report had been written almost entirely by two brilliant Environment Canada scientists using data gathered from thousands of volunteer citizen scientists. I was working for Bird Studies Canada at the time and helped design, promote and operate those continent-wide data-gathering programs. At the webinar, the two federal scientists were allowed to give a short pre-vetted overview of the findings on the population trends of hundreds of bird species, and then the government media person opened it up to questions, pointing out that the authors would not be allowed to answer those questions. I had to step in and field media questions even though I had not done the analyses or written the report. It was ridiculous, and there are many more examples of that sort of situation with government scientists not being allowed to explain the findings of their research.

There was also the infamous case of DFO research libraries being closed and their books being thrown into dumpsters. One of my former colleagues, Dr. Jeff Hutchings, a fisheries biologist from Dalhousie University, wrote an important paper on the ecology of the northern cod in 1993. A lot of the information he used came from grey literature survey reports that he found in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans library in St. John's. He found them by looking at every report on the shelf in that part of the library. The Harper government claimed that all those reports were digitized before being thrown out, but it is clear that they were not. Dr. Hutchings tells me that he could not write that report today. That important historical information has been lost and cannot be found in any PDF.

I am happy to say that I think things have improved somewhat and that the present government takes science more seriously than the previous government did. I will point out that the member for Etobicoke North created the chief science advisor position, whose mandate it is to advise cabinet on scientific matters. That is a step in the right direction, but what we really need is a truly independent parliamentary science officer, just as we have a Parliamentary Budget Officer. It would be an office that all parliamentarians, MPs and senators, not just the cabinet, could turn to for unbiased scientific advice, just as we can ask the PBO to assess the financial aspects of various programs or proposals. My former colleague Kennedy Stewart, now the mayor of Vancouver, put that proposal forward in previous Parliaments, but unfortunately it was never taken up.

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● (1815)

The federal government puts a lot of money directly into science and research, over \$4 billion from what I can determine, so it is incumbent upon us in the House to know how that money is spent, how it could perhaps be better used or how it perhaps should be increased.

In 2017, the Naylor report on fundamental science was tabled by the member for Etobicoke North. I was then the NDP critic for post-secondary education, and I heard very positive reviews from university representatives. The Naylor report made 10 main recommendations to increase and coordinate funding to basic research. Four years later, only one of those recommendations has been fully completed, six are partially addressed or still in progress and three have not been done at all. Therefore, a study on the implementation of the Naylor report would be very illuminating, just the kind of thing a standing committee on science and research could take on.

Another useful study would be one on inclusion in Canada's research sector. I am afraid I am only too typical of the standard Canadian scientist, an older white male. We have been hearing for years how we have to encourage women and girls to enter the sciences. When I taught an ecology course at UBC one or two decades ago, we had a very high proportion of female students, but that was not the situation across the board in other fields of studies such as engineering and physics. That situation has been improving. Many women are entering those fields, but for many years there has also been a systemic bias against women in science and research, and many were frustrated by the lack of success and advancement or in obtaining research grants. Thankfully, even that phenomenon seems to be getting better and the trajectory is definitely toward gender equity.

This past year, we have heard a lot and learned a lot from the Black Lives Matter movement and the more general barriers facing racialized people in our society. I have been very inspired by the stories I have seen in the media and online about young Black scientists and indigenous scientists who talk about the struggles they face in a field where no one looks like them. Their persistence and passion for science is really an example for all of us. Therefore, inclusion in science and research is another critical issue that a standing committee could study.

To have any intelligent debate, indeed to have a functional democracy, we have to agree among ourselves on basic facts, but often those standard baselines are hard to find.

In the natural resources committee in the previous Parliament, we did a study on how we should have an independent, unbiased, timely, comprehensive source of energy data in Canada. Some of that was being done by the National Energy Board at the time, but it was anything but comprehensive, timely or unbiased. I felt we should have a completely independent agency similar to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Even a dedicated part of Statistics Canada would be better than what we have now. However, two or three years later, as far as I know, nothing has been accomplished along those lines. Therefore, a dedicated science committee could look at all aspects of public data availability in Canada.

I will finish with a quote from Timothy Caulfield from the faculty of law at the University of Alberta. In 2017, he said in *The Globe and Mail*, "We need more science. We need better science. We need trustworthy science. We need agenda-free science."

The House of Commons in particular and Canada in general would benefit greatly from a standing committee focused on science and research, and I will be supporting this motion.

● (1820)

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise virtually in the House of Commons today in support of private member's motion, Motion No. 38, brought forward by my great friend and hon. colleague, the MP for Etobicoke North. This motion would create a permanent standing committee on science and research.

I had the pleasure of serving as the parliamentary secretary to science, working alongside the former minister, and I can say that it was the most rewarding time I have had as a member of Parliament.

Growing up in London, Ontario, I was keenly aware of the amazing research that has been done at Western University over the years. Sir Frederick Banting was working at Western 100 years ago when his research for a lecture inspired his idea that provided the key to discovering insulin. Dr. Vladimir Hachinski, the distinguished professor of neurology at Western, transformed the understanding, diagnosis and prevention of the two greatest threats to the brain: stroke and dementia. Dr. Cal Stiller was Canada's major voice in organ transplantation during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. He championed innovation in health and biomedical research and pioneered multi-organ transplantation.

These are just a few of the many laureates that are honoured in Canada's medical hall of fame based in London, and that is not even mentioning some of the stars in the science and research world today, like Ravi Menon, the pioneer in the use of MRI for brain imaging, or the applied research under way at Fanshawe College. Suffice it to say that I think members can understand why I am so passionate about this as a parliamentarian.

Being the parliamentary secretary to this important portfolio made me understand the depth of Canada's scientific and research community. What this experience made me realize is that science and research must be celebrated, promoted and supported, and if we have learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that science must be respected and believed for all of us to be safe and healthy.

It was once said that the good thing about science is that it is true whether or not one believes in it. We must bear this in mind as we are challenged to understand the world we live in. We need guidance and we need knowledge, and as parliamentarians, we need to ask questions of scientists and researchers to find solutions to the problems that confront us.

The goal of the minister of science was to unmuzzle scientists, to make them realize that their voices were being heard. I am pleased to say that during my time as PS to science, the government restored respect in the science community and made the largest investment in science research in our country's history. I am not for a second taking any credit for this important step. I was simply at the right place at the right time.

As a government, and under the leadership of our minister of science, we delivered in budget 2018 great news for science with the announcement of the largest increase in new funding for fundamental research through the granting councils in Canadian history with an investment of \$925 million over five years. We also put money into the Canada Foundation for Innovation to cover the cost of running research labs and buying equipment for the Canada research chairs program to support the country's top professors, money to support fast-breaking research, and investments to collect data on government-funded researchers and to improve equality and diversity in academia.

It was apparent then and still is today that science and research play an important part in moving Canada forward, but it does not happen overnight. We need governments that have a long-term vision and that recognize that scientists need long-term support to be successful.

We also need to encourage our next generation to choose STEM or STEAM, as it is quite often referred to today. We need to bring young girls and women into the fold and make them believe that their future career choices can be science, technology, engineering and math, and, of course, the arts are important, too.

I was especially pleased when it was announced that we were investing \$5.9 million over five years to Let's Talk Science, which is located in my riding of London West. With this funding, Let's Talk Science will educate young people on climate change through hands-on activities, projects, events and digital resources. Let's Talk Science is helping youth learn to take risks and develop the persistence to find innovative solutions to real-world problems.

● (1825)

The world is a better place when our young people are encouraged to be curious and pursue their passion for science. As parliamentarians, we must do the same, so I would like to read what Motion No. 38 is calling on this House to do.

It states:

- (i) recognize that science and research are of critical importance to all Canadians, including, but not limited to, improving the health of Canadians, improving the environment, driving innovation and economic growth, and improving the quality of life of Canadians, (ii) recognize that science and research are more important than ever, as the economic, environmental and social challenges we face are greater, (iii) affirm its commitment to science, research and evidence-informed decision-making

Private Members' Business

How can we not agree with the motion? By agreeing with it, we need to make sure science and research get the attention they deserve by giving parliamentarians a chance to meet with people in the science community and hear what they have to say. I cannot say this more clearly: At no time in our history have science and research been more important. COVID-19 has done what few natural or people-made disasters have ever done. It has literally and figuratively stopped us in our tracks.

I know I am not allowed to use the member's name in the House, so I will refer to her again as the MP for Etobicoke North. Many people are unaware that she was the first scientist to become the minister of science in Canada, and prior to entering politics, she served on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, an organization that won the Nobel Prize in 2007. However, it is her work on the influenza pandemic of 1918 that is so interesting, especially in light of COVID-19. She published a book in 2003 about her expedition to uncover the cause of the flu epidemic. The book is entitled *Hunting the 1918 Flu: One Scientist's Search for a Killer Virus*.

After 100 years of research, we are still learning. We are learning what works to eradicate viruses like COVID and how to stop them before they spread. We cannot let it happen again. As parliamentarians, it is our responsibility to make sure it does not. It is our responsibility to ask the big questions and challenge the assumptions. This standing committee would give us a venue to do just that.

One of the first decisions the member for Etobicoke North made as the minister of science was to reinstate the position of the government chief science advisor. Dr. Mona Nemer has been working with her G7 counterparts to launch a new global partnership to fight pandemics. Dr. Nemer has had the opportunity to appear before a number of committees, but a stand-alone committee dealing solely with science and research could rely on her expertise on a more regular basis. She could be called upon to navigate some of the challenges we face, including the so-called brain drain, early career research, stem cell research and the ongoing issue of women in research who are not taken seriously.

In 2018, the minister of science drew a line in the sand for universities in this country: Hire more women, people with diverse backgrounds, indigenous people and people with disabilities as Canada research chairs or be prepared to face funding cuts. Some considered this heavy-handed, but it was necessary to move the dial.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canadian science grows stronger as our research community better reflects the diversity of background, experience and perspective of Canadians themselves. If we are to remain competitive, Canada simply must have more diversity in senior academic roles and in those coveted research chairs. This is but one issue that a permanent standing committee on science and research could take a closer look at and delve into, with witnesses who could tell us first-hand about their experiences and push us as a government to make better public policy and make government science fully available to the public.

Every day, we are confronted with problems that need scientists and researchers to help solve. It is time for parliamentarians to take a closer look at this and vote in favour of establishing a permanent standing committee on science and research.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1830)

[*English*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, my constituent, a busker, applied for the Canada recovery benefit. He submitted his annual income tax return for the last two years along with his City of Vancouver street vendor permit as proof of income and employment. CRA did not accept these and wanted to see receipts and bank statements indicating deposits made. It is, in my opinion, unreasonable to expect buskers and street musicians to provide receipts and regular bank deposit for their small amount of cash income.

That was almost six months ago and today, I am happy to report that after this intense advocacy, which included a letter to the minister, questions in question period and countless calls to CRA agents, the government finally accepted my constituent's original proof of income documents, which were his income tax returns and the City of Vancouver street vendor permit, as valid proof of employment and income to qualify for the CRB.

I am sharing this in the House of Commons today so that others can be aware of this important win for my constituent. If people are faced with a similar issue, I urge them to contact their member of Parliament to try to get the matter resolved.

As we are talking about CRA, related to CRA, I have written to the government to request an extension of the income tax filing deadline for older adults age 60-plus who receive their guaranteed income supplement. Last year, the federal government publicly announced that seniors receiving GIS would be able to keep their GIS payments, without interruption, if they filed their taxes by October 1, which helped many seniors. I hope the same measures can be taken again this year to support seniors during this ongoing pandemic where we are well into the third wave with new variants.

Many GIS recipients face multiple barriers, including language, mobility and technology. That made the navigating of the systems

very difficult, if not impossible, without assistance. These seniors rely on community tax clinics and community non-profit groups to assist them in filing their income taxes accurately and in a timely manner. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the barriers to tax filing already experienced by low-income seniors. Many seniors serve in community organizations that rely on volunteers who are also seniors, such as the 411 Seniors' Centre Society in my riding.

With the third wave raging on, organizations providing tax filing services for seniors are shutting down their in-person services in accordance to public health guidelines. I have been informed by the organization that it has been serving over 160 seniors per week and has almost 400 more appointments booked for the upcoming weeks. However, due to the need to temporarily shutdown in-person clinics, it will take time for the organization to move its services to remote models.

Even prior to the public health guidelines, both seniors volunteering and clients in need of support have been voicing health and safety concerns over travelling to the clinic in person. Even with services moved to remote and virtual models, there will be many seniors with technology and other barriers who will not be able to access these services in time. Ontario has also announced a four-week, province-wide shutdown and Quebec has announced special lockdowns for select cities and regions, which will no doubt impact community tax clinics in those communities as well.

From that perspective, I am asking the government to extend the tax timeline for seniors and to ensure that their GIS is not interrupted, especially during this very difficult period. I hope the government can provide this support to seniors.

• (1835)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to hear of the outcome with regard to the issue faced by one of her residents.

With respect to the assessment of eligibility for self-employed Canadians who received the Canada emergency response benefit, during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Canada Revenue Agency deployed seven emergency and economic recovery measures to support Canadians and businesses.

The Government of Canada announced the CERB on March 25, 2020, and in just 12 short days after the announcement, the CRA began distributing CERB payments to the millions of Canadians who were in need of that support.

On April 27, 2020, the CRA also deployed the Canada emergency wage subsidy, otherwise known as CEWS, to eligible businesses as part of the Government of Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan. This emergency measure was designed to help employers who had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to keep workers on their payroll or to bring back previously laid off employees.

[Translation]

The CRA has worked very hard to support Canadians, including workers and small or medium-sized businesses, through this very difficult period. It also implemented measures to preserve the integrity of Canada's tax system.

[English]

We must remember that from the outset, the CERB was designed to support employed individuals, contract workers and self-employed persons who were not deemed eligible for employment insurance. For instance, millions of Canadians were able to apply for the CERB online through My Account via an automated telephone line or by calling CRA's toll-free number. Moreover, millions of payments were made to Canadians via either direct deposit or cheque, typically within just 10 days of applying for the benefit.

The CERB eligibility criteria clearly stated a person had to either earn at least \$5,000 in 2019 or over the past 12 months from self-employment income or provincial benefit payments related to maternity or paternity leave.

In the first two weeks the CERB was announced, information provided on Canada.ca and by the CRA call centre agents on eligible self-employment income was unclear. The situation may have led some self-employed Canadians to apply in good faith despite being ineligible. However, by late April, clearer information regarding CERB eligibility was posted on Canada.ca and provided to CRA's call centre agents. The Government of Canada and the CRA regretted sincerely that communications regarding the eligibility criteria may not have been clear in the first days after the CERB was launched.

I would also like to point out that the Government of Canada and the CRA's support of self-employed workers does not stop there. Just last month, on February 9, the government announced that self-employed individuals whose net self-employed income was less than \$5,000 and who applied for the CERB would not be required to repay the CERB as long as their gross self-employment income was at least \$5,000 and they met all other eligibility criteria.

That same day, the Government of Canada and the CRA also announced they would provide targeted interest relief to Canadians who received COVID-related income support benefits. Once individuals have filed their 2020 income tax and benefit return, they will not be required to pay interest on any outstanding income tax debt for the 2020 tax year until April 30, 2022.

• (1840)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, many low-income seniors across Canada depend heavily on their GIS as a core part of their income. Any interruption to this important benefit would cause dire hardships, so I really urge the government to extend the income tax deadline for them.

Adjournment Proceedings

Of course, seniors are not the only people experiencing problems with CRA. There is another situation being faced by my constituents, whereby they are not able to get a new T4 tax slip from CRA in time to file their taxes, and the miscalculation on their T4 is a result of the errors made by CRA on CERB payments. In one instance, one of my constituents did not even ask for CERB but received it. She returned that money and now she is being taxed for it.

This is absolutely outrageous. We need the government to do better, we need CRA to do better and we need to extend the deadline for income tax filing.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I do encourage all Canadians to file their taxes by the deadline to ensure they maintain the benefits and credits they deserve and for which they have worked so hard.

The CRA is committed to maintaining a balance between making emergency funds accessible to individuals and businesses that urgently need the support, while preserving the fairness and integrity of our tax system.

In collaboration with ESDC, the CRA designed the CERB application process to be attestation based. This is similar to the approach used in tax filing, where individuals attest to information they provide when they file their taxes. The CRA may verify this information at the time of filing or at a later date.

The vast majority of Canadians are honest and well-intentioned, and the CRA has effective systems in place to ensure only eligible Canadians receive benefit payments.

[Translation]

I want to point out that the CRA is committed to putting people first. In accordance with its client service model and in the spirit of fairness and transparency, the CRA will continue—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Souris-Moose Mountain.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, a while back, I asked a question about the Liberal government collecting GST on the carbon tax. In my question, I also referenced a constituent, a small business owner, who had already paid over \$2,500 in GST on the carbon tax since April 2019.

Adjournment Proceedings

The answer I received from the Minister of Finance was extremely disappointing. Instead of addressing the actual issue of GST being charged on top of the carbon tax, she started talking about Bill C-14, which was completely unrelated to the question I posed. Her flippant non-answer was insulting to many Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet while their household bills are increasing. I hope the Liberals will stop and listen to someone other than themselves.

In simple terms, the question was about charging the GST, a federal tax, on the carbon tax, another federal tax, and why top finance officials are saying that they don't pay it, yet small businesses are paying it.

The minister's non-answer is unfortunately a continuing trend. In September, I submitted an Order Paper question requesting the total amount of GST collected on the carbon tax since January 2017. The response I received was convoluted and did not provide any of the actual numbers requested. Instead, it pointed me to the annual report that was about to be released.

That annual report was also extremely convoluted and did not provide the breakdown of numbers I had asked for, further proving to me that the government is doing everything it can to sweep the fact that it collects GST on the carbon tax under the rug. If Liberals are so proud of the tax regime they have created, why will they not give us the numbers? In my view, they are clearly trying to hide the tax, hoping that if people do not see it, it does not happen.

Perhaps it is because they do not actually understand the numbers themselves. The whole reason I asked this question was because the top finance official who was testifying at committee did not know that GST was charged on top of the carbon tax. He answered "no" when asked the question directly. How are Canadians to trust the government has their best interests at heart when its experts do not even know how its programs work?

The constituent I mentioned also owns a small trucking company that services the oil and gas industry. She has been tracking the amount of GST she has been charged on the carbon tax just for diesel fuel alone, and she has serious concerns about the viability of her business going forward. By the time the carbon tax reaches \$170 dollars per tonne in 2030, she may already have had to shut down for good. This is the case for many small business owners.

That is not what the government wants, is it? Perhaps that is another debate for another time.

The fact of the matter is that rural Canadians are being hit hard by the carbon tax and the GST that is being charged on top of it. In Saskatchewan, it is not uncommon to have to drive one or two hours just to attend a doctor's appointment, something that the urban population typically does not have to consider. Rural Canadians pay for more fuel. In turn, they pay more carbon tax, and in turn, more GST on that carbon tax.

Another matter to consider is the weather. In Saskatchewan it can get as cold as -50°C in the winter. Heating a home gets expensive, and these costs are then compounded by the carbon tax and the GST that comes with it. Again, these are costs that are unique to those who live in areas such as the Prairies and not those who live in downtown Toronto, where it rarely dips below -10°C.

The last thing that Canadians need right now is more uncertainty about the future, and that includes the amount of taxes they are being charged, not to mention the taxes on those taxes. Contrary to what the Liberals might think, we understand that emissions need to be reduced, but we do not think that it should be done on the backs of small business owners or at the expense of our economy.

We in Saskatchewan are world leaders in carbon capture technology, but we get no credit for it, not to mention the excellent land stewardship of our farmers and ranchers, who also do not get credit—

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the pillars of Canada's work to combat climate change is putting a price on carbon pollution.

A price on carbon provides Canadians with an incentive to make more environmentally sustainable choices and to invest in greener alternatives that create a cleaner economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The federal carbon pollution pricing system has two components: a regulatory system for large industry, known as the output-based pricing system; and a regulatory charge on fossil fuels, otherwise known as a fuel charge.

The latter applies in the province of Saskatchewan, which the member for Souris—Moose Mountain represents. Consumers do not pay the fuel charge directly to the federal government. Furthermore, the direct proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system remain in the province or territory of origin. In the case of Saskatchewan, approximately 90% of direct proceeds from the fuel charge are returned to residents through climate action incentive payments.

The remaining fuel charge proceeds are used to support small businesses, schools, universities, municipalities and indigenous groups. Fuel producers and distributors are generally required to pay the fuel charge and, as a result, the price paid by consumers on goods and services would usually have the cost of the fuel charge embedded.

With respect to the GST-HST, it is calculated on the final amount charged for a good or service. The general rule that was adopted at the inception of the GST in 1991 is that this final amount includes other taxes, levies and charges that apply to the good or service, and that may be embedded in the final price. This includes the fuel charge as part of the federal carbon pollution pricing system.

This long-standing approach to calculating the GST-HST helps to maintain the broad-based nature of the tax and ensures that tax is applied evenly across goods and services consumed in Canada. It also simplifies the vendor's calculation of the amount of tax payable, since the vendor is not required to back out other taxes, levies or charges at the point of sale in order to determine the amount of GST-HST payable.

The Government of Canada has been clear that it should not be free to pollute in Canada. However, I want to strongly emphasize that the government is not keeping any direct proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system. I know that all members are concerned about the state of small and medium-sized businesses in Canada right now. To truly support small businesses during this unprecedented time, I urge all members to come together to support the passage of Bill C-14 so that we can continue to provide targeted and meaningful investments to help Canadians who need them the most.

• (1850)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, as usual, that was another non-answer.

My question was about the GST on the carbon tax, which was collected and tucked away by the Liberal government. That GST is collected on top of the carbon tax. It is not refunded to the provinces. It is not refunded to the hotels. It is not refunded to the schools. It is not refunded to the hospitals.

The question was about the GST on the carbon tax. That is the amount we are asking about. It is not about the other aspect of things.

This is very disconcerting for my constituents. They know it is being collected. They know the government is taking this money. They know the government is pocketing this money. They question whether this is actually, perhaps, a wealth redistribution program, when the government is not being accountable for what the GST cost is.

A recent report by the Fraser Institute stated that if the carbon tax increased to \$170 per tonne by 2030, as the Liberals decided it would, then there could be a loss of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, as I have said already, the federal carbon pollution pricing system is about recognizing that pollution has a cost. It is about empowering Canadians and driving innovation.

Including the fuel charge in the final amount of GST-HST for a good or service aligns with the long-standing approach to ensure that taxes apply evenly across goods and services consumed in Canada.

Furthermore, returning proceeds from carbon pollution pricing helps Canadians make more environmentally sustainable consumption choices, but does not change the incentive to pollute less. In fact, in the provinces where residents receive climate action incentive payments, most households receive more in payments than the

total cost they face from the federal carbon pollution pricing system.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, my questions tonight address the failure to get an adequate response from the Minister of National Defence earlier on what steps and actions are going forward to respond to the allegations of sexual misconduct and how to root this out in the Canadian Forces.

I would like to remind everybody that when I asked the minister back in March for his opinion as to who was responsible and accountable for the failure of the allegations against the CDS being investigated, he replied, yes, he was absolutely responsible. I take the minister at his word. However, when I asked him in the House, which is why I am here tonight, what lessons the minister has personally learned from his failure to investigate and what actions he has taken to ensure the same mistakes do not happen again, unfortunately, I got a non-response.

I am sure many of my colleagues in the House know that I spent 25 years serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. So many of my former colleagues have reached out to me, especially female colleagues, who are disappointed, to say the least, in the lack of accountability and action being taken by the government to address these serious allegations and figure out the best way to ensure they never happen again.

I am going to paraphrase some of the comments that I made publicly in a national newspaper. Our country and all Canadians need an effective and well-led military to face the ever-evolving and complex global conflicts. We cannot be strong at home when leaders fail the women and men under their command, nor can we be engaged in the world without leveraging every competent, willing and capable Canadian who enrolls in the military. When we have phenomenal leaders such as Lieutenant-Colonel Eleanor Taylor retiring in disgust, not much more needs to be said. This needs to be fixed now and into the future. The Canadian Armed Forces needs more Lieutenant-Colonel Eleanor Taylors, not fewer.

I know the minister himself spent years serving Canada, both as a police officer and in uniform, and I respect him for that, but what I do not respect or am disappointed in is his lack of taking action and coming up with a plan. When a similar question was asked in question period today about what actions are being taken, the response was that the government is giving another \$236 million to combat sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, with the assumption that this is somehow taking real action. I do not accept that. Money is not going to solve the problem. This is not a money solution to stop and root out what is going on when Canadian Forces members are losing trust in the senior leadership, especially the women and men dealing with sexual misconduct and harassment. They need to have faith that when an allegation is brought forward, concrete action is being taken.

Adjournment Proceedings

In closing, what I really want to know is what specific plans and actions the government is taking, specifically the minister. What are those lessons? I am not talking about the lessons that he has identified. Something we learn in the Canadian Armed Forces is that there is no use identifying the problem. What are the actual lessons we have learned so that we can ensure this never happens again? What has the minister personally learned?

• (1855)

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like start by thanking the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his military service. He knows, and I believe Canadians know, that our government has always said that we do not tolerate any form of sexual misconduct, harassment, inappropriate behaviour or abuse of power. We want it reported, we want it investigated and we want to support those who are affected by it, but more than anything we want to make sure it stops and does not happen in the first place.

No one is above the law, no matter their rank or position. No one should ever interfere with the independence of any investigation. This is essential to achieving just outcomes and it is essential to the integrity of the justice system. Allegations have always been referred to the appropriate authorities. That is what the minister and this government have always done. This is why we are taking additional steps, as the hon. member mentioned, to ensure that every CAF member feels safe coming forward and has confidence that misconduct and harassment will always be fully investigated.

We recognize the importance of following all appropriate processes when looking into such matters. That is why our government is committed to taking further action to strengthen accountability mechanisms, promote culture change in the military and end the culture of toxic masculinity, as well as to provide a safe space for survivors to report misconduct and access the services they need, including the recent announcements of peer-to-peer support and enhancing the SMRC. We are doing this by listening to the solutions and recommendations of survivors and those with lived experience.

I, personally, have been very moved by the testimonies we have heard from survivors and those who were impacted, including the one my hon. colleague mentioned. I can tell members that these stories of mostly female, but also male, survivors who have so courageously come forward are making me, the minister and our government even more determined. We have got to get this right, and that means listening to the people who are impacted and not creating programs that might have unintended consequences, as we have done in the past.

Through budget 2021, we are committing \$236 million to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the Canadian Armed Forces. I believe this is going to make a difference. This will expand the reach of the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre, allow for more research and provide online, in-person, peer-to-peer and other supports that the survivors have been asking for.

[Translation]

We are putting the needs of survivors first, since they are at the centre of these cases. Any action that is taken must prioritize and align with their needs and wishes. The reporting process can be a significant source of stress for survivors. That is why there are op-

tions for support without triggering a formal investigation. One example is the sexual misconduct response centre.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces make tremendous sacrifices to protect Canadians and, regardless of rank or gender, they have the undeniable right to serve safely.

• (1900)

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, unfortunately the parliamentary secretary missed the point, and unfortunately the minister chose not to respond himself, because this is who I was asking the question.

What lessons has he personally learned from his failure? He accepted responsibility for failure to investigate or for these allegations to be properly investigated, and now we are at the point where Canadian Armed Forces members, these survivors the parliamentary secretary alluded to, want to know that senior leadership can be held to account. I do not need talking points. I spent 25 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. I have people reaching out to me and explaining. Here is what I am hearing from the ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces: They do not trust the senior leadership and they do not trust the government to actually hold the people to account. The skepticism that is growing in the ranks is what is going to do long-lasting damage that we need to fix.

How is the government going to fix these allegations against our most senior leaders?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld: Madam Speaker, we are committed to taking further action to eliminate sexual misconduct. In addition to the \$236 million that I mentioned in budget 2021, we will have more to announce in the coming days and weeks. We need to make it easy and accessible for anyone at any level to report an incident and they need to have confidence in those reporting mechanisms. That is why we are developing an independent reporting structure to look at all allegations.

As the minister of defence and the Prime Minister have stated, all options are on the table. We will continue to be guided by fairness and respect for the rule of law. The integrity of independent investigations must be upheld because, as my hon. colleague has said, our members deserve a just process and fair outcomes.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been

adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:02 p.m.)

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